

Case Studies from Europe

To further illustrate the concepts in this manual, here are three real-world European agroforestry project case studies. These can be used as extended examples during sessions or as additional reading for participants. Each showcases how project management practices contributed to their outcomes, and each is accompanied by a suggested exercise or discussion prompt. More information about agroforestry can be found in: www.agroforestry.net.eu



Case Study 1: Silvopasture Restoration in Dehesa/Montado Systems (Spain & Portugal)

Project Name: LIFE Regenerate (EU LIFE Programme)

Location: Southwestern Spain & Southern Portugal (Dehesa and Montado rangeland systems)

Focus: Revitalizing traditional silvopastoral systems – integrating oak trees, pasture, and livestock – to enhance biodiversity, soil health, and farm profitability.

- Project Summary: [LIFE Regenerate Official Website \(Archived\)](#)
- Final Report and Publications: [LIFE REGENERATE Results \(LIFE Database\)](#)
- Overview in LIFE Brochure (p. 26): [LIFE and Agroforestry – European Commission PDF](#)

Project Summary

The Dehesa (in Spain) and Montado (in Portugal) landscapes are historic agroforestry systems with scattered oak trees (cork and holm oaks) shading grazing lands. These systems were degrading due to neglect, overgrazing, and climate stress. The LIFE Regenerate project aimed to restore them by introducing regenerative grazing, soil improvements, and new business models. Over 5 years, the project worked with local farmers to test practices like rotational grazing, seeding legumes in pastures, and producing biochar from pruned wood to enrich soils. Demonstration sites were set up on several farms, with scientific monitoring alongside.

Project Management Aspects

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The project actively involved farmers from design to implementation. Local farmers' associations and ranchers were partners, ensuring the practices tested were relevant. Researchers (from universities) and extension agents collaborated, bridging science and practice. Policymakers were invited to field days to witness results, building support for policy incentives. Regular meetings (every 6 months) were held to get feedback from farmers – an Agile-like iteration approach, adjusting techniques based on farmer input.
- **Planning & Implementation:** A detailed work plan (WBS) was developed: Year 1 focused on baseline studies and training farmers; Years 2-4 on field implementation and iterative improvements; Year 5 on evaluation and dissemination. Gantt charts were used to schedule grazing rotations and monitoring activities seasonally. The team divided tasks among technical leads: one team handled **soil restoration** (biochar experiments, soil sampling), another handled **grazing management** (fencing, rotation plan), etc. They coordinated via monthly calls and a shared Trello board to track tasks across countries.
- **Risk Management:** Key risks identified were drought (could ruin pasture regeneration), farmer adoption (risk that farmers would not maintain new practices), and market fluctuations (price of beef and cork). Mitigation steps: for drought, they selected hardy pasture species and set up water points; for farmer adoption, they provided small financial incentives and constant on-farm support to build confidence; for



market issues, they helped develop a niche label for “sustainably raised Dehesa products” to potentially receive higher prices. Indeed, during a dry spell in year 3, they activated a contingency to purchase supplemental feed to keep livestock healthy – this was budgeted as an emergency fund.

- **Scaling & Impact:** As the project progressed, results were tangible – improved weight gain in livestock, richer soil, more birds and pollinators observed. They documented these in reports and videos. The lessons were shared through farmer field schools and exchanges to neighbouring areas. By the project’s end, an **Agroforestry Implementation Handbook** was published in Spanish/Portuguese for dissemination such as the AF4EU agroforestry handbook. Several farmers outside the project replicated the techniques after seeing neighbours’ success. Policymakers in the region launched a new grant scheme for rotational grazing based on the project’s outcomes. The project thus had a legacy beyond its life, influencing practice and policy across the Iberian Peninsula.

Project Takeaway: Effective stakeholder engagement and adaptive management were crucial. By treating farmers as co-creators and being willing to adjust practices (some seed mixtures or grazing timings were adjusted each year), the project achieved robust results that earned wide buy-in. It showcased that blending traditional knowledge with modern techniques and solid project management can regenerate iconic agroforestry landscapes.

Exercise Suggestion: *Analyze the Project Plan* – Have participants outline what the WBS for LIFE Regenerate might look like (phases and key tasks) based on the summary. Identify one risk and ask how it was mitigated. Discuss how they would engage policymakers if they were running this project. Alternatively, role-play a negotiation: one group as farmers, one as policymakers – the farmers request continued support post-project, policymakers want evidence; practice making the case using the project’s results.



Case Study 2: RAPCA- Andalusian Network of Pasture–Firebreak Areas (Spain)

Project Name: RAPCA–Andalusian Network of Pasture–Firebreak Areas

Location: Andalusia, Southern Spain

Focus: Integrating livestock grazing into forest fire prevention and sustainable land management.

Project Summary: <https://af4eu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/AF4EU-Factsheet-RAPCA.pdf>

Project Summary

RAPCA (Red Andaluza de Áreas Pastoreadas para Cortafuegos – Andalusian Network of Pasture–Firebreak Areas) is an initiative of the Andalusian Regional Government that combines sustainable forest management with wildfire prevention. Its core idea is simple yet powerful: use controlled grazing by local livestock to maintain vegetation in strategic firebreak zones, thereby reducing wildfire risk while sustaining traditional pastoral livelihoods.

RAPCA operates across all Andalusian provinces, currently managing about 14,000 ha of public forests through contracts with hundreds of livestock farmers. Each participating shepherd or farmer grazes assigned areas following annual technical plans drawn up by forestry specialists. These plans regulate grazing intensity, timing, and livestock species according to vegetation type and terrain. Goats and mixed sheep–goat herds are especially valuable for browsing woody scrub, the primary wildfire fuel in Mediterranean landscapes.

Project Management Aspects

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The programme hinges on cooperation between the Regional Ministry for Sustainability and Environment, the Agency for the Management of Agriculture and Fisheries of Andalusia,



and pastoralists' associations. Farmers are treated as key project partners and receive both grazing rights and financial compensation for the service they provide in reducing biomass accumulation.

- **Planning & Execution:** Annual grazing plans are co-designed by forestry technicians and livestock keepers, specifying target areas, grazing periods, and vegetation-reduction objectives. GPS collars are often used to track herd movements and verify effective coverage of firebreak strips.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Success indicators include hectares maintained, vegetation reduction levels, and wildfire-risk mitigation in high-priority zones. RAPCA's inclusion in the Andalusian Forest Fire Prevention Plan provides institutional monitoring and integration into broader regional disaster-prevention frameworks.
- **Socio-Economic Benefits:** Farmers gain an additional income stream, reduced feed costs, and formal recognition for their environmental services. The presence of shepherds year-round also aids in early fire detection, contributing indirectly to community safety and rural employment.

Results & Impact: RAPCA demonstrates that traditional grazing can be an effective ecological service. The programme not only maintains firebreaks and prevents catastrophic fires but also strengthens rural resilience, preserves biodiversity, and recovers long-standing cultural land-use practices. It is now referenced as a model of agroforestry-based fire prevention within European innovation networks such as AF4EU.

Project Takeaway: RAPCA's success lies in aligning environmental goals with viable livelihoods. By integrating pastoral activity into official fire-management policy, Andalusia achieved sustained landscape stewardship, measurable risk reduction, and stronger rural communities — all through an agroforestry lens.

Exercise Suggestion: Ask participants to map a similar “Grazed Firebreak Network” concept for their own region. What partners would need to be involved (forestry agencies, livestock associations, local authorities)? How could contracts and monitoring be managed? Design a short project charter and a stakeholder matrix for such an initiative.



Case Study 3: Urban Agroforestry for Community Resilience (Germany)

Project Name: Edible Cities Network (EdiCitNet) **Location:** Berlin, Germany (with sister projects in Oslo, Rotterdam, Barcelona, etc.) <https://www.edicitnet.com/>

Focus: Developing **urban agroforestry and food forests** in cities to enhance local food security, green spaces, and social cohesion.

Project Summary

EdiCitNet is an EU-funded project (Horizon 2020) that created a network of cities implementing “Edible City Solutions.” In Berlin, the project established community-run forest farming (food forests) on underutilized city land. These are essentially small-scale agroforestry systems in urban areas: fruit and nut trees, berry shrubs, and vegetables grown collectively by residents in parks or near housing estates. The goals were to increase urban resilience to climate change (more green cover, reduced heat islands), provide fresh produce to residents, and create educational and social engagement opportunities. The Berlin pilot, in the neighbourhood of Tempelhof, turned a vacant lot into a lush edible landscape over 3 years.

Project Management Aspects

- **Stakeholder Co-Design:** In an urban setting, stakeholders included local community members (of various ages and backgrounds), city government (parks department, city planners), NGOs focused on urban agriculture, and even local businesses (like cafes interested in sourcing local herbs). The project held numerous co-design workshops where neighbours could voice their needs and ideas – what to plant, how to manage the space, accessibility features, etc. This participatory approach was crucial to gain community

buy-in and to prevent vandalism or misuse (common risks in city projects). A local steering committee was formed, comprising residents and officials, to guide the project – effectively a stakeholder governance structure.

- Planning & Implementation:** Urban land is often contested and regulated. The project had to work closely with municipal authorities to secure land use permissions. A formal **Memorandum of Understanding** was signed between the project and the city, outlining responsibilities (the city allowed use of land and maybe provided soil/compost; the project would manage installation and maintenance, etc.). Planning also had to account for infrastructure: bringing in healthy soil, planting in a way that does not damage underground utilities, ensuring public safety (no poisonous plants, sightlines maintained for security). They developed site plans using GIS, mapping sun/shade patterns from buildings to place the right plants in the right spots. A Gantt chart scheduled the sequence: site cleanup, soil preparation, planting events, and creation of pathways and signage. Volunteers from the community were organized for planting days – essentially turning implementation into a series of well-managed community events (with clear task lists, tool provision, refreshment breaks, etc., which the project team coordinated).
- Risk & Adaptive Management:** Some risks: *land-use conflict* (what if neighbours complain or someone wants the land for development?), *plant failure* (urban soil or microclimate might cause some species to fail), *volunteer burnout* (community projects often start strong then participation fades). Mitigations: The project engaged urban planners early to incorporate the forest farming (food forest) concept into city plans (so it was not seen as temporary or in conflict). They also made the space multi-functional (including open paths, seating, play areas) to ensure broad community value – reducing risk of conflict by making it a park for all, not just a fenced garden. For plant success, they chose hardy, locally adapted varieties and built raised beds where soil contamination was an issue. They also set up a water catchment system (rain barrels) to address dry spells, and arranged with the fire department that, in extreme drought, they would help water the trees (leveraging city resources). To maintain volunteer engagement, the project partnered with a local NGO that continued to organize regular community events (harvest festivals, gardening workshops) – keeping people involved and attached to the project. By project’s end, a formal community group took over management, with support from the city’s parks department – an exit strategy for sustainability.
- Scaling:** EdiCitNet was not just Berlin – it linked cities. The Berlin team regularly exchanged experiences with counterparts in other cities (virtually and through exchange visits). This network effect meant successful practices (like the stakeholder committee model, or a digital app they used for volunteers to sign up for watering shifts) were replicated in other cities. Additionally, Berlin’s success led to interest from other districts to create their own forest farming (food forests). The project team compiled a toolkit “How to start an Edible City initiative” which included project management tips and was distributed via the network’s website. Thus, the project scaled horizontally through knowledge sharing.
- Impact & M&E:** They tracked fun indicators: number of fruit trees planted, kilos of produce harvested by the community, number of participants (and demographics to ensure inclusivity), green area increase, and qualitative feedback from neighbours. Surveys showed improved community cohesion (people met neighbours through the project) and educational impact (students from a nearby school used the forest farming (food forest) for ecology lessons). On the environmental side, even a small forest patch had noticeable cooling effects in summer and provided habitat (bird counts went up). This data was reported back to city officials, strengthening the case for more such projects. It also fed into policy recommendations for integrating edible landscapes in urban design.

Project Takeaway: Even in dense urban environments, agroforestry projects can thrive if **community involvement and cross-sector collaboration** are prioritised. The Edible Cities project highlights that project management in a city context means navigating bureaucracy, ensuring inclusivity, and continuously engaging volunteers. When



done well, the outcome is a self-sustaining community asset that can be replicated in other cities. Essentially, they turned an idea into a movement by careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and sharing of experiences.

Discussion Prompt: *Urban vs. Rural Project Management* – Ask participants to compare the challenges in the urban case to rural agroforestry cases. What tools or approaches were the same (stakeholder mapping, etc.) and what were different (more focus on city permits, volunteer management)? This can reinforce that the core principles apply broadly, with context-specific tweaks.