

## Session 1: Introduction to Change and the Advisor's Role (09:30–10:30)

### Objective

Set the stage for the training by exploring what we mean by “change” in the context of agroforestry adoption. Participants will recognize common barriers to change in agriculture and how an advisor’s approach can influence success. By sharing personal experiences, the group will appreciate the human side of change – both its challenges and opportunities – and build motivation for learning change management skills. **Advisor attitudes** (openness, empathy, patience) that facilitate change are highlighted, creating a supportive mindset from the start.

### Key Topics

- Why Change is Challenging (and Needed) in Agroforestry:** Discuss why adopting agroforestry practices often requires significant change for farmers. Brainstorm in plenary: *“What changes when a farmer shifts from conventional farming to agroforestry?”* Expected points: new techniques to learn, altered farm layout, different short-term costs/benefits, involvement of new stakeholders (e.g. forestry department, cooperatives), etc. This highlights that agroforestry is not just a technical adjustment but a **holistic change** in farming system and mindset. Also discuss why this change is worthwhile: to meet climate challenges, improve sustainability, open new income streams. Emphasize that **change is both necessary** (for long-term resilience) and **hard** (people must leave comfort zones). This frames the advisor’s mission: to help make necessary change possible and less daunting.
- The Role of the Extension Advisor as a Change Agent:** Introduce the concept of the advisor as a facilitator of change (not just an expert dispensing advice). Unlike top-down “instruction,” change facilitation means **working alongside farmers**, understanding their starting point, and guiding them through each step. Key advisor attitudes and skills are discussed via group input: *“What qualities in an advisor help farmers embrace new practices?”* (Possible answers: listening, trustworthiness, credibility, enthusiasm, patience, flexibility, respect for local knowledge, etc.) Contrast directive vs. facilitative approaches: e.g., instead of simply telling a farmer to plant trees, a good advisor **engages in dialogue**, explores the farmer’s goals, addresses fears, and co-develops solutions. Emphasize the importance of **building trust** – farmers are more willing to try changes when they trust the person guiding them. An extension advisor who demonstrates empathy (truly understands the farmer’s perspective) and positive belief in the farmer’s ability to change will be far more effective.
- Types of Change – Incremental to Transformational:** Briefly note that change can range from small adjustments (incremental change, like trying one new tree species) to transformational shifts (overhauling farm design to agroforestry system). Agroforestry adoption can be **incremental (adding one component at a time)** or **systemic (redesigning entire farm)**. Advisors should gauge how ready a farmer or community is for change – some may start small, others may leap. Recognizing this helps tailor the approach: gradual change might require continuous encouragement, while big change needs strong upfront vision and support.
- Personal Experience with Change:** To humanize the topic, have participants reflect on their own lives. *Quick individual reflection (2 minutes): “Think of a significant change you personally went through (professional or personal). What made it hard or easy? Who or what helped you through it?”* Then ask a few volunteers to share their stories or insights. This often reveals common themes: fear of the unknown, excitement for something new, the importance of support from friends/family, the impact of good communication, etc. Link these insights to our context: farmers feel similar emotions when asked to change practices; an advisor can play a role akin to the supportive friend or mentor in those stories. **Key message:** experiencing change ourselves teaches us empathy for others in change. Encourage participants to remember their feelings during change – this will help them be patient and supportive with farmers.



### CASE STUDY: Small Steps to Big Change- Silvopasture Introduction (Ireland)

Casey, J. (2025). Combining cattle with forestry. AF4EU. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18482925>

This case reflects AF4EU practice abstracts on integrating livestock with trees (e.g., cattle with forestry systems). Farmers in Ireland introduced silvopasture using species such as oak (*Quercus robur*) and willow (*Salix spp.*), initially through small-scale trials. The main challenge was farmer hesitation due to uncertainty about grazing impacts, tree management, and productivity trade-offs. Advisors addressed this by encouraging incremental adoption—starting with a few tree rows or shelter belts rather than whole-farm redesign. Demonstration plots and peer examples helped farmers observe benefits such as improved animal shelter, better pasture condition, and long-term productivity gains.

#### Key takeaway

Small, low-risk trials allow farmers to test agroforestry in practice, building confidence and enabling gradual scaling—demonstrating that **incremental change is often the most effective pathway to transformation**.

*“People change at their own pace – the advisor’s job is to encourage and guide, not push too hard or judge.”*

After this session, participants should feel **positive and engaged**, aware that their own behaviour and mindset as advisors can greatly influence change outcomes. A tone has been set that no question is foolish and every challenge is surmountable together.

**Tip for Success:** *“Be the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage.”* – In change processes, an advisor should aim to **facilitate rather than dictate**. Empower stakeholders to contribute ideas and make decisions about the change. This inclusive approach builds ownership, making lasting change more likely.