

## Strategic Advisory for Agroforestry Businesses

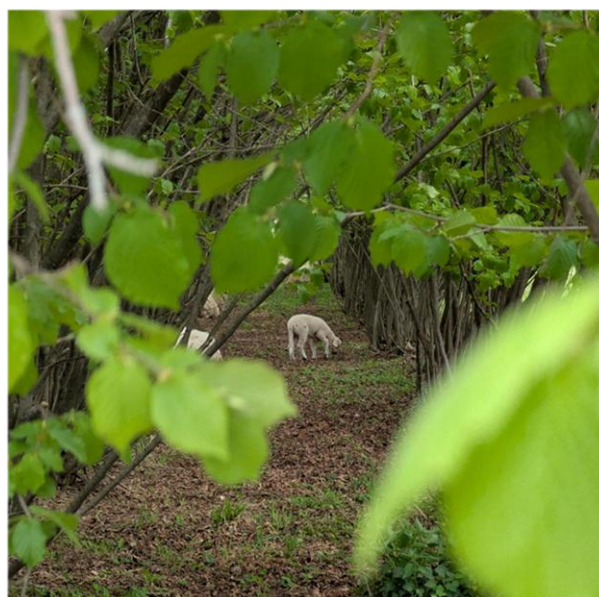
- **Description:**  
A practical 2-day training module that equips advisors with the skills to support businesses in strategic planning and decision-making.
- **What you will gain:**  
  - Skills to guide visioning and strategic goal setting
  - Ability to conduct SWOT, PESTEL, and risk analysis
  - Tools to support implementation and monitor progress
  - Confidence to act as a strategic facilitator for farm businesses
- **Includes:**  
  - Strategic planning tools and templates
  - Real-world case studies and advisory scenarios
  - Communication and facilitation techniques
- **For:**  
Agroforestry extension advisors, consultants, and professionals supporting farm businesses

### Introduction

Agroforestry businesses –whether family farms, cooperatives, or startups– face complex strategic decisions in a changing environment. Beyond day-to-day farming, they must set long-term visions, adapt to market and policy shifts, manage risks like climate change, and communicate their strategy to stakeholders. Strategic planning is crucial: it gives a **forward-focused vision** that aligns the team and stakeholders toward common goals.

When everyone is on the same page about short- and long-term objectives, it is much easier to keep efforts on track. Strategic goals give team members something tangible to work toward and a common language for success – they provide *something to look forward to and a reason to celebrate when achieved*.

Agroforestry extension advisors are uniquely positioned to guide these strategic processes. In the role of “**strategic**



**FIGURE 1. Silvopastoral system integrating hazel and sheep in Slovakia. Source: Couso-Viana, A.**



**facilitators,**” advisors help business owners clarify their vision and targets, analyse their internal strengths and external opportunities, and navigate decisions that shape the enterprise’s future. This is different from routine technical advice: it requires a big-picture perspective, confidentiality, and empowering clients to make their own informed strategic choices. Advisors must balance **visionary thinking** (inspiring long-term goals) with **pragmatic planning** (concrete steps and risk management). Done well, strategic support can transform an agroforestry enterprise’s trajectory – for example, turning a struggling farm into an innovative demonstration site, or a small producer group into a competitive cooperative with a clear niche.

This 2-day training module equips agroforestry advisors with the skills and tools to support businesses in strategic issues. Through interactive learning and case examples from various European contexts, participants will learn how to facilitate visioning exercises, perform SWOT analyses and trend scans, assess risks, and guide clients through strategy implementation. The workshop emphasizes **learner-centred methods**: advisors will practice using strategic planning tools in realistic scenarios, engage in group discussions and role-plays, and reflect on their role as strategic coaches. By the end, participants should be more confident in helping agroforestry businesses chart their strategic direction and respond proactively to challenges and opportunities.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this 2-day training, participants will be able to:

- **Articulate the importance of strategic orientation** for agroforestry businesses, explaining how a clear vision and strategy benefit long-term success (e.g. aligning team efforts, adapting to trends, and improving decision-making).
- **Distinguish the advisor’s role in strategic planning** from technical advising, adopting a facilitator approach that empowers clients to set and achieve their own vision (guiding the process without dictating content).
- **Facilitate the development of visions and strategic targets** with clients, using tools like visioning exercises and goal-setting frameworks to define an inspiring yet realistic direction.
- **Conduct a strategic analysis** for an agroforestry enterprise, including performing a SWOT analysis to identify internal strengths/weaknesses and external opportunities/threats, and using trend monitoring (PESTEL analysis) to scan the business environment for relevant trends (policy, market, climate, etc.).
- **Guide clients in risk assessment and management**, identifying major risks (e.g. production, market, financial, climatic, regulatory) and evaluating their likelihood and impact. Advisors will learn to use simple risk assessment tools (risk matrices, scenario planning) to help businesses develop mitigation strategies.
- **Apply communication tools in the strategy process**, facilitating effective communication of the strategy to stakeholders (e.g. employees, cooperative members, partners) to ensure buy-in and alignment. This includes storytelling, visualization (strategy maps), and inclusive discussion techniques that engage stakeholders around the common vision.
- **Support implementation planning and control**, assisting farmer clients to translate strategy into action plans (with clear responsibilities and timelines) and establishing simple monitoring metrics (KPIs) to track progress. Advisors will be able to explain how to review and adapt strategies over time (strategic controlling cycle).
- **Utilize practical tools and exercises** during their advisory work, such as vision canvas templates, SWOT worksheets, PESTEL checklists, risk assessment matrices, and communication planning checklists – and know when to use each tool in the strategic planning process.
- **Reflect on their own approach** to strategic facilitation, identifying personal strengths (for example: analytical skills, communication) and areas to develop to become more effective strategic advisors.



## Training Structure Overview

This module is structured as a two-day interactive workshop (approximately 6–7 hours per day, including breaks) that balances short presentations with participatory activities, group work, and real-world case discussions.

**Day 1** focuses on foundational concepts of strategic planning and analysis, ensuring advisors understand key strategic tools and the context of agroforestry enterprises.

**Day 2** builds on these foundations with sessions on communication and execution – covering how to move from planning to action and how to support clients throughout implementation.

A mix of learning methods is used: mini-lectures (supported by slides) to introduce concepts, facilitated discussions to draw on participants' experiences, hands-on exercises (like doing a SWOT in groups), role-play scenarios (practicing advisory conversations), and case study analysis.

Each session outline below includes its objective, content summary, suggested **interactive methods**, and timing. **Trainer tips** are provided for guidance on emphasis or common pitfalls. The style is **learner-centred and example-rich** – modelling how advisors should facilitate strategic thinking *with* clients (not just for them). Participants will frequently work in pairs or small groups to apply tools on sample scenarios, mirroring how they might work with farm clients. Throughout the module, we incorporate examples from AF4EU partner countries to illustrate how strategic planning principles apply in different agroforestry contexts. These case examples provide concrete success stories and lessons learned, making the learning highly practical.

## Audience & Format

This training is designed for agroforestry extension advisors or consultants who provide support to farm enterprises or organizations. Participants should have a basic understanding of agroforestry practices; no prior formal training in business strategy is required. The workshop is ideally in-person with 10–20 participants for optimal interaction (it can be adapted for online delivery if needed). The room setup should encourage participation – e.g. small group tables or a U-shape, plus wall space for flipcharts. Materials needed include flipchart paper, markers, sticky notes, and a projector for the accompanying PowerPoint slides. A co-facilitator is helpful for assisting with group exercises and time management.

## Training Materials

- **PowerPoint Presentation:** A slide deck is used to support the sessions, containing key points, diagrams (e.g. a SWOT matrix, PESTEL framework, risk matrix), and photos or graphics from agroforestry cases. The slides are minimal text and emphasize visuals and examples (reflecting the style of the reference modules). Trainers are encouraged to use the slides as prompts for discussion rather than lecture points, keeping sessions interactive.
- **Handouts/Tools:** Printable templates such as a *Vision Statement worksheet*, *SWOT Analysis template*, *PESTEL factors checklist*, *Risk Assessment matrix*, and a *Strategy Action Plan template* are provided. These allow participants to practice during the workshop and can be used with clients later.
- **Quiz:** A short quiz is conducted at the end of Day 2 to assess knowledge uptake of key concepts and tools. This helps reinforce learning and can be used by trainers to gauge which topics might need a refresher or follow-up. (See the “Quiz” section at the end of this document.)
- **Reference and Further Reading:** A list of open-access resources and references is provided at the end for participants who wish to deepen their knowledge or access tools (e.g. guides on strategic planning, case studies, online toolkits).

## Day 1: Strategic Planning Foundations for Agroforestry Businesses

Day 1 introduces fundamental strategic planning concepts and tools in the context of agroforestry. Participants begin by exploring why strategic orientation matters for farm businesses and how an advisor can facilitate strategic thinking. We then dive into the first steps of strategy formulation: defining a vision and strategic targets. The afternoon of Day 1 covers strategic analysis, including internal/external analysis through SWOT and trend monitoring, as well as assessing risks. By the end of Day 1, participants will have practiced these tools on example cases and will understand how to initiate and guide a strategic planning process with a client from vision through analysis. They will also reflect on the unique role of an advisor in strategic support, setting the stage for communication and implementation topics on Day 2.

### Schedule at a Glance (Day 1)

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 09:00–09:30 | Welcome & Introductions   |
| 09:30–10:45 | Session 1: The Advisor’s Role in Strategic Planning & Importance of Strategic Orientation |
| 10:45–11:00 | Break   |
| 11:00–12:30 | Session 2: Developing Vision and Strategic Targets  |
| 12:30–13:30 | Lunch   |
| 13:30–15:00 | Session 3: Strategic Analysis – SWOT and Trend Monitoring                                 |
| 15:00–15:15 | Break   |
| 15:15–16:30 | Session 4: Risk Assessment in Agroforestry Businesses                                     |
| 16:30       | Day 1 Wrap-Up & Reflection Assignment   |

(Note: Timing can be adjusted based on participant number and interaction level. Each session includes interactive components as detailed below.)

### Welcome & Introductions (09:00–09:30)

Begin Day 1 by providing a brief overview of the training module’s purpose and agenda. Invite participants to introduce themselves (name, role, and one expectation or question they have about strategic planning). Since this workshop is about strategy and advising, kick off with an **icebreaker** that is both fun and relevant:

**Icebreaker-“Company-Innovation”:** for example, ask each person to name a famous company or farm they admire for its strategy or innovation, and one word why (for example: “Apple – innovation”, “Local Agroforestry Coop – resilience”). Write these on a flipchart. This sets an expectation that strategic thinking is all around us, and transitions into the training’s relevance.

Quickly review *housekeeping* (break times, where facilities are, etc.) and ground rules for interactive learning (e.g. respect all ideas, everyone participates, ask questions). Emphasize that the workshop is *participatory* – not a lecture series. Encourage them to share experiences: many may have helped farms with business decisions before. Their knowledge is valuable here.

**Trainer Tip: Model good facilitation from the start.** Use active listening and positive reinforcement during introductions. For instance, if someone mentions “\_\_\_” as a strategy they admire, respond appreciatively and note that we will touch on resilience in strategic planning. This builds trust and openness, crucial for the interactive style.

## Session 1: The Advisor's Role in Strategic Planning & Importance of Strategic Orientation (09:30–10:45)

### Objective

Establish why strategic planning is important for agroforestry businesses and clarify how an extension advisor can effectively support clients in strategic issues. By the end of this session, participants should be able to explain the benefits of having a clear strategy for a business and identify keyways an advisor adds value in the strategic planning process (facilitator, sounding board, information source, etc.).



### Activity- Mini-Presentation (20 min)

Using slides, introduce the concept of strategic planning and “strategic orientation.” Define what a *vision* and *strategy* are in simple terms (vision = “where we want to go long-term”; strategy = “how we get there”). Present 2–3 key reasons why having a strategy is critical for businesses. For example: it helps in *proactively managing change* (rather than just reacting), in aligning decisions with long-term goals, and in making the enterprise more resilient to shocks. Cite a compelling statistic or statement: *Preparing a strategic plan helps businesses objectively assess opportunities, trends, and developments in their environment*, leading to better-informed decisions. Also, highlight how strategic planning unites the team: *when the whole team shares the same goals, it is easier to coordinate efforts and measure success*. Use an agroforestry-specific angle: for example- “*Why does a silvopasture farm need a strategy?*” – perhaps to integrate tree planting with livestock phases over years, or to secure grants by showing a clear plan.

- **Interactive Discussion Prompt:** Ask participants: “*In your experience, do most farmers or rural businesses you know have a written strategy or clear long-term plan? Why or why not?*” This opens discussion on real-world attitudes. Some might say farmers often plan season by season; others might mention coops or innovative farmers who do strategic planning. Use 2–3 responses to illustrate common barriers (lack of time, knowledge) and benefits (direction, funding access).



### Advisor's Role (20 min):

Transition to how an advisor fits into this picture. Explain that advising on strategic issues is different from advising on, say, crop management. Here the advisor acts more as a **facilitator and coach**: guiding the process, asking the right questions, providing tools, and connecting to information, but *the business owner must own the strategy*. On a slide, list key roles an advisor can play in strategic support:

- *Analyst*: help analyse the situation (bring in data on trends, market info, financial analysis tools).
- *Facilitator*: run strategy meetings or vision workshops with the client's team, ensure everyone's voice is heard, and foster consensus on goals.
- *Challenger*: politely question assumptions (“*What if...?*”) to expand the farm client's thinking or consider new angles (e.g., suggest looking at climate forecasts, new market opportunities).
- *Resource Connector*: link the business to resources (like market research, innovation funding, or networks such as the **Agroforestry Business Model Innovation Network (AF4EU)**) that can inform their strategy.
- *Supporter*: motivate and encourage the client to think long-term, and later, to stick with the plan implementation.

**Tip for Success:** Emphasize *what the advisor should NOT do* – take over the decision-making or impose their own vision. It is about empowering, not dictating. A good phrase: “**We are process guides, not bosses.**” Clients are more committed to a strategy *they* develop; our job is to make that process effective. Share a quick anecdote if

possible: for example, an advisor who wrote a strategic plan for a farmer that ended up unused because the farmer did not feel ownership.

### **Group Activity – Strategic Advisor Mindmap (15 min):**

Split into small groups of 3–4. Give each group a flipchart sheet. Ask them to draw a quick mindmap or list: “*What knowledge, skills, and qualities does an advisor need to effectively support strategic planning?*” Have them think of as many as possible (e.g., knowledge of business planning, facilitation skills, patience, understanding of agroforestry systems, networking contacts, etc.). After 10 minutes, each group shares one or two top points. The trainer collects these and highlights any that were missed, reinforcing a holistic view of the advisor’s role. Likely points: **Communication skills** will arise (leading into Day 2 topics), **analytical ability, knowledge of tools** (like SWOT, business plans), **trustworthiness/confidentiality**, etc. Tie this back to how strategic advising often means wearing many hats. To ground the discussion, present a real-world inspired story.

### **Example – Helping a Farm Develop a Vision (Spain)**

In Andalusia, Spain, a small organic farm was struggling with no clear direction – each year they changed crops and marketing channels, chasing short-term income. An extension advisor intervened to support strategic planning. In a farm workshop, the advisor guided the family to articulate a vision: “*to become the region’s leading example of regenerative agroforestry, integrating olive orchards, livestock, and ecotourism.*” This inspiring vision was tied to their values and local opportunities. The advisor then helped them set three strategic targets for the next 5 years:

- (1) **Agro-tourism development** – build a farm stay cabin and educational trail by year 3;
- (2) **Value-add olive products** – start producing olive leaf tea and olive oil soap;
- (3) **Training & networking** – host annual field days for other farmers to share knowledge.

With a clear vision and targets, the farm owners felt energized and focused. Over the next year, they stopped pursuing random side ventures and concentrated on these targets. The results: they secured a rural development grant for agro-tourism and formed a local farmer network on regenerative practices.

#### **Key takeaway**

The advisor did not *tell* them what to do, but by facilitating a vision session and providing planning tools, helped the farmers define their own strategic direction.

–*Interactive Q&A:* After the story, ask participants what stood out. For instance: “*What did the advisor do to help the clients create a vision?*” and “*Why do you think having those specific targets helped the farm?*” This reinforces the role and importance of vision.

**Methods Used:** Interactive lecture (with slides), group discussion, brainstorming in small groups, and a case study discussion. **Interactive element:** high – participants share experiences and create a mindmap in groups.

**Session 1 Wrap-up (5 min):** Summarize that strategic orientation is crucial for long-term success and that advisors are catalysts for strategic thinking. Transition to Session 2: “*Next, we’ll practice how to actually develop that vision and strategic targets with a client – one of the first steps an advisor would facilitate.*”

## Session 2: Developing Vision and Strategic Targets (11:00–12:30)

### Objective

Equip participants with methods to help clients develop a compelling vision and translate it into strategic goals/targets. By the end of this session, advisors should be comfortable facilitating a visioning exercise and formulating SMART strategic objectives that align with the vision. Participants will also recognize how to tailor the visioning process to different types of businesses (e.g., individual farm vs. cooperative).



#### Activity – Vision Statement Creation (30 min)

Rather than starting with lecture, engage participants immediately in a *visioning exercise* to experience it first-hand. Introduce a fictional but relatable scenario: “*Green Acres Cooperative*” – a group of farmers in an area who are starting a collective agroforestry project but lack a unifying vision. Each group of participants (4–5 people) will act as advisors facilitating a vision brainstorm for this coop. Provide a one-page brief on Green Acres (their context: for example, mixed farms, interested in alley cropping and farm-to-table sales, some want environmental focus, others profitability). Each group’s task: come up with a draft Vision Statement for the cooperative in 15 minutes. Encourage them to use a flipchart, and remind them a vision should be **inspiring, clear, and long-term**. They can list key phrases first (e.g. “*profitable farms, healthy soil, community learning*”) then craft a sentence or two.

- After 15 min, each group presents their draft vision. Applaud creativity. Likely visions might be like: “*Green Acres Coop envisions a thriving rural community where agroforestry sustains livelihoods, biodiversity, and innovation, serving as a model for sustainable farming.*” Discuss briefly: Are these visions motivating? Do they give a direction? Point out good elements (e.g., mentions of sustainability, community, profitability). Also gently critique if needed: e.g., if a vision is too vague or too narrow. This exercise not only teaches visioning but also models a tool advisors can use: a facilitated group vision workshop.



#### Presentation: Characteristics of a Good Vision (10 min)

Now use a few slides to consolidate learning. Define what a Vision Statement is and its characteristics: *clear, inspirational, aligned with values, and oriented to the future*. Emphasize it’s not about specific numbers (that is goals), but the desired future state. Show an example vision from a real agroforestry enterprise (if available) or from known organizations (e.g., “*AGFORWARD project vision: European farming landscapes with trees as key elements for productivity and ecosystem services*” – illustrative example). Mention the importance of **strategic targets** that stem from the vision: if vision is the “*dream*”, strategic targets are the concrete milestones on the way to that dream. Introduce the concept of SMART Goals (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-bound) for setting strategic targets.



#### Activity – Setting Strategic Targets (20 min)

Continuing with the “*Green Acres Cooperative*” scenario, each group now develops 2–3 strategic targets that would achieve their vision, applying SMART criteria. For example, if their vision emphasized profitable agroforestry, a target could be “*Increase average farm income by 15% through agroforestry products within 5 years*” (specific, measurable, time-bound). If biodiversity was in the vision, a target might be “*Establish 20 km of hedgerows across member farms in 3 years.*” Groups discuss and write their targets. Trainer moves between groups to assist, ensuring targets are not too generic. After 10–15 minutes, have groups share one target each. Discuss briefly if they meet SMART criteria, and how they relate to the vision. This helps participants practice articulating strategic objectives, a key skill for advisors guiding planning.

**Trainer Tip for Success:** Encourage groups to ensure at least one target addresses economic sustainability (since businesses need profitability), and another addresses environmental or social goals if relevant – demonstrating a

balance often needed in agroforestry strategies (multi-functional benefits). Also, remind them to keep it to a manageable number of strategic targets (3-5 usually), as too many targets can dilute focus.

### Presentation – Vision to Strategy (10 min)

Explain how to go from a broad vision to a strategy. The strategic targets they set are part of that bridge. An advisor would next help the client figure *how* to reach those targets – that is essentially the strategy (the set of actions or approaches). Note that the next sessions (SWOT, etc.) will provide input into deciding those actions. Summarize a simple strategic planning cycle:

Vision -> Goals -> Analysis (SWOT) -> Strategy Choices -> Implementation.

Highlight that it's iterative and can loop back (sometimes vision/goals get refined after analysis). Show a slide of this cycle diagram. Share a success story highlighting vision and goal setting.

### Example – Cooperative with a Common Vision (France)

A dairy farmers' cooperative in southern France decided to integrate trees on their pasturelands for long-term sustainability. Initially, members had different ideas (some just wanted shade for cows, others were interested in timber or biodiversity). An extension advisor facilitated a strategic vision workshop for the coop. Through a series of meetings, they agreed on a unifying vision: *“By 2030, our coop will be a pioneer of climate-smart dairy farming, combining productive pastures with thriving woodlands that enhance animal welfare and income.”* From this, they set strategic targets: e.g., **Plant 5,000 trees on member farms in 5 years; Develop a branded “silvopasture milk” product by year 4; Secure a premium price by marketing the environmental benefits.** Having these targets united the group.

The advisor then helped outline how to achieve them (securing seedlings, training farmers, marketing plan). Over time, the cooperative successfully planted over 6,000 trees and launched a new milk label highlighting agroforestry. Financially, they negotiated a 10% higher price with a local dairy for their differentiated product. Members reported that without the clear vision and goals, this coordinated effort would not have happened.

#### Key Takeaway

A shared vision can align diverse stakeholders, and clear targets make it actionable. The advisor's role as a facilitator was instrumental in getting everyone to agree on the direction.

### Plenary Reflection (5 min)

Ask: *“How would you handle a situation where a client says they don't have time for ‘visioning’ and just want to solve immediate problems?”* This question brings out the challenge of balancing urgent needs vs. strategic planning. Guide participants to consider that sometimes you might integrate strategic planning in small bites, or tie it to immediate concerns (for example- show how a clear strategy can actually solve some short-term issues by providing focus). **Methods Used:** Small-group visioning exercise, collaborative target-setting activity, short presentations with slides, and a real-case discussion. **Interactive element:** very high – participants actively create vision and goals in groups.

### Session 2 Wrap-up

Summarize that defining “Where do we want to go?” (vision) and “What do we want to achieve on the way?” (strategic targets) is the first phase of strategic support. Everything else (analysis, risk, implementation) builds on this foundation. Compliment the group on their creative visions. *“After lunch, we'll dive into tools that help us figure out how to reach those visions – starting with analysing the current situation and the environment (that's SWOT and trend analysis).”*

## Session 3: Strategic Analysis – SWOT and Trend Monitoring (13:30–15:00)

### Objective

Introduce and practice tools for analysing a business’s internal and external environment – primarily SWOT analysis – and integrate *trend monitoring* (scanning external trends via PESTEL or similar) into strategic planning. By the end, participants will be able to facilitate a SWOT analysis with a client, and guide them in identifying relevant external trends (opportunities/threats) that should inform their strategy. Participants will understand that analysis is a critical step before deciding on strategic actions.



### Presentation & Demo: SWOT Analysis (20 min):

Begin by explaining the SWOT framework: Strengths, Weaknesses (internal factors), Opportunities, Threats (external factors). Many may have heard of it, but clarify how to do it effectively for an agroforestry business. Show an example SWOT matrix on a slide for a hypothetical farm enterprise. For instance:

- **Strengths:** e.g. *diverse farm products, strong local brand, young and motivated team;*
- **Weaknesses:** e.g. *limited capital for investment, lack of machinery for tree management, little marketing experience;*
- **Opportunities:** e.g. *growing consumer interest in sustainable products, new agroforestry subsidies (policy support), availability of training programs;*
- **Threats:** e.g. *increasing droughts (climate risk), volatility in crop prices, potential new regulations/land use rules.*

Explain that the goal of SWOT is to honestly assess where the business stands internally and what’s happening externally. Advisors can prompt clients with questions in each category (e.g., “*What do you think you’re really good at? What feedback have you gotten?*” – for Strengths; “*What keeps you up at night?*” – for Threats). Mention that after mission and vision are defined, evaluating internal/external environment is the next step. Research suggests using SWOT alongside considering broader forces (economic, social, etc.) to get a full picture.

Introduce the idea of **PESTEL analysis** (**P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, **T**echnological, **E**nvironmental, **L**egal trends) as a tool advisors can use to brainstorm external factors that feed into SWOT’s Opportunities/Threats. For example, PESTEL would have them consider things like policy changes (CAP reforms), economic trends (market prices), social trends (consumer preferences for organic), tech (new agroforestry machinery), environmental (climate change patterns), legal (land tenure or zoning laws). Not every factor will apply, but it ensures they scan widely for trends.

**Show a quick demo:** Take one participant’s earlier example (maybe from Session 1 introductions where someone mentioned a strategy admiration) or a generic case, and as a whole group, populate a mini SWOT on flipchart. For instance, “*Let’s do a rapid SWOT for a hypothetical apple orchard with sheep farm adopting agroforestry.*” Ask the room for one example in each quadrant. This livens up the concept and shows how quick brainstorming can generate a useful SWOT draft.



### Activity – SWOT for a Case (30 min):

Now participants will practice facilitating a SWOT in small groups. Distribute a detailed case study handout (or slide) for analysis. For example: “**Sunrise Farm**” – a hypothetical mid-size farm in Italy that recently started planting walnut trees in wheat fields (agroforestry). The hypothetical farm profile can be changed to suit the particular audience, region or country. Give some thought to the farm type as you will be returning to it later. Provide background: farm size, products, some info like yields, market, climate issues, any recent events (maybe

a drought last year). The task: each group (4–5 people) acts as an advisory team conducting a SWOT analysis for Sunrise Farm’s strategic planning. In 20 minutes, they should identify at least 3 points in each SWOT category. Encourage them to also think of broader trends affecting the farm (hint: use PESTEL categories for O/T). Provide flipchart paper divided into four quadrants or a printed SWOT worksheet. Facilitators (trainers) move around to assist, prompting deeper thinking (e.g., “The case mentioned a new local walnut processing facility – could that be an opportunity?”). After 20 min, have each group share one interesting point they came up with, especially in Opportunities or Threats, since those relate to trends. Compile a combined SWOT on the board, noting commonalities.

**Debrief:** Discuss how different groups sometimes spot different factors – showing the value of diverse perspectives. Emphasize that in a real advisory situation, the advisor’s role is to *facilitate the client’s thinking*, maybe by asking questions or providing information about external trends they might not know. If a group missed a known threat (say, a pending regulation on water use), an advisor could bring that up. Discuss prioritization: SWOT lists can get long, but not all points are equal. Advisors can help clients focus on the most **strategic** items (e.g., high-impact weaknesses or highly likely threats).

**Tip for Success:** Ensure that during the exercise, one group do not get stuck only on internal factors or only external. Remind them to use both sides of the SWOT. Watch for any confusion between Strengths vs Opportunities, etc., and clarify. *Strengths and weaknesses are present-day/internal, opportunities and threats are future/external.*



### Activity- Trend Monitoring Discussion (10 min):

Dive a bit deeper into how to keep an eye on **trends** as part of strategic planning. Ask participants: “*What big trends do you think agroforestry businesses should watch over the next 5-10 years?*” Possible answers: climate change impacts, carbon markets, evolving EU agricultural policy, consumer demand for sustainable products, technological innovations (like remote sensing for tree growth), etc. Jot these on a flipchart. This is essentially practicing PESTEL thinking. Point out that good strategic advisors continuously monitor such trends and share relevant insights with their clients. Introduce the idea of doing a *simple trends report* or *opportunity/threat radar* annually for a business. Some advisors create summaries of key changes (for example: new grant opportunities = Opportunity, or emerging pest = Threat) and discuss them with clients. This can be an ongoing service offering. It helps businesses not to be surprised. Tie back to SWOT: these trend insights feed into updating the SWOT and strategy regularly.

Optionally mention tools: you can use online resources to stay updated (like EURAF news for policy, market price trackers, climate outlooks from meteorological services). Encourage participants to share any sources they use to keep up with agricultural or forestry trends. Share a case that shows how analysis could inform strategy.



### Example – SWOT Leads to New Opportunities (Ireland)

In Ireland, a small agroforestry enterprise (a fruit orchard with poultry grazing) was looking to expand income. With an advisor, they performed a SWOT analysis. Key findings:

**Strengths:** high-quality organic fruit, diversified income from eggs, strong local community support.

**Weaknesses:** limited processing facilities, no online presence.

**Opportunities:** growing local tourism trend, government grant for farm diversification, rising consumer interest in “*agroforestry experiences*.”

**Threats:** cheap imported fruit undercutting prices, frequent extreme wet weather affecting yields.

Through this analysis, the advisor helped the farmer realize they could leverage their strengths and opportunities by opening a small farm café and farm tour (agritourism) – turning the local tourism trend into an income source. They also decided to apply for the diversification grant to build a fruit drying facility (to process surplus fruit into chips and teas, addressing the weakness of no processing). These strategic initiatives



came directly from the SWOT insights. Two years later, the farm's revenue increased by 40%, partially thanks to agritourism and value-added products. Importantly, by monitoring policy and market trends, the advisor kept the farmer informed (e.g., alerting them when a new rural tourism marketing program started, which they joined to attract visitors).

**Key Takeaway:**

A thorough analysis can reveal “hidden” opportunities, and advisors help connect the dots from analysis to action.

**Session 3 wrap-up (5 min)**

Ask participants how they felt doing the SWOT as a group – what was easy or hard? Often, identifying weaknesses or threats can be uncomfortable. Emphasize advisors should create a safe, non-judgmental environment for clients in this process (for example: reassure that every business has weaknesses and that identifying them is a strength, not an embarrassment). End with the note: *“Now that we know how to analyse the situation, the next step is to consider risk more deeply, and then move towards deciding on actions.”*

**Methods Used:** Presentation with example, large group brainstorming, small group case analysis exercise (SWOT), trend brainstorming. **Interactive element:** high – group work and discussions ensure participants actively use the tools.

**Tip for Success:** *“Good strategy rests on good analysis.”* SWOT and trend analysis help businesses understand their context before jumping to decisions. As advisors, being systematic and bringing in external info is a big value-add. *Part of the analysis that's especially critical is identifying and assessing risks.*

## Session 4: Risk Assessment in Agroforestry Businesses (15:15–16:30)

### Objective

Introduce the concept of risk assessment within strategic planning and provide advisors with tools to help businesses identify and manage risks. By the end, participants will be able to facilitate a basic risk assessment, categorize different types of risks (e.g. production, market, financial, climate-related), and guide clients in developing risk mitigation strategies as part of their business plan. They will also appreciate the advisor's role in fostering risk-aware yet proactive decision-making (not fear-driven).



### Activity - Discussion Starter (10 min)

Ask the group: “What kinds of risks do agroforestry enterprises face that could derail their strategic goals?” List answers on flipchart. Likely responses: weather extremes (drought, storms), pest/disease outbreaks, market price drops, policy changes (e.g., subsidy removal), financial risks (debt, interest rate changes), labour availability, etc. Supplement with any missed ones – possibly categorize into:

**Production risks** (yield, pests, weather),

**Market risks** (prices, demand shifts),

**Financial risks** (cash flow, investment),

**Institutional/Legal risks** (policy, land tenure), and

**Human risks** (illness/injury of key people, labour issues).

This mirrors the known categories of farm risk management. The idea is to make sure participants consider a broad spectrum, not just natural risks.



### Presentation: Risk Assessment Basics (15 min)

Define risk in a planning context:

*Risk = the possibility of an event that could negatively (or positively) affect outcomes.* Emphasize that strategic planning is not complete without considering “What could go wrong?” and “How will we prepare or respond?” Introduce a simple tool: the **Risk Matrix** (likelihood vs impact). Show a slide with a 2x2 or 3x3 matrix and an example: “Severe drought” = high likelihood, high impact for a Mediterranean farm – top priority risk; “Equipment breakdown” = moderate likelihood, medium impact; etc. Advisors can help clients plot key risks on such a matrix to prioritize which ones need action. Mention **risk mitigation strategies**: avoid, reduce, transfer (insurance), or accept. Give a quick example for each:

*Avoid* – choosing not to plant a very frost-sensitive species in a frost-prone site;

*Reduce* – implementing irrigation to reduce drought risk;

*Transfer* – buying insurance or partnering to share risk;

*Accept* – acknowledging a minor risk and monitoring it.

Stress that not all risks can be eliminated, but having a plan can turn a crisis into a manageable event. Quote a relevant extension insight: Extension workers have a vital role in helping farmers reflect on and manage risks, meaning advisors should prompt clients to think about risks proactively. If available, share a statistic or factoid, e.g., “Studies show that farmers who plan for risks (diversification, insurance, etc.) have more stable incomes over time [fao.org](http://fao.org).”



Highlight **opportunity side of risk** – sometimes taking a calculated risk is needed to innovate. Advisors should help distinguish between reckless risk and strategic risk (calculated, with backup plans).



### **Activity- Case Study & Role Play – Risk Analysis Conversation (30 min):**

Organize a role-play activity to practice discussing risks with a client. Pair up participants. One plays an advisor, one the farmer/business owner. Give each pair a scenario (possibly continue with the “*Sunrise Farm*” case from Session 3 or a new short scenario that the participants can identify with). Example scenario: A chestnut silvopasture farm in Italy is planning to expand chestnut orchards. They have identified this as a key strategy for growth. But they face risks like unpredictable rain patterns (some years of drought), and dependence on a single buyer for their chestnut products.

The advisor’s task: in 10 minutes, talk with the “farmer” to identify at least 3 major risks to the plan and brainstorm ideas to manage them. The “farmer” (participant) can use a prompt sheet with a few personality/attitude notes (e.g., risk-averse or risk-taking stance) to make it interesting. After 10 minutes, swap roles if time permits with a different scenario or let some pairs share their experience.

After the role-play, debrief as a whole group (10 min): “*How easy or difficult was it for you (as the advisor) to get the farmer to talk about risks?*” and “*How did the farmer respond – were they defensive, open, surprised?*” This draws out how some clients might initially resist talking about negative possibilities, or conversely, some might be very anxious about risks. Discuss strategies to approach both types (for example: for resistant ones, frame risk talk as “*we want to ensure your plan succeeds under different conditions*”; for anxious ones, emphasize that planning reduces fear). Ask a pair or two to share a risk and mitigation idea they discussed.

For instance, the chestnut farm risk: drought – mitigation might be to invest in water storage or plant some drought-tolerant fodder trees as backup; single-buyer risk – mitigation by finding alternative buyers or developing on-farm processing to not rely on one buyer. Note how these mitigation actions might become part of the strategic plan (e.g., “*develop local direct sales for chestnut flour*” becomes a strategic action stemming from risk analysis).

**Tip for Success:** Walk around during role-play to ensure they stay on task. If a pair seems stuck, you can gently drop a hint in character (“*Farmer might be worried about...*”). After role-play, highlight positive behaviours observed, like good questions asked by advisors or empathetic listening.



### **Tool Practice – Risk Prioritization (10 min):**

Distribute a simple risk matrix template. Individually or in small groups, have participants take one of the scenarios or even their own real-life client example and jot down 4-5 risks on sticky notes, then place them on the matrix (if doing physically) or mark on paper. This quick exercise reinforces the concept of prioritizing risks. Then ask: “*Which one or two risks came out as highest priority in your matrix?*” and “*What is one action to address each?*” This reinforces making the link from assessment to action. Provide a brief example of a farm that may successfully navigate a major risk thanks to planning.



### **Example- Windbreaks as Risk Management (Netherlands):**

A Dutch agroforestry farm (mixed vegetables and trees) identified wind damage and soil erosion as a threat (after a storm devastated crops one year). With an advisor’s guidance, they made risk mitigation part of their strategy: planting tree windbreaks and diversifying crops. The strategic plan included establishing 3 rows of willow and alder as shelterbelts around fields within 2 years, and diversifying into at least 2 new crops to spread weather risk. Two years later, a severe storm hit the region. While neighbours’ monocrop fields suffered heavy



losses, the agroforestry farm had minimal damage – the windbreaks reduced storm impact and diverse crops meant some yields survived. Additionally, the farm saved on irrigation due to improved microclimate from trees. This case underlines how integrating risk management (tree windbreaks in this case) into the strategic plan built the farm's resilience.

**Key Takeaway:**

The advisor helped the farmer see that proactive investment (planting trees) would pay off by reducing future risk, which it did.

**Session 4 wrap-Up (5 min)**

Reinforce that discussing risk is a critical part of strategic advising. Advisors should ensure clients consider “*what if*” scenarios. It is not about scaring them, but about preparedness. Quote if appropriate: “*Hope for the best, plan for the worst.*” By thinking ahead, agroforestry businesses can weather setbacks and even turn some risks into opportunities (for example: climate change driving carbon farming incentives). End Day 1 on a positive note: strategic planning might seem a lot of work – vision, analysis, risk – but it arms businesses with knowledge and confidence. Encourage participants to reflect overnight on how they might apply these tools to their own context or a client they know. Assign a light reflection homework: for example, “*Think of a farm or project you work with. Jot down a draft SWOT or a couple of key strategic goals for them – something we can perhaps discuss tomorrow.*” This primes them for Day 2.

**Methods Used:** Brainstorming, mini-lecture with slides, paired role-play, interactive tool practice, and case example storytelling. **Interactive element:** high – especially with role-play engaging participants in advisor-client dialogue.



## Day 1 Wrap-Up & Reflection (16:30–16:45)

Thank participants for their active involvement. Remind everyone of the the next sessions and anticipate the upcoming topics: For example- “Tomorrow we’ll focus on how to communicate and implement these strategic plans – the best plan means little if it’s not well-communicated and executed. We’ll also tackle any remaining questions from today.”

**Tip for Success:** Do a quick round: ask each person to share *one insight or tool* from these sessions that they found most useful. This serves as informal feedback and reinforcement. Common answers might be “*I liked practicing the SWOT, it was eye-opening*” or “*Visioning can actually be fun, I was surprised.*” Acknowledge all inputs.

## Day 2: From Strategy to Action – Communication and Implementation

Day 2 builds upon the strategic plans and analyses from Day 1, shifting focus to *execution*: how advisors can support the implementation of strategies and the communication needed throughout the process. The day begins by addressing any reflections from Day 1 and a quick review. Then, a significant session on communication in strategic processes covers how to engage and align stakeholders (such as farm employees, cooperative members) with the strategy – a critical advisor skill. The afternoon sessions concentrate on turning strategy into concrete action plans, ensuring effective execution, and establishing a monitoring (controlling) mechanism to keep the strategy on track. Participants will learn tools for implementation planning (work plans, Gantt charts, responsibility matrices) and practice using them in scenarios. Finally, a capstone exercise will tie together the learning: participants will work on a mini strategic plan for a case and present it, allowing them to integrate vision, analysis, communication, and implementation elements. The day concludes with a knowledge quiz and an evaluation. By the end of Day 2, advisors should feel equipped not just to *plan* but to help *drive action* and *follow-through*, which is where many strategies succeed or fail.

### Schedule at a Glance (Day 2)

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 09:00–09:30 | Recap of Day 1 and Overview of Day 2                                      |
| 09:15–10:45 | Session 5: Communication Tools in the Strategy Process                    |
| 10:45–11:00 | Break   |
| 11:00–12:30 | Session 6: Action Planning – From Strategy to Implementation              |
| 12:30–13:30 | Lunch   |
| 13:30–15:00 | Session 7: Execution and Monitoring (Strategic Controlling)               |
| 15:00–15:15 | Break   |
| 15:15–16:15 | Session 8: Capstone Exercise – Strategic Plan Integration & Presentations |
| 16:15–16:45 | Quiz and Evaluation and Closing   |

### Recap of Day 1 and Overview of Day 2 (09:00–09:15)

Start with a quick energizer: for example, a short quiz question or poll: “Which strategic tool from yesterday do you anticipate using first in your work?” (Options: Visioning, SWOT, Risk matrix, etc. – participants can raise hands or use coloured cards for each). This reactivates their memory. Summarize Day 1 key points in 2-3 slides or a spoken narrative: *We talked about the importance of strategic planning, practiced setting a vision and goals, analysed a business with SWOT and trends, and considered risk.* Emphasize how those pieces feed into today: “Now we have a plan, how do we make it happen and get everyone engaged?”

Invite a couple of participants to share their reflection homework (if assigned). For instance, “*Maria, you mentioned you had a client in mind yesterday – what SWOT factor stood out for them?*” Keep this brief; it is mostly to show relevance and encourage application thinking. Give an overview of Day 2 agenda. Highlight that today is about **communication** and **implementation** – often the hardest part of making strategies reality. Mention the final capstone and quiz, so they know what is coming.

## Session 5: Communication Tools in the Strategy Process (09:15–10:45)

### Objective

Highlight the critical role of communication in successfully formulating and executing strategy, and equip participants with practical communication tools and techniques to use with clients and stakeholders. By the end, advisors will understand how to engage stakeholders through clear messaging, storytelling, and participatory communication methods, ensuring everyone involved in the business strategy is informed and motivated. They will practice crafting strategic messages and managing group communication (e.g., strategy meetings, announcements).



### Activity- Brainstorm & Input (10 min)

Pose a question: *“Who are the stakeholders that need to understand or be involved in a farm’s strategic plan?”* Write answers on a flipchart. Expected: the farm owner(s), family members, employees or farm workers, cooperative members (if co-op), investors or sponsors, customers (maybe indirectly), local community (if relevant), and partners (like extension services, etc.). This shows that strategy is not just in the head of the owner – communicating it to others is key for alignment. Highlight that even a single-family farm should ensure all family members involved know the plan; in larger groups, communication becomes even more crucial.

### Reflection- The Importance of Communication (5 min)

Reinforce with a quick fact or quote: *“Successful implementation of a strategic plan depends on communication that aligns everyone’s actions”*. Explain that poor communication can cause a strategy to fail even if it is a great plan – because people will not execute what they do not understand or buy into. Another quote: *“Effective communication is key to breaking down silos and engaging stakeholders around a common vision”*. Advisors often act as communication facilitators or translators, ensuring the message of the strategy is clear and compelling.



### Presentation: Communication Tools (15 min)

Introduce specific tools and approaches for strategic communication:

- **Vision/Mission Statements:** These can be displayed prominently (in farm office, on website) – a concise reminder of the strategic direction. Advisors can help craft these statements in plain language that everyone understands.
- **Strategy Map or Visual:** A one-page diagram that shows how the pieces of the strategy fit together (for example: a flowchart linking vision -> goals -> key initiatives). Show a simple example on a slide – perhaps a mock-up for an agroforestry business (vision at top, pillars or strategic objectives beneath, arrows to outcomes).
- **Stakeholder Meetings & Workshops:** Advisors might facilitate a meeting where the business owner presents the new strategy to staff or coop members. Techniques to use: start with a *story* (why this strategy matters *“Remember the drought last year? That inspired us to plant trees – our strategy is about resilience.”*), use charts or before/after visuals, and allow Q&A for buy-in.
- **Regular Communication Channels:** Encourage clients to have ongoing updates, for example: monthly meetings, newsletters, WhatsApp group updates – to report progress on strategic initiatives. Advisors can help set up these rhythms.

- **Elevator Pitch:** Teach clients (and practice ourselves) to explain their strategy in a few sentences for different audiences (such as what to tell a potential investor versus a neighbour about their plans).
- **Storytelling:** Emphasize translating dry goals into human stories. Instead of “*We aim to increase tree cover 20%*,” tell it as “*We’re planting orchards so that in 5 years our cows will graze under blossoms and we’ll have a new cider product – that’s our path to sustain this farm for our children.*” Advisors can draw out these narratives which resonate emotionally.

Mention the importance of **feedback loops**: communication is two-way. Stakeholders should be invited to give input or express concerns – strategy should be a living conversation, not a top-down decree. As a tool, advisors might use *surveys* or informal interviews to gather input from farmers, employees or coop members during strategy development.



### Activity – Crafting a Message (20 min)

Participants practice simplifying and communicating a strategy. Have each participant (or pairs) pick one of the strategic targets or initiatives from the earlier case (“Sunrise Farm” or their own example). Now, imagine they have to explain this part of the plan to a stakeholder in a compelling way. For instance, target: “*Plant 5 ha of agroforestry alley crops.*” How to communicate it? Perhaps as: “*We’re going to plant rows of walnut trees in our wheat field – this will protect the soil and in a few years provide extra income from nuts, making our farm more profitable and sustainable.*” Encourage them to use non-technical language and mention the *why*. Give 5 minutes to write a few sentences (this is the elevator pitch for that initiative). Then have a few volunteers present theirs as if addressing a stakeholder group. After each, discuss: was it clear and motivating? Refine together. This trains advisors to help clients articulate their strategy clearly.



### Presentation – Handling Difficult Conversations (15 min)

Discuss scenarios where strategic decisions might face resistance and how communication tools can help. For example: A cooperative decides to shift to organic practices as part of strategy, but some members resist due to short-term costs. How should the advisor guide the communication? Solicit quick ideas. Then outline a few tips:

- Use data and success stories: for example, share results from another farm that went organic and benefited, to persuade logically.
- Empathize and address concerns: “*I understand you worry about costs; here’s how we plan to manage them...*”
- Find champions: maybe a respected member who supports the strategy can co-present the plan (peer influence).
- Small group dialogues: break a big contentious meeting into small facilitated groups to let everyone voice thoughts (reducing open conflict).

Possibly role-play a micro-scenario: one trainer plays a sceptical stakeholder, and the other (or a volunteer participant) tries to communicate the strategy to them using some of these techniques. Keep it light but instructive.

**Tip For Success:** Remind participants that **listening** is the most powerful communication tool. Advisors should coach clients to listen to their team’s feedback. Also, mention that sometimes strategies need adjusting if communication reveals valid concerns – that’s okay; better to adjust early than to have silent pushback later.

Share a positive example where good communication can make a difference.

### Case Example – Engaging a Team through Communication (Italy)

An agroforestry start-up in Italy had a brilliant strategic plan to develop a new line of tree-based herbal products. However, initially the farm workers were not performing their tasks toward the new plan; some did not understand why they were suddenly asked to collect tree leaves in addition to regular duties. The owner, with an advisor's help, realized the strategy had not been well communicated. They organized a team meeting on the farm. The owner told the *story* of how he got the idea during a farm visit in France where tree herbs were selling well (making it relatable), explained the vision (*"if this works, it could increase our revenue and everyone's earnings"*), and showed a short video of the French farm successfully doing it. He invited questions, addressing concerns about workload by promising training and possibly hiring an additional seasonal worker during harvest. After this transparent communication, the workers became more engaged – some even suggested ideas to improve the process. Over the next year, productivity and morale improved, and the new product line launched successfully.

#### **Key Takeaway:**

Taking time to communicate the “why” and “how” of a strategic initiative with those who execute it can significantly improve implementation. Advisors can prompt business owners to not skip this human step and even facilitate these meetings to ensure clarity and inclusion.

**Wrap-up Thought:** Quote a proverb or saying, e.g., *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”* Tying it to strategy: a leader with a plan will “go far” only if they bring others along through good communication. Encourage advisors to use these tools to be that bridge for their clients.

**Methods Used:** Brainstorming, short lecture with slides, writing exercise (messaging), small role-play demonstration, and case study. **Interactive element:** high – especially the message-crafting where each participant practices simplifying strategy concepts.

### Session 5 Wrap-up

Reiterate that communication is not a one-off at the end of planning; it's woven throughout the strategic process – from gathering input, to announcing the plan, to updating on progress. “Next, we'll assume we have buy-in and understanding, and focus on turning that strategy into concrete actions – implementation time!”

## Session 6: Action Planning – From Strategy to Implementation (11:00–12:30)

### Objective

Provide advisors with frameworks and tools to help clients transform strategic objectives into an actionable plan. Participants will learn how to create implementation plans that specify *who does what and when*, and how to ensure resources are allocated. By the end, they should be able to guide a client in developing an action plan (for example: a timeline or Gantt chart, task list) for at least one strategic initiative, and understand how to set up checkpoints to keep things on track.



#### Presentation: From Goals to Actions (10 min)

Connect the dots: We have a vision and strategic targets (from Day 1), we analysed and communicated. Now, *implementation planning* is about breaking down each strategic target or initiative into tasks. Introduce the concept of an **Action Plan** – typically includes *activities, timeline, responsibilities, and required resources*. Show an example format on a slide or flipchart:

- Goal/Initiative: “Establish 5 ha of silvopasture by 2026.”
- Activities: “Design field layout (by Aug 2025)”, “Source tree saplings (Sept 2025)”, “Prepare land (Oct 2025)”, “Plant trees (Nov 2025)”, “Install fencing (Dec 2025)”, “Train staff on tree care (Early 2026)”.
- For each activity: who is responsible (assign owner), when (deadline or duration), and what resources needed (budget, tools, help from extension, etc.).
- Possibly show a Gantt chart snippet illustrating these tasks over a timeline for visual effect.

Emphasize that an advisor can facilitate this breakdown by asking guiding questions: “*What steps are needed? In what order? Who will do each? How long and how much might it cost?*” This detail is crucial to move from idea to execution.



#### Presentation, Tool Highlight – Gantt Chart & Work Plan (5 min)

Briefly explain tools like Gantt charts (timeline charts) or even simple calendars to schedule actions. While not every farmer will want a formal Gantt chart, the advisor can use simplified versions. For small operations, even a whiteboard with tasks by month can serve. The key is scheduling and assigning responsibility. Mention creating a *budget* for the strategic plan if relevant (some actions require investment – planning those finances is part of implementation readiness).



#### Activity – Action Planning Practice (30 min)

Return to the case from earlier (Sunrise Farm or another example everyone knows by now). Say one of their strategic targets was “*Develop a new agroforestry product line within 2 years*” (for example: mushroom cultivation under trees). Each group (4–5 people) will create a mini action plan for this. Provide a handout template or flipchart with columns: Activity, Person Responsible, Timeline, Resources.

Groups have to come up with at least 5 key activities to make that happen (such as research mushroom market, training on mushroom growing, procure spawn, trial on small scale, marketing plan, etc.), assign roles (maybe roles like farmer, spouse, hired help, advisor), and a rough timeline. After 20 minutes, have each group quickly report one interesting activity they listed and any challenges they foresee scheduling it.

**Debrief:** Acknowledge that coming up with tasks is usually straightforward, but estimating time and assigning roles can be tricky – especially if the client is already busy. That is where prioritization and maybe phasing comes

in (advisors can help decide what can be done this year vs next). Discuss resource constraints: did anyone include “Budget X amount” as an activity? It might be necessary to plan financing.

**Tip for Success:** Encourage groups to think of at least one *monitoring* activity in their plan (like “*review progress after first season*” or “*check tree survival rate next year and adjust plan*”), anticipating the next session on monitoring. If no group mentions it, bring it up in debrief.

### **Group Discussion - Overcoming Implementation Barriers (10 min)**

Lead an open discussion on common reasons strategic plans fail in implementation and how to overcome them. Possible points (obtain from participants and add):

- People get busy and revert to “*business as usual*” – to counter, integrate plan tasks into regular farm schedule and set check-ins (advisor can schedule follow-up visits).
- Lack of skills for new tasks – plan training as part of the strategy (for example: if introducing a new crop, include an activity “*attend workshop on X*”).
- Financial shortfall – maybe the plan assumed funding that did not come; have contingency actions or scale down rather than drop the goal entirely.
- Changing conditions – drought, market crash, etc. – build flexibility (“*If not able to plant in spring, do in fall*”; or maintain a cash reserve).
- Loss of motivation – celebrate small wins to keep morale, keep the vision visible (literally put a picture of the future state on the wall), advisors can act as accountability partners with periodic encouragement calls or visits.

As each barrier is mentioned, ask if anyone has seen that happen, and what was done. This grounds advice in real experience. Provide a concise example where good implementation planning can make a difference.

### **Case Example - Step-by-Step Execution (Belgium)**

A Belgian agroforestry initiative aimed to transition a conventional farm to an agroforestry demonstration site within 3 years. The advisor helped the farmer create a detailed implementation plan, including a timeline for each field to be converted, training apprentices to help (addressing labour needs), and quarterly progress meetings with the local advisory service.

Because of this clear plan, the farmer knew exactly what needed doing each season and could prepare in advance (e.g., ordering trees a season early, scheduling machinery). When minor setbacks occurred (one tree supplier delay), they adjusted the timeline easily because everything was laid out. By year 3, they had achieved 90% of their milestones and opened the demo site on time. In contrast, a neighbouring farm tried a similar transition without a formal plan and faced delays and confusion, ultimately taking two extra years.

#### **Key Takeaway:**

The structured plan (and advisor’s regular check-ins) kept the project on schedule. It shows how “*planning the work and working the plan*” with an advisor’s support leads to timely results.

### **Group Discussion - Action Plan Gallery (10 min, if time allows)**

If possible, tape the groups’ flipchart action plans on the wall as a “gallery”. Let everyone walk around briefly to see each other’s work during a short break or moving period. This can spark additional ideas as they compare approaches. You can highlight a neat idea from one group (“*Look, they even planned a farm open-day event as part of implementation to engage community – that’s a great idea!*”).



**Methods Used:** Short presentation, hands-on group planning exercise, guided discussion, and sharing of examples. **Interactive element:** high – they actively create an action plan and discuss barriers.

### Session 6 Wrap-up

Summarize that an advisor's job is to make sure the great ideas actually happen on the ground. With solid action planning, the strategy becomes tangible. Encourage participants to use templates provided (like the action plan worksheet) with their clients. Now lead into the next session: "*We've got the plan and started implementation – how do we ensure it stays on track and adapt as needed? That's our next focus: monitoring and controlling the strategy.*"

## Session 7: Execution and Monitoring (Strategic Controlling) (13:30–15:00)

### Objective

Introduce the concept of strategic monitoring and controlling – in other words, tracking progress and making adjustments during execution. Advisors will learn how to set up simple monitoring systems (KPIs, periodic reviews) for strategic plans and how to facilitate adaptive management. By the end, participants should be able to help a client define a few key performance indicators for their strategy, run a strategy review meeting, and understand the cycle of revisiting and updating the strategic plan.



### Presentation - Definition and Rationale (5 min):

Explain that *strategic controlling* does not mean “controlling people,” but controlling in the sense of monitoring and steering. It is about checking: Are we doing what we said? Is it producing results? Do we need to change anything? Use a metaphor: It is like navigation – you set a course (strategy), but on the journey you check the compass/GPS and weather, and sometimes correct course. Without monitoring, a strategy can drift off target or become outdated.

### Setting KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) (10 min)

Introduce the idea of metrics for strategy. These are measurable signs of progress or success, linked to the goals. For example, if a goal was increase income by 20%, a KPI is annual farm profit or revenue growth rate. If goal was plant 5,000 trees, KPI is number of trees planted per quarter. Not every goal is purely numeric (“*improve soil health*”), but then find proxies (soil organic matter % or earthworm count). Advisors can help identify and track KPIs. Show 1-2 examples on slides:

- Strategic Goal -> KPI -> Target Value -> Actual (to date).
- For example: “*Shade trees on pasture -> % of paddocks with shade structures -> target 100% by 2025 -> currently 60%*”. Emphasize keeping the number of KPIs manageable (maybe 5 or so for a small business) and aligning them with what actually matters to success. These indicators should be reviewed regularly.



### Activity – Pick the KPI (15 min)

In pairs, have participants look at a strategic goal from earlier exercises and come up with one possible KPI to measure it, from Green Acres coop’s targets or Sunrise Farm’s plan, for instance.

Goal: “Increase biodiversity on farm” -> KPI could be “bird species count on farm” or “insect pollinator index.” Have a few pairs share their KPI ideas. Discuss: is the KPI easily measurable? (If not, refine it). This trains them to think in terms of measurable outcomes.



### Presentation - Monitoring Schedule & Methods (10 min)

Advise on how often to monitor. Many small businesses might do a formal review annually, but advisors can suggest quarterly check-ins for key actions, or even simple monthly progress notes. Tools: Could be as informal as a journal or Excel sheet, or as structured as project management software for larger projects. The advisor might set up quarterly meetings with the client to review the action plan status (what is done, what work is falling behind), look at KPI data, and discuss any changes needed. This is a chance to celebrate progress or identify bottlenecks. Encourage involving team members in these reviews if possible (to maintain buy-in and transparency).



Mention that monitoring also ties back to communication: sharing progress with stakeholders keeps them engaged (for example: a co-operative board gets a quarterly strategy update). It ties back to motivation – seeing progress builds momentum, and seeing shortfalls early allows problem-solving rather than blame later.

### Adaptive Management (10 min)

Explain that strategies are not set in stone; they may need adjusting as conditions change or if assumptions were off. Advisors should cultivate with clients a mindset that *changing the plan is okay if done thoughtfully*. Provide a short example: Suppose a farm's strategy included planting a new crop, but after a trial, results are poor or market prices crashed – rather than stubbornly continuing, a strategic pivot might be to try a different crop or approach. The vision can remain, but paths to it may change. This is not failure; this is learning. Advisors can facilitate a mid-course correction meeting. Perhaps introduce a simple structure for such reflection: What's working? What's not? What have we learned? What needs to change in the plan?

### Group Discussion – Advisor's Role in Execution (10 min):

Ask, “*How involved should an advisor be during execution? Where's the line?*” Some participants might worry about doing too much versus leaving client to it. Discuss that the advisor is *not* there to do all the work, but to be a coach on the side: check in, offer advice if new problems arise, connect to resources if needed (e.g., “*you need a marketing expert now, I can help find one*”), and hold the client accountable in a supportive way (“*you said you'd finish X by June, how is that progressing?*”). Sometimes advisors can organize peer exchanges, bringing farm clients together to share how their strategies are going, which can spark solutions and encouragement.

Mention if available: some advisors use formal agreements or MOU with clients for a strategic planning service, which includes follow-up meetings. But even informal, it's good to set expectations: “*I will visit quarterly to see how things are progressing, and I'm available by phone if issues come up.*” Provide a short story of the benefits of strategy adaptation.

### Case Example – Mid-course Correction (Germany)

A German agroforestry enterprise set out a 5-year strategy to transition from conventional to organic and add agroforestry. Midway, they hit a snag: after converting 50% of land to organic, a new pest (brown marmorated stink bug) started affecting their tree fruits, causing losses. The original plan had not accounted for this pest (a new threat).

In a yearly strategy review meeting with their advisor, they decided to adjust course: they slowed down the remaining conversion (to focus on pest control research) and applied for a new government integrated pest management program (opportunity) that became available. They also changed one strategic target (instead of expanding fruit production as originally planned, they diversified with some timber trees less susceptible to pests).

These changes were documented in an updated strategy document. The following year, with better pest control and diversified crops, they were back on track, albeit with a modified strategy. If they had rigidly stuck to the old plan, they might have gone bankrupt; adaptation saved the business.

#### Key Takeaway:

Regular monitoring and willingness to adapt are keys to long-term strategic success; advisors help in recognizing when and how to pivot.

### Final Thoughts on Monitoring (5 min)

Summarize key points: choose a few meaningful indicators, set a regular review schedule, celebrate wins, and be ready to adjust. Use another metaphor or analogy: “*Strategic planning is a marathon, not a sprint – and you need mile markers and water stations (KPIs and check-ins) along the way to finish strong.*” Encourage advisors to build



follow-up into their service – it might even be an opportunity for ongoing engagement (and possibly new business for them as consultants).

**Methods Used:** Short presentations, Q&A, pair exercise on KPIs, discussion. **Interactive element:** moderate – less hands-on than earlier sessions but still engaging through questions and sharing experiences.

### Session 7 Wrap-up

“We’ve now covered the full cycle: vision to implementation to monitoring and adjustment. In our final session, we are going to tie it all together in a capstone exercise where you get to be the advisor and develop a mini strategic plan, applying everything from the two days. This will solidify your learning by practice.”

## Session 8: Capstone Exercise – Strategic Plan Integration & Presentations (15:15–16:15)

### Objective

Allow participants to integrate and apply the concepts and tools from the entire training in a realistic scenario. In groups, they will simulate working with a client to produce a strategic plan outline (vision, analysis highlights, key strategies, implementation steps) and present their recommendations. This consolidates learning and builds confidence in using the toolkit in real life. By the end, participants will have a concrete example of a strategic planning process they have developed collaboratively, and they will have received feedback on it.



### Activity – Group Strategic Planning Simulation (30 min)

Form new groups of about 4 (mix participants so they get to work with different people than earlier if possible). Present a **comprehensive case scenario** that includes rich details. For example: **“EuroAgro Forestry Ltd.”** – a mid-sized diversified farm business in a non-specific EU country. Provide a handout or slide with: background of the business (crops and livestock, current agroforestry practices or lack thereof), the people involved, some financial info, external environment notes (e.g. local market info, climate, community relations), and a stated problem or opportunity (e.g., they are considering a big change like transitioning to agroforestry or expanding processing, and need a strategy).

- For instance: EuroAgro Forestry Ltd is in France, run by two brothers; they grow cereals and raise poultry, with some hedgerows. They are interested in silvoarable systems and value-added products. Challenges: grain prices fluctuating, farm succession unclear, community pressure for more eco-friendly farming, etc. They have contacted an advisor to help make a 5-year strategy that ensures profitability and environmental sustainability.

**Task:** Each group is the advisory team. In **30 minutes**, outline a strategic plan for this business. Specifically, they should produce:

1. **Vision statement** for the business (long-term goal/mission).
2. 2–3 **Strategic objectives/targets** (SMART) for the next 3–5 years.
3. A brief **SWOT analysis** (at least one point per quadrant) or identification of key Strengths, Opportunities, etc. that justify their strategy.
4. 2–3 **Strategic initiatives** or actions they recommend (the main components of the strategy to reach the objectives). These should link to the SWOT (e.g., use a strength to capitalize on an opportunity, or mitigate a weakness/threat).
5. At least 2 **risk factors** to watch and ideas to mitigate them.
6. 1–2 sentences on **how they would communicate** this strategy to the farm’s stakeholders (such as *“We will hold a family meeting and create a simple one-page summary to share with the co-op”*).
7. 2–3 key **implementation steps** with who/when (does not need full plan due to time, just major next steps).

They can use flipchart or large paper to write these points in a structured way (like a mini strategic plan on one page). Emphasize to focus on applying concepts, not writing an essay. The format can be bullet points. It is acceptable if some parts are hypothetical – it is about the thought process.

### Presentation (15 min)

Each group gets about 3 minutes to present their strategic plan highlights to the room as if they are pitching their advisory recommendations to the farm owners (and perhaps other stakeholders). Encourage creativity in



presentation – even role-play as consultants if they wish. They should cover the 6 items above succinctly. The trainer (and group) acts as the farm/client listening. After each presentation, allow 2 minutes for the “audience” to ask one question or give one positive comment. As a trainer, ask a question if needed like, “*How did your SWOT inform the initiative on agro-tourism?*” to prompt them to explain their reasoning, which reinforces learning.

### **Feedback & Synthesis (10 min)**

After all presentations, congratulate them – they practically drafted a strategic plan in a short time! Highlight common themes or particularly good ideas each group had. For instance, Group A had a strong vision, Group B identified a critical threat and addressed it well, Group C’s initiatives were very innovative, etc. This reinforces key points by example. Point out the diversity of strategies – there is no single right answer, but they all practiced a structured approach.

Link back to learning objectives: “*You’ve just demonstrated you can guide vision, do SWOT, plan actions, consider risk, and think about communication. That’s exactly what we aimed for!*” This helps them see their progress in concrete output.

**Case Wrap-up:** If this were a real client, the advisor would now refine this plan with the client’s input and then support implementation as we discussed.

**Methods Used:** Team project, presentation, peer feedback. **Interactive element:** very high – culmination of all participation.

**Tip For Success:** Ensure the atmosphere is supportive, not overly critical. The point is to practice integration. Any major gap (like if a group forgot to mention any threats) can be noted as something to remember. However, focus on positive reinforcement.

## Quiz and Evaluation and Closing (16:15–16:45)

### Knowledge Quiz (10 min)

Distribute a short quiz or conduct it verbally. This assesses key takeaways and reinforces learning in a fun way. For example, a mix of multiple-choice and short answer:

1. *Which of the following is an external factor in SWOT? (a) Farm's soil quality, (b) Farmer's knowledge, (c) Market price of products, (d) Equipment condition.*

**Answer:** (c) Market price (external opportunity/threat) – (a), (b), (d) are internal. (This tests understanding of SWOT internal vs external).

2. *What does SMART stand for in goal setting?*

**Answer:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

3. *Name one method to identify opportunities and threats in the business environment. **Answer:** PESTEL analysis (scanning Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal factors). Other acceptable: market research, trend analysis.*

4. *Give one example of a risk mitigation strategy for weather risk in agroforestry. **Answer:** Possible answers – irrigation system to mitigate drought, diversifying crops/species to avoid total loss, insurance coverage for crop failure, planting windbreaks to reduce storm damage.*

5. *True or False: A strategic plan should never be changed once it is in implementation. **Answer:** False – it should be reviewed and can be adapted if conditions change.*

6. *What is one key reason to communicate a strategic plan to all farm staff or cooperative members?*

**Answer:** To ensure everyone understands the vision and their role in it, gaining buy-in and coordinated action. It aligns efforts and improves implementation success.

7. *As an advisor, list one good question to ask when helping a client formulate a vision. **Answer:** Example: "What do you want your farm/business to look like in 10 years?" or "What impact do you want to have on your community/environment in the long run?"*

8. *Which tool would you use to organize the timeline of activities for implementing a strategy?*

**Answer:** A Gantt chart or an action plan schedule.

9. *How can advisors involve stakeholders in the strategy process?*

**Answer:** By facilitating stakeholder workshops, seeking input through meetings or surveys, using participatory decision-making tools, and maintaining open communication channels throughout the process.

10. *What does SWOT stand for and why is it useful?*

**Answer:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats – it's a tool to assess internal and external factors affecting the business, helping to inform strategy by leveraging strengths/opportunities and addressing weaknesses/threats.

(Reward correct answers with a simple praise or perhaps a small prize if available to make it fun, depending on your budget!)



### Participant Evaluation (5 min)

Encourage participants to share feedback on the workshop and what they plan to do next with their new skills. Perhaps ask verbally: *“What is one thing you will do differently in your advisory work after this training?”* to get a few responses.

### Closing (10 min)

Thank the advisor participants for their engagement. Reiterate the importance of their role: *“By helping businesses think and act strategically, you’re multiplying the impact of agroforestry – making these operations more resilient, innovative, and successful. You are key players in the sustainable future of agriculture.”* Provide any final resources (the reference list, toolkit links). Hand out certificates of completion if appropriate. End on an encouraging note: offer ongoing support (maybe through a network or email group – for example: *“We’ll add you all to an advisors network where you can continue sharing experiences. Encourage to engage with the AF4EU website”*).

**Tip for Success:** It is always advisable to close with a call to action, for example: *“Strategy is not about predicting the future, it’s about preparing for the future. As advisors, you’re giving farmers the tools to prepare for whatever comes and to create the future they want.”*

## Conclusion for Extension Advisors

- This module has explored how agroforestry advisors can support businesses in developing and implementing effective strategies. From shaping a clear vision and setting strategic targets, to analysing the business environment, managing risks, and supporting implementation, participants have engaged with practical tools and real-world examples to strengthen their advisory approach.
- A key message throughout is the importance of the advisor as a facilitator—guiding the process, engaging stakeholders, and enabling clients to make informed decisions about their future. Strategic planning is not a one-off activity, but an ongoing cycle of reflection, action, and adaptation. Strong communication, participatory approaches, and regular monitoring are essential to ensure strategies remain relevant and effective.
- By applying these tools and approaches, advisors can help agroforestry businesses become more resilient, innovative, and better prepared to respond to changing conditions. The skills developed in this module contribute to strengthening both individual enterprises and the wider agroforestry sector



## References and Further Reading (Open Access)

**Agroforestry Business Model Innovation Network (AF4EU)** – Available via <https://af4eu.eu/> Provides insights into business planning and network approaches for agroforestry enterprises across partner countries. Includes toolkits and case studies demonstrating strategic development in agroforestry businesses, which can serve as references or inspiration for advisors.

Rivera Nieblas, O. (2022). *The Importance of Strategic Planning in SMEs*. (Thesis, National College of Ireland). – Illustrates how strategic planning unites teams around common objectives and provides direction for long-term success [norma.ncirl.ie](https://norma.ncirl.ie/norma.ncirl.ie).

FAO Farm Management Extension Guide: Strategic Planning – *Chapter on SWOT Analysis & Visioning*. Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019. – Offers guidelines on helping farmers set goals and assess internal/external factors in their farm business (includes participatory tools for SWOT and visioning) [norma.ncirl.ie](https://norma.ncirl.ie).

Kahan, D. (2012). *Entrepreneurship in Farming* (Farm Management Extension Guide 5). FAO. – Contains sections on business planning, risk management, and the role of extension advisors in farm strategy. Emphasizes the importance of risk [fao.org](https://fao.org).

ClearPoint Strategy. (2021). *Effective Strategic Plan Communication for Success*. – Describes methods to communicate strategy effectively within an organization, noting that aligning stakeholders through clear messaging is crucial for implementation [blog.hague.co.nz](https://blog.hague.co.nz).

Achieveit. (2020). *Strategy Implementation: Turning Plans into Action*. – Explains steps to execute strategy, highlighting the need for assigning responsibilities, setting timelines, and monitoring progress [achieveit.com](https://achieveit.com). Provides tips on keeping teams accountable and adaptive.

Agroforestry Network (AFINET). (2018). *AFINET Practice Abstracts & Case Studies*. – Collection of European agroforestry case studies where innovation and strategic development were key. Open-access summaries available at [agroforestry.eu](https://agroforestry.eu) showcase practical examples of farmers adopting new strategies (e.g., diversifying products, forming networks) with advisor support <https://agroforestry.net.eu/afinet>

European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF) Newsletter. (2023). *Special Issue on Agroforestry Business Models*. – Contains articles on emerging market opportunities, policy incentives, and trends in agroforestry across Europe. A good resource for advisors to stay updated on external trends and opportunities (e.g., carbon credits, new grants) relevant to strategic planning.

Klerkx, L., & Rose, D. (2020). *Dealing with the game-changing technologies of Agriculture 4.0: How do we manage diversity and responsibility in networked innovation systems?* – NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences, 90-91, 100314. Open-access article discussing how advisors and innovation networks help farmers adapt to new trends and technologies – useful context for trend monitoring and adapting strategies in farming.

USDA Extension Risk Management Education. (n.d.). *Risk Management Checklist for Farmers*. – A publicly available checklist that helps identify common risks in farming and suggested mitigation actions, useful as a tool for advisors during risk assessment.



*These resources complement the training, offering deeper dives into certain topics and real-world examples that advisors can learn from.*

#### OUTCOMES OF THE COURSE MODULE

- Skills to guide visioning and strategic goal setting
- Ability to conduct SWOT, PESTEL, and risk analysis
- Tools to support implementation and monitor progress
- Confidence to act as a strategic facilitator for farm businesses

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