

# “TREES IN THE FIELD” AS A SELLING ARGUMENT

Getting higher value for agroforestry products through dedicated marketing



## THE WHAT AND WHY

### Using agroforestry as a differentiation argument to get better market penetration and price

Agroforestry, being still a marginal form of farming nowadays in France, is not yet well-known by the consumers. However, we now know that this way of producing food, combined with a global agroecological approach, leads to more sustainable systems. Agroforestry goes beyond simple food production, providing ecological and social services. Various studies also suggest that those changes in practices tend to lead to higher quality products (taste and nutrition), improving the health and pleasure of the consumers.

Taking into account these characteristics, agroforestry products can be marketed as such, so as to provide added

value for the farmers and, probably as important, raise awareness among the wider audience. Some producers have already taken this opportunity and added to their marketing strategy an adapted story-telling to explain and display their practices. Today, a significant part of the market share is occupied by educated and increasingly demanding consumers who look for quality and meaningful purchases. This is a clear opportunity for agroforestry products that, if well-marketed, can comply with both expectations. In France, this marketing trend is adopted by both individual farms and the larger food value chain.



Ducks browsing shrubs at Péres family farm, Gers, France.  
Source: fermedelapattedoie.fr



Example of two labels using agroforestry as a marketing argument in pig systems.

Source: noirdebigrorre.com and gascondemontaut.fr

## HOW IS THE CHALLENGE ADDRESSED

### Taking advantage of agroforestry and put its services forth

The Péres family are French farmers producing ducks in Gers, an area that is well-known for its famous foie gras, a delicacy valued all over the world. However, the products from **La Ferme de la Patte d'Oie** are not like all the other ones: they come from a full-agroforestry environment with a long-term strategy of reintegrating trees in the farming landscape. The family planted wild cherry, walnut, linden, ash and many other species on their 20 ha of free-range plots, and circled them with diversified hedges. They did so to improve a lot of aspects of their business, but what they tirelessly repeat is that the presence of trees on the farm truly increases the global quality and value of their products. As Philippe Péres says himself: *“It is undeniable, products from agroforestry systems have better nutritional quality and taste. Yes they are ducks, but agroforestry ducks!”*. These practices are a real advantage that customers highly value, whether at farmers' markets or directly at the farm shop.

The marketing potential of trees on farms and agroforestry can

also be used at a value chain level. As an example, the **Porc Noir de Bigorre** (Bigorre Black Pig) quality label is a French initiative that began 40 years ago to save a traditional breed of pig from the South West of France. It is known to provide quality meat (with higher content in omega 3, for example) although with a lower productivity than many modern breeds as it requires free-range extensive systems. In 1981, there were only 34 individuals of that breed remaining, with less than 20 small-breeders still active. Nowadays, the whole value chain has been restructured with 60 breeders and an annual production of more than 7,500 pigs. It has also officially been recognized as a quality scheme in 2004 and is now a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) label. The whole marketing strategy behind this success is based on the extensivity and naturality of the production system, with agroforestry being one of the key elements. Today the *Porc Noir de Bigorre* is a true ambassador of a more sustainable and less intensive animal husbandry.



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Agroforestry can be a selling argument and help differentiate products on the market.
- Today a significant share of the consumers demand more sustainable and meaningful food products, which is an opportunity for agroforestry farmers.
- Story-telling needs to be clear and easy to understand since agroforestry is still little known by the consumers.
- A lot of quality labels are now existing on the market, so it is important to get fully involved in raising awareness and popularizing the sustainable practices behind agroforestry, rather than just relying on a label.



The Bigorre Black Pig has now become a symbol for high-value agroforestry systems in France.

Source: porcnoir.fr

## FURTHER INFORMATION

<sup>1</sup>2018 annual report of the evolution of the organic market in (in French)

More information on the Bigorre Black Pig label initiative (in French): [www.noirdebigorre.com](http://www.noirdebigorre.com) and [www.porcnoir.fr](http://www.porcnoir.fr)

Information on French agroforestry products (in French): *Les produits agroforestiers, des paysages à déguster des valeurs à partager*, 2015, Arbre & Paysage 32.

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## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

### Getting a better product differentiation and stimulate interest, but avoiding confusion

Taking the example of the organic market in France, with a double-digit growth every year (+15.7% in 2018 reaching 9.7 million euros<sup>1</sup>), it is clear that an ever growing portion of the consumers are moving toward more sustainable and meaningful products. More generally, an efficient story-telling can bring more to the consumers than just the benefits of the product. It helps them understand how the product was made and feel closer to the producer. These two factors are key to differentiate one's product, an important advantage in nowadays market, flooded with homogenized goods.

However, these past few years, numerous labels appeared on the market, official and unofficial, bringing some confusion and scepticism to the consumer's mind. Creating an official "agroforestry" label does not seem realistic and could even be ineffective. Agroforestry gathers a whole range of practices to be adapted to each context, and setting fixed technical specifications could make no sense to promote sustainable development on the field.

Only a consistent and clear marketing strategy involving all the actors of the value chains can have good results for a large scale change, together with individual approaches using the direct sale channel.



watch video

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