

## CONTRIBUTION TO PEFC INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION ON CERTIFICATION OF TREES OUTSIDE FOREST

SYNTHESIS OF FRENCH POSITIONS

---

*Trees outside forests are mainly represented by agroforestry systems (hedges, isolated trees, alignments, intra-plot plantations). These trees cover an area of nearly 2 million hectares in France (16 million in the forest).*

*The PEFC International proposal to open a forum for the certification of these trees joins the demands of an increasing number of farmers for the establishment of a certification tool to manage their hedges, so that they can access certain markets, mainly wood energy, with a sustainable management approach.*

This paper contains some proposals for the development of a sustainable management framework and its certification.

---

**Contributors** : *Fabien Balaguer (French association of agroforestry), Olivier Billeau (PEFC-Wester France), Lucie Collin (cooperative “grovegenesis” and « Coat Nerzh Breizh » - brittany) Philippe Guillet (French chamber of agriculture in Sarthe), Yousri Hannachi (French chamber of agriculture in Paris), Séverin Lavoyer (French association of agroforestry), François Lefevre (France Nature Environnement), Catherine Moret (Association of watershed engineers), Laurent Nevoux (cooperative “grove energy”), Mathieu Rebendenne (French chamber of agriculture in Sarthe), Isabelle Senegas (French chamber of agriculture in Ille-et-Vilaine).*

*Contribution based on three meetings in France, from September 2014 to November 2015 (around 40 participants).*

## 1. BACKGROUND, EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATION

The hedgerows were steadily created until the first part of the twentieth century, originally as barriers, property boundaries and for firewood supply. Gradually disused, especially after the Second World War, hedgerow landscapes were profoundly rearranged and numerous hedges were removed.

The hedges are still widely used for energy. This value as firewood still represents the vast majority of volumes produced in hedgerows: heating in private homes with firewood is resurging in recent years, creating additional demand.

Meanwhile, the shredded wood industry has emerged since the late 90s. In France, forest covers 31% of the country and is under-exploited, mainly because of the fragmentation of private forests. This fragmentation and the geographical context mean that each year only 60% of the growth is harvested. This is similar in the case of hedgerows. Short supply chains and small boiler room offer new technical solutions to exploit untapped resources. The state, regions, departments and local authorities financed and launched biomass boiler rooms in France, creating a large demand for wood, in a very short time. Farmers with hedgerows found a new outlet for what had long been, for some, an unrealisable asset.

This new market has also attracted new companies, mostly civil works companies, who offer all-inclusive packages (felling, shredding and skidding) at attractive prices, but without any guarantee of sustainable management (some projects akin to looting). Numerous cases of unsustainable management took place, destructive for groves and hedgerows (alerts raised by environmental associations or local press). This unsustainable management also puts the PEFC brand in jeopardy since some PEFC-certified companies become operators outside their certified forests, where PEFC rules do not apply.

Moreover, traceability of the grove wood industry is also a challenge for its credibility. Today, there is no way to verify the long term sustainability of the management of the grove. Supply chain actors, who are willingly engaged in sustainable management of these trees outside forests, want to set themselves apart as sustainable managers, and benefit from this point of difference in the coming years.

Meanwhile, in recent decades, many environmental and social functions of hedges were recognised. Trees in rural areas are valued for a number of factors: attractiveness of the landscape, living environment, water quality, retention of topsoil, preservation of biodiversity, etc. These positive externalities provided by hedgerows and groves should be recognised in the product sold. Consumer awareness is growing.

Widely installed in France, sustainable forest management labels (PEFC, FSC) guarantee on the one hand the sustainable management of forests and also ensure traceability of wood

from these forests. These labels are so well established that they have become, over the years specific elements for local authorities that want to source sustainable timber, resulting from sustainable management. Figures coming from the French Ministry of Agriculture indicate that the French certified area represents 8,000,000 hectares (including overseas departments) in 2014 only for the PEFC label. Integration of agroforestry systems is interesting: a sustainable management label for hedgerows and grove, well-constructed, could have the same impact on grove wood buyers.

Since 2006, state and local authorities have ambitious objectives to integrate sustainable development in their purchases (to limit greenhouse gas emissions). Thus, project calls for the supply of wood for public buildings boiler (schools, town halls ...) incorporate elements of sustainable development in three forms: a part of environmental clauses, a minimum rate of CO2 emission or the explicit mention of "sustainability" of the wood (PEFC, FSC).

To date, no tool allows the customers (once one leaves the forest) to separate the products of responsible and sustainable exploitation, from other products. The wood from the grove, the hedgerows or agroforestry systems can show its durability and sustainable management with, for the best, charters of good practices. **Yet these charters do not guarantee anything more than an intention** for sustainable management of hedgerows since no control is planned or made. The trees outside forests managers (*i.e.* farmers) have no tool to ensure sustainable management from upstream to downstream activities; it's therefore more and more regularly impossible for them to respond to local authorities' project calls for their supply of local wood.

French motivations for the establishment of a sustainable management certification system of agroforestry systems (hedgerows, groves, agroforestry systems) are:

- (1) Enact what already happen and give some rules: trees outside forests produce wood that is already sold. The sustainable and multifunctional management of these trees is a priority. We must move towards sustainable and acceptable ways of production and stop non-renewable farm practices,
- (2) respond to and increasing public command for local and sustainably managed wood,
- (3) Recognize ecosystem services provided by agroforestry systems, hedgerows and groves,
- (4) Give these trees outside forests a value in order to allow farmers to sell wood (from their farms) and thus support sustainable management of these ranged trees, hedgerows and groves in compliance with various public policies,

- (5) Join the concerns of the final users: participate to the reduction of the ranged trees decline and participate to local life and non-transferable employment
  
- (6) Improve farmers' image with sustainable management of hedgerows, which are as well elements of the farms and of the landscape.

## 2. A STRONG SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUE

Management of agroforestry systems is different from forest management. Managing a hedge is more expensive than managing a forest (for the same amount of wood). Due to operating costs and dispersion of the trees, trees outside forests won't be competitive with forest trees. Thus, the main challenges lie not in timber issues: low volumes, sparse resource; but rather on environmental issues, social links and local economy. Trees from hedgerows and grove are important for ecological corridors. More than this ecological issue, this is an opportunity for farmers to become, as well, landscape managers.

A balance is necessary: this inability to certify sustainable management prevent farmers from managing it. It also inhibits many local authorities who don't want to participate to the destruction of French *bocage*<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, how local authorities or private actors, volunteer for purchasing sustainable wood (with an ecological impact reduced and jobs provided locally) can be assured of this sustainable management?

This raises the issue of certification of sustainable management of trees outside forests (agroforestry, hedgerows ...), and sub-issues:

- (1) What types of trees outside forests are potentially targeted?
- (2) Which types of surfaces will be under certification? On what bases? Cadastral bases? Others?
- (3) Who will be certified in a country where land rent represents 70% of the UAA (owner or tenant)? Who plants the trees? Who get the "capital gain"?
- (4) Is the certification process economically sustainable?
- (5) What would be the minimum and common specifications to these certifications?

**The latter question leads to: who performs management plans today? to what extent? and what are the opportunities?**

A survey conducted in France concludes that management plans for trees outside forests are really different from one operator to another. If we want to certify the sustainable management with a brand, a label, an official quality mark, the creation of a "minimum common core" is essential. Thus, the result of this investigation was the establishment of a multi-stakeholder forum for the co-construction of a shared framework for sustainable management of hedgerows grove and agroforestry systems.

**Would this minimum common core be compatible with existing certification systems (PEFC or FSC)? Will the PEFC label meets the expectations of the grove managers? Should we build a specific label for the grove? Should there be a parallel label "PEFC-hedges" or an independent one?**

---

<sup>1</sup> Hedgerow landscape

### 3. SHARING COMMON OBJECTIVES

***Bocage actors in France share the common objectives below. Some of them are still not convinced by working with PEFC.***

French actors propose these targets in the construction of tree outside forest certification:

- An identified label on trees outside forests is a guarantee of recognition. This recognition will help and legitimize policies implemented for the development of farmland and agroforestry in the long term,
- Having simple and minimized rules
- A label approved by a bottom up method, with few simple and easily measurable indicators (specifications credible for buyers, specifications accepted by producers),
- Establishing monitored indicators is essential for the credibility of the label:
  - the actors are not the same in forest and outside forest
  - management routes are different
  - production restraints are different
- The label must have a strong ambition, not limited to a part of the production but must be on the entire production
- A participatory governance label with stakeholders (producers and consumers, public and private) which will consider every expectation,
- A national and international dimension of the label, and local management for local specifications,
- An accessible label: cheap for each.

## ANNEX

### A FORUM FOR CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A TREES OUTSIDE FOREST MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION

Farmers want to develop one activity when society wants to have a look on the management of this resource. The certification for sustainable management of trees outside forests appears as a pragmatic solution to these two converging demands.

Local supply chains were developed due to strong involvement of farmers and cooperatives, in which farmers are gathered. The recognition of sustainable management of this "farm wood" as well as forest wood must be effective to ensure its development. This recognition will give buyers the opportunity to choose the most sustainable offer with most benefits to their landscape.

Between September 2014 and November 2015, all operators of the management of hedgerows (farmers, technicians, processors, buyers ...), representing different sensibilities have offered their contribution to the development of national or local standards in order to achieve the certification for sustainable management of trees outside forests (agroforestry, hedgerows etc.) The task-group worked on sustainable management of trees outside forests. Initially the proposal was to work on three components of sustainability: economic, environmental, social. The participants wished to add supply chain as a fourth dimension.

The elements mentioned in Figure 1 should be considered in the certification process. The fourth column is more general and is composed of elements constituting either too imprecise elements or elements that will be placed in the 3 first columns. No contribution has been modified.

Economy	Social	Environmental	Supply chain
Harvest less than what grows	Local job generator	Diversity of species	Participatory governance, multi-stakeholder involvement ...
Profitability for the farmer: he must live from his work	Local income for non-professionals	Structure of landscape	consumer ...
Valuation of all functions and all productions of the hedge	Create a cultural identity	Old trees (habitat)	Proximity
Recognise non-commercial functions	Create social links (rural-urban) & rehab.	Remarkable elements (species, size ...)	Conditionality in CAP
Integrate hedgerows in a productive agricultural system	Compliance with planning laws	Ecological Corridor, networks	Long-term goals and medium-term programming: consider the question of time
Continuous improvement of the productive potential		Choice of local species	Simplicity and scalable system - operational system.
Materials used / adapted cutting tools		Regeneration type / selection and regeneration	Measurable assessment
		Climate and climate change	Continuous improvement
		Sustainable routes	
		Environmental compensation	

Figure 1 : réponses des opérateurs et parties prenantes concernant les éléments à prendre en compte pour la durabilité de la gestion des arbres hors forêt

This table is the first version of sustainability elements that tree outside forest sustainable management protocol should contain.