

# **KOMMUNE NIEDERKAUFUNGEN**

**Good Practice Collection**



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## Introduction

Max is part of the organic farm “Alles im Grünen Bereich” near Kassel. With a Bachelor of Engineering in Landscape Planning and several years of experience in a planning office, he combines solid expertise with hands-on agricultural work. His particular focus is on the role of water in agroforestry systems, serving as regulating elements in the landscape’s water balance. A standout example is the “Kaufunger Baumacker” project, which he designed and implemented with support from Triebwerk. Max’s commitment to regenerative agriculture is rooted in his deep interest in sustainable land use that promotes biodiversity and strengthens long-term soil health.

## The Farm

“Alles im grünen Bereich e.V.” is a diverse and innovative farm cooperative managing approximately 45 hectares of land. Their production includes a wide variety of elements such as grain crops, vegetable cultivation, dairy farming, mobile chicken units, agroforestry systems, and seed production. A strong focus is placed on regenerative practices, particularly water management, no-till cropping, and keyline design. The farm also experiments with agricultural machinery specifically developed for regenerative methods. In addition to their practical work, the farm is actively involved in multiple research projects, making it a hub for applied innovation in sustainable agriculture.

# The Location

The farm is situated just east of Kassel, in a valley bordered by the Kaufunger Forest—one of the larger contiguous forest areas in central Germany. This region is part of the Geo-Nature Park Frau-Holle-Land, known for its scenic beauty and ecological significance. The surrounding landscape is characterized by a hilly upland terrain and a temperate climate, providing varied conditions for diverse forms of agriculture. The location offers both challenges and opportunities for implementing regenerative land use strategies, especially in terms of water management and soil conservation.

## Agricultural regeneration objectives

A central objective of the agroforestry project was to improve water retention and distribution across the landscape. By applying the principles of keyline design, where water flow is guided along natural elevation contours, the system was designed to make optimal use of available rainfall. Ditches and shallow basins were integrated into the layout to slow down runoff, allow for infiltration, and reduce erosion. These measures support long-term soil health and moisture availability for both crops and trees. In doing so, the farm contributes to climate resilience, flood protection and drought preparedness.

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# Best Practice Focus

There are two agroforestry systems at Kommune Niederkaufungen. One of them is older and focuses on fruit and wild fruit production. The second, more recent system was designed to reduce soil erosion while simultaneously improving water availability on the land. To achieve this, tree strips made of poplars were complemented by small swales.

Keyline design is a planning approach that follows natural contour lines to efficiently distribute water across the landscape and retain it in the soil. The planning follows a principle that places water flow and topography at the center, aiming to optimize water supply within the cultivation system.

Thanks to the cooperative's broad orientation, suitable equipment was already available, which made implementation much easier. In addition to the poplar strips, there is also a branch of the farm focused strongly on fruit trees, though this is difficult to compare to the poplar system. The poplars require very little maintenance: occasional weeding is sufficient, and after that, the trees largely grow on their own, however they profit from regular water supply.

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## Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementation – challenges faced

From the initial idea to the actual implementation, the process took about three years. From the beginning, the team aimed to secure public funding, as soil protection is not only a farming concern but also serves the public good. The search for funding turned out to be the most time-consuming phase. The mindset was clear: if we're doing something meaningful, it should be financially supported. However, the journey was far from smooth—multiple funding applications were rejected, and nearly two years passed before a suitable funding source was found. Eventually, the Daniel Schlegel Environmental Foundation and TRIEBWERK came on board as funding and implementation partners, making the project possible.

# Main Slogan

"Alles im Grünen Bereich!" (Everything is in the green zone!)

## Categorisation, keywords

#Keyline Design #Agroforestry #Soil Protection  
#Erosion #Climate Change #Heavy Rain Events  
#Poplar #Kommune-Niederkaufungen #Relief  
#Agriculture #Water Retention #Water Availability  
#Extreme Weather #Resilience



## Advantages and disadvantages

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Advantages    | Environmental Protection: Less erosion and increased water availability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|               | More Ecological Diversity: In a poplar strip as a permanent culture, there is a greater value for biodiversity than in a pure monoculture field. This is especially true due to the edge effects created.                                                                                                                              |
|               | Resilience in the Climate Crisis: Here, we mainly struggle with heavy rain events. Grain crops cannot handle the surplus water, while the poplar trees do not have problems with this and actually experience massive biomass growth! With the poplar, we now have a system component that handles these weather extremes wonderfully. |
| Disadvantages | Economic Aspects: We need to build a completely new area of business, and we are still undecided about the full range of utilization possibilities. There will also be new investments required.                                                                                                                                       |
|               | Time-Consuming Planning: It took a long time to get the project funded, and it required a lot of patience.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

# Learning points

One of the main challenges in the early phase of the project was weed management. A large number of weeds emerged shortly after planting, and the team struggled to identify the right timing and approach for effective control. This issue made the establishment phase more difficult than expected. Over time, the problem resolved itself as the poplars grew and began to suppress competing vegetation. However, if they were to start the process again, more attention would be given to early weed management and scheduling care interventions at the right moments. This experience highlighted the importance of timing, observation, and adaptive planning in agroforestry system establishment.

## References/Bibliography

- <https://gruener-bereich-kaufungen.de/>

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# Regenerative Agricultural Practices for Environmental Rejuvenation and Sustainable Ecosystems on European Farms



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