

WENDLAND ZIEGE

Good Practice Collection



Introduction

Veronika and Sören met during their master's studies in process and quality management in agriculture in Berlin. After completing their degrees, they decided to take over Sören's father's farm and convert it to goat farming with an on-site cheese dairy. Their shared motivation stems from a deep commitment to shaping a form of agriculture that equally respects the needs of animals, people, and the environment. By integrating regenerative principles into their farm management, they aim to create a balanced, sustainable, and socially responsible farming system.

The Farm

Veronika and Sören run a diverse mixed farm with a herd of dairy goats, a small group of heritage cattle breeds, and some arable production of field vegetables and grain. A key feature of their operation is the on-farm cheese dairy, where they process their own goats' milk into high-quality cheese, which they sell directly to customers. In 2024, they planted a 6.5-hectare agroforestry system specifically designed for fodder tree production to feed their goats. This new system enhances both the ecological value and resilience of their farm, while supporting animal welfare and nutrition through locally grown, perennial feed sources.

The Location

The farm is located in Wendland, a rural region in Lower Saxony known for its diverse cultural landscape and ecological value. The land includes areas of lowland peat soils with a naturally high groundwater table, which shapes both crop choices and land management. Parts of the arable land are exposed and vulnerable to wind erosion, a factor that played a key role in the design of their recently established agroforestry system. The integration of tree lines and shelterbelts was planned not only to protect the soil but also to support long-term ecological stability and animal welfare on the farm.

Agricultural regeneration objectives

One of the farm's key regeneration goals is to improve animal health and welfare through the integration of agroforestry. Goats naturally benefit from a diet that includes tree leaves and twigs, which provide nutrient-rich feed that can enhance both overall health and milk quality. The newly established agroforestry system also contributes to a more comfortable and resilient microclimate by offering shade and shelter from wind and weather extremes. These measures not only support animal well-being but also align with broader goals of ecosystem restoration and sustainable fodder production.



Best Practice Focus

One of the farm's core regenerative practice focuses on the integration of agroforestry systems with fodder trees such as willow, ash, and alder. These tree species are specifically selected for their multifunctionality: they serve as a valuable feed source, provide natural shade, and act as windbreaks across the grazing areas. Beyond their nutritional benefits, certain species like willow also offer medicinal properties—salicylic acid, for instance, can support animal health naturally. By combining animal nutrition, landscape protection, and ecological resilience, this practice contributes to a holistic and animal-centered farming approach.

Financial aspects of regenerative measure implementation – challenges faced

The implementation of the agroforestry system was financially manageable, as most costs—including fencing and maintenance—were covered through the FuLaWi project. This initiative focuses on developing methods for utilizing fodder leaves from agroforestry systems to enhance nutrient supply and reduce methane emissions in small ruminants. More information about the project is available at futterlaub.de.

However, the process still demanded a significant investment of time, particularly in planning, coordination, and communication with local authorities. The main challenges lay not in funding, but in organizing the logistics and integrating the new system into the existing farm structure. Much of the work was carried out by the farmers themselves, requiring flexibility and long-term commitment.



Categorisation, keywords

Goats, agroforestry, tree fodder, animal welfare, shade, windbreak, biodiversity, climate change, bureaucracy, practical knowledge, peatland, mixed farming, organic agriculture, motivation, sustainability



Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Supports species-appropriate and animal-centered husbandry
	Promotes biodiversity through integration of diverse tree species
	Improves the microclimate (shade, wind protection, humidity retention)
Disadvantages	High maintenance requirements, especially in the establishment phase
	Bureaucratic hurdles in planning and approval processes
	Uncertainties regarding long-term establishment and fodder use of tree species

Learning points

Implementing the agroforestry system required new knowledge in tree species selection, site-specific planting strategies, and maintenance techniques. Understanding which species thrive under local soil and climate conditions was essential. In addition, the process demanded strong skills in planning, communication with authorities, and navigating administrative procedures. Practical competencies such as operating machinery and organizing long-term care schedules were equally important for successful establishment and integration into the farm routine. The planning and planting of the agroforestry system was supported by specialised companies.

References/Bibliography

- <https://www.wendland-ziege.de/>
- <https://futterlaub.de/>

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



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