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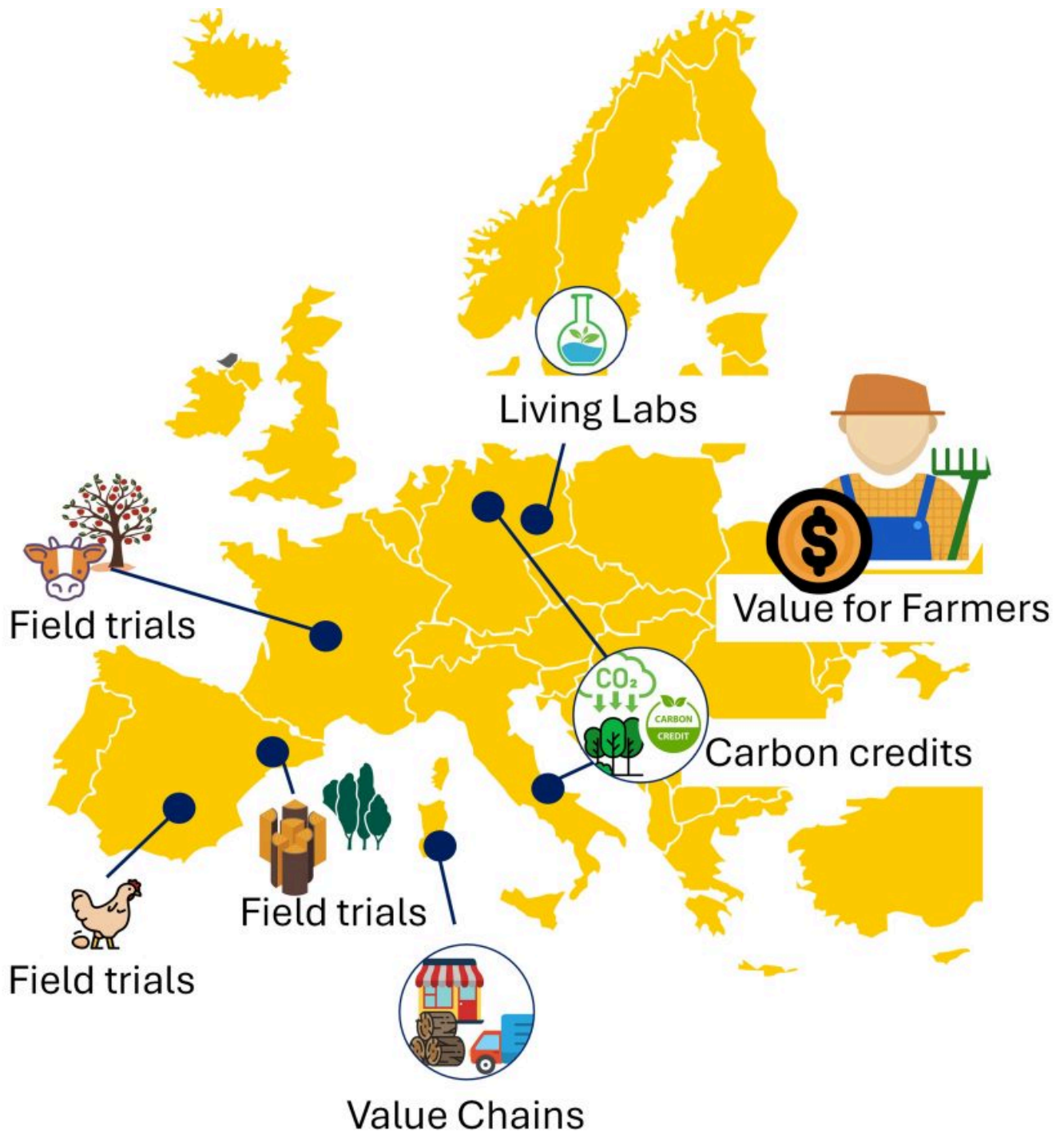
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RESEARCH PROJECT

AF4VALUE

In progress 01/01/2026 → Unknown

Innovations in value chains to promote farming viability through agroforestry



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Summary

The European Union (EU) Nature Restoration Regulation, LULUCF, the EU Green Deal, and its supporting strategies—including the Soil, Forest, Bioeconomy, Farm to Fork, and Biodiversity strategies—set clear and ambitious goals for restoring nature and biodiversity across European landscapes. Key targets include reducing the use of chemical and hazardous pesticides, increasing the share of high-biodiversity areas within Utilized Agricultural Areas (UAA), planting at least three billion trees in an ecologically responsible manner, and implementing restoration plans that contribute to climate change mitigation and help reduce the impact of increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves.

Agroforestry (AF)—a sustainable land-use system that integrates trees with agricultural practices on the same land units—is widely recognized as one of the most promising solutions to achieving these goals. Numerous studies support agroforestry as an eco-intensification approach that is especially relevant for small- and medium-sized farms. It is highly adaptable to diverse climatic and agronomic conditions and is compatible with other agroecological approaches. This makes agroforestry a pragmatic, scalable, and versatile strategy for meeting EU climate and biodiversity objectives while delivering socio-economic benefits to farmers and rural communities. However, despite its well-documented advantages, the widespread adoption of agroforestry faces several critical barriers:

1. Limited access to practical knowledge and technical expertise for farmers and land managers;
2. Absence of scalable and sustainable business models;
3. Inconsistent regulatory support and limited integration into agricultural and rural policies; High initial investment costs and lack of adequate financial incentives;

4. Limited trust and awareness around agroforestry practices.

Several EU-funded projects (e.g., AGFORWARD, AFINET, FOREST4EU, AF4EU, MARVIC, MARVOC) have made important strides in promoting knowledge and best practices in agroforestry. Yet, there remains a significant research and implementation gap, particularly regarding the economic and financial incentives required to overcome these adoption barriers.

The AF4VALUE project aims to address these challenges and unlock the full potential of agroforestry through the following objectives:

1. Propose innovative agroforestry practices that enhance farmland productivity, improve farm resilience and biodiversity, optimize water use, and restore soil health;
2. Assess measurement technologies and modeling tools to reduce certification costs and improve their quality and reliability—ensuring their applicability across a wide range of tree species, crops, livestock systems, and soil types;
3. Investigate new economic incentives and develop agroforestry value chains that reward farmers and stimulate rural development;
4. Develop business models and carbon finance innovations to improve the attractiveness and feasibility of agroforestry for farmers, investors, and other stakeholders;
5. Evaluate the existing policy framework to ensure alignment with EU incentive schemes, certification systems, and regulatory structures, supporting evidence-based policy recommendations for the agroecological transition.

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