

Woodland Creation Case Study

Morrisons employs Tree Advisors to support UK farmers and net zero ambitions



Morrisons are supporting a team of Tree Advisors to give specialist advice to their network of 3,000 farmers, to help plant the right tree species in the right place for the right reasons.

The advice includes how to access government and grant funding to cover farmers' costs, as well as how to manage woodland projects for both additional income and environmental benefits, without impacting upon individual farm businesses.



The challenge

Morrisons have set an ambitious plan to be directly supplied by net zero British farms by 2030 as part of their overall goal to reduce 'Scope 3' emissions by 30% by 2030. They are working with farmers and their supply chain to lower emissions and then consider a net zero balance scale approach – looking at opportunities for carbon sequestration whilst also supporting nature-friendly farming.

The overall objectives of Morrisons' tree initiative are to:

- **work towards net zero ambitions**
- **work in partnership by connecting people and signposting to existing advice and support networks**
- **allay any fears around tree planting and displacing food production**
- **help improve our overall environment through the key theme of 'nature positive farming' which cares for the world around us and helps local communities.**

The approach

To support their net zero programme, Morrisons searched for industry experts to journey with their network of 3000 farmers to get them to the right destination.

In an innovative new partnership with the Forestry Commission and Catchment Sensitive Farming (an initiative involving Natural England and the Environment Agency), a team of professional foresters from Forest Canopy Foundation have been employed by Morrisons to support farmers to plant trees to improve sustainability, soil health and farm productivity.

Initially, they are working with Morrisons' 50 blueprint farms – a collection of meat and produce farmers helping to create net zero carbon farm 'models'. Once a workable blueprint has been established, the models will then be shared with all 3000 of Morrisons' farmers.

Sophie Throup, Head of Agriculture at Morrisons, said: "We knew that trees needed to play an important part in the net zero balance - but it can be a sensitive subject when faced with the challenge of food security and concerns about displacing food production with tree planting.

"I am a big believer in walking in each other's shoes and understanding different perspectives. We wanted to give farmers access to specialist advisors that would open conversations between foresters and farmers - show that we can work together."

"We also wanted to provide individual advice on the farm, so farmers could think about the right tree, in the right place, and for the right reason for them. It must be the right reason for the farmer and their own business."

Sophie Throup, Head of Agriculture, Fisheries and Sustainable Sourcing, Morrisons



The process

Morrisons set up a working group with invaluable support from all partners. Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Forestry Commission advised from a government perspective in terms of how policies, decisions and strategies were being set more centrally.

Once the group had set the outcomes, Morrisons followed a competitive tender process to source independent advisors. This led to the appointment of professional foresters from the Forest Canopy Foundation, who focus on responding to the climate crisis by planting trees and increasing woodland creation.



The result

Morrisons rolled out the Tree Advisor scheme to their 50 blueprint farms in 2022. Farmers didn't have to accept the offer of a free farm visit from a trained professional – but most of them took up the opportunity.

Morrisons Tree Advisors offered expert advice to farmers on a case-by-case basis, helping to create individual tree, hedgerow and woodland planting and management plans. They helped identify which trees are best in which location, how tree planting can complement farming business activity and what environmental benefits it will bring. They were also able to advise the farmers on how to access government grants to finance planting trees, as well as how to secure income from their woodland projects.

The scheme will now open more widely to all 3000 farmers in the Morrisons supply chain.

"The advice we received has been really useful in making plans for future tree planting. Help understanding the correct tree for the correct place has been key, as well as how to access funding to make a project viable. Also being given an idea of the ongoing management of any woodland project is imperative, as this maintenance allows a healthy woodland to thrive and reach its potential, both in terms of timber stocks and carbon sequestration."

Tim Phipps, Phipps Farm Partnership, Bragborough Hall, Daventry



Morrisons' top tips for tree planting initiatives:

1. Think about it from a people point of view, not just a process point of view.
2. Think about influencing, engaging, persuading and building a relationship with those farmers on the ground doing the work. They are very busy and not thinking about trees as priority number one.
3. Think about who is delivering the information and how, just getting the info out there isn't enough.

Learn more about woodland creation

If you're interested in exploring how woodland creation could fit into your supply chain, read our [woodland creation overview](#) or take a look at our leaflet on [how woodland creation can benefit farms](#).

*Alternatively, get in touch at:
engagement@forestrycommission.gov.uk.*



With thanks to Sophie Throup, Head of Agriculture, Fisheries and Sustainable Sourcing, Morrisons.
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