

# grow

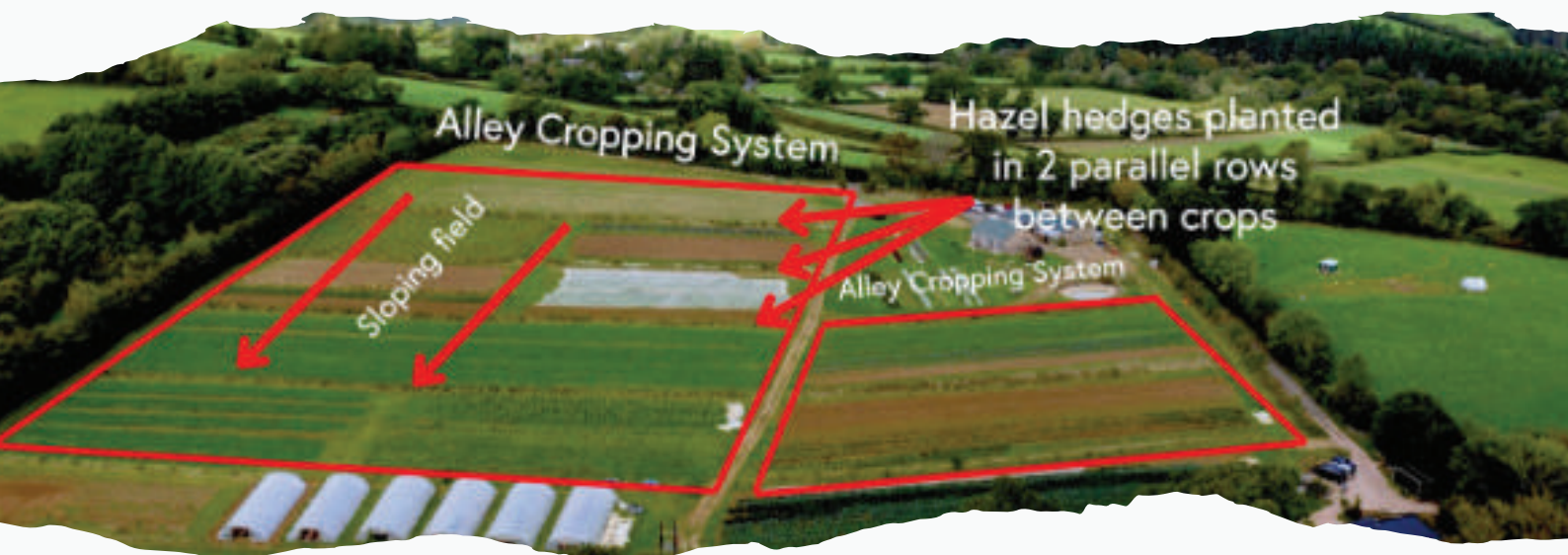


## Working with Nature at the Apricot Centre: Agroforestry and Mixed Farming Systems

### About Apricot Centre

The Apricot Centre, located in England, is a model for sustainable living, cultivating land, lives, and livelihoods through a unique combination of food production, education, and well-being services.

By incorporating agroforestry into its farming system, the Centre continues to diversify and deepen its commitment to regenerative agriculture.



### Challenge: Restoring Balance Between Nature and Farming

Modern agriculture often separates productivity from ecology. The Apricot Centre saw a different path: one where farming works in harmony with the land. But how?

The key challenge was to embed multifunctionality and biodiversity into their farm design, while improving soil health and integrating ecological services into the very heart of their business.



## THE SOLUTION

The Apricot Centre introduced an alley cropping system featuring hazel hedges planted between crops using a cross-contour design. This layout helps manage water flow and nutrient retention.

They also integrated traditional Shetland breed cattle for conservation grazing, adding value to the landscape and enriching the agroforestry system. These animals help manage vegetation naturally and support ecosystem health.

## IMPACT AND RESULTS

Agroforestry, as demonstrated at the Apricot Centre, delivers more than environmental benefits — it supports biodiversity, water management, animal welfare, and economic resilience for farm businesses.

- The alley cropping system offers natural wind protection and acts as a buffer for nutrient runoff.
- Livestock grazing within the agroforestry layout results in better pasture quality, reduced ground compaction, and enhanced biodiversity.
- Animals benefit from access to a diverse variety of forage, the ability to self-medicate, and improved adaptation to environmental conditions.
- Together, these benefits showcase the strength of a mixed, resilient farming system.

## Case Study by:

Dr Shannon Maguire McLaughlin &  
Dr Tanisha Waring.  
Queen's University Belfast

Watch the video:

