

FARMING ON THE WILD SIDE

Learning Objectives

The learner will:

- Learn about different approaches to ecological farming, and give examples
- Understand ecological processes underlying ecological farming approaches.
- Understand attributes of natural systems farming, agroforestry systems, and wild farming approaches.

Ecological Farming Systems

- Farming In Nature's Image: Natural Systems Farming
 - Home Gardens / Forest Gardens
 - Land Institute & Perennial Polyculture
 - Rotational / Mixed Species Grazing Systems (Savory & others)
- Agroforestry / Silvopastoralism / Agrosilvopastoralism
 - Agroforestry: growing herbaceous crops and tree crops together
 - Silvopastoralism: raising livestock and tree crops together
 - Agrosilvopastoralism: livestock, crops and trees
 - Agroforestry System Attributes
 - ✓ Deep nutrient Cycling
 - ✓ Enhanced wildlife / livestock habitat
 - ✓ Increased biotic Diversity
 - ✓ Increased crop diversity
 - Examples:
 - ✓ Windbreaks / hedgerows
 - ✓ Live fences
 - ✓ Alley cropping
 - ✓ Field / Pasture Trees (Acacia albida, Oregon white oak)
 - ✓ Taungya
 - ✓ Forest Gardens
- Wild Farming: Biodiversity on Farms and Ranches
 - Importance of Biodiversity
 - Wild Farming Practices
 - ✓ Water Conservation
 - ✓ Soil Conservation
 - ✓ Soil Fertility Management
 - ✓ Livestock Management
 - Biodiversity: Incorporating Natural Areas on the Farm Practices
 - ✓ Riparian Areas
 - ✓ Woodlands
 - ✓ Hedgerows
 - ✓ Beetle Banks

- ✓ Field Margins
- Biodiversity Within Farmed Areas
 - ✓ Cover Crops
 - ✓ Intercropping
 - ✓ Strip Cropping
 - ✓ Insectaries & Pest Strips
 - ✓ Low or no till
 - ✓ Alternate Mowing

Ecological Processes in Healthy Agroecosystems

- Nutrient Cycling (deeper, balanced cycles)
- Hydrology (enhanced infiltration, soil moisture storage)
- Energetics (enhanced capture of solar and water inputs)
- Soil Conservation and Building
- Predator – Prey Relationships (beneficial insects, birds, mammals for pest control)
- Disturbance (herbivory)

Assessment/Review

- How would you mimic a prairie in an agroecosystem? A savannah? A forest?
- Describe the ecological processes functioning in an agroforestry system.
- Why is biodiversity important on a farm?
- Describe wildlife-friendly elements in a farming system.

References:

Imhoff, Daniel. 2003. *Farming With the Wild: Enhancing Biodiversity on Farms and Ranches*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, CA. 182 pp.

Jackson, Dana, and Laura Jackson. 2002. *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 295 pp.

Soule, J., and J. Piper. 1993. *Farming In Nature's Image: An Ecological Approach to Agriculture*. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 305 pp.

Wild Farm Alliance: www.wildfarmalliance.org