Agroforestry
Business Model
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Introducing Honey Locust into an Agroforestry System

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35-year-old Honey locust aligned with almond trees in a cereal plot

The Honey locust, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, is a native tree from North America that was introduced to Europe three centuries ago. It features large, strong thorns, but today it is easy to find varieties that are thornless. This fast-growing, deciduous tree can withstand temperatures as low as -20°C. It thrives in rich, moist soils and along riverbanks, but it also performs well in calcareous soils and can tolerate low rainfall.

In agroforestry, the Honey locust can serve several purposes. It can be planted in a system as timber, where it can reach heights of up to 25 meters in about 15 years, depending on the soil. Its slightly reddish heartwood is very hard and is often used for furniture, posts, or even railroad ties.

As a member of the Fabaceae family, it fixes atmospheric nitrogen, which it returns to the soil through the decomposition of its leaves and roots. For this reason, it can be incorporated into a fruit hedge, where it can be pruned as a pollard to maximize growth and facilitate maintenance.

The Honey locust can also fit well into a livestock system. Its foliage can be used as fodder, especially the young shoots. For this purpose, a thornless variety is preferable. However, it is the fresh pods that are most appreciated by domestic animals because they are rich in sugar. Sheep and goats, which tend to chew their food well, can break the hard seed coats and thus benefit from the proteins they contain.

Finally, its dense wood makes it a good addition to a windbreak hedge.

Tsoukalia Carpente

Ver de Terre Production

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