
What farmers really think about agroforestry and ecosystem services

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Abstract

There is an increasing recognition of the diverse ecosystem services provided by agroforestry systems. With benefits for rural livelihoods, food security and biodiversity conservation. In Europe, agricultural policy is moving towards greater support of multifunctional agriculture. However, modern farmers appear to be resisting this change. For example trees in agricultural landscapes are still declining, despite increasing direct-payments for their ecosystem services.

To understand the drivers of farmer behaviour in Switzerland with regard to practicing agroforestry, a survey was developed building on the concept of ecosystem services and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The following survey consisted of a sample of 50 farmers who were interviewed using a semi-quantitative and open ended questionnaire.

In terms of potential motivations for adoption of agroforestry, most farmers (adopters and non-adopters) gave highest scores to habitat ecosystem services, both for livestock and wildlife. Low scores were given to productivity, profitability and ecological direct payments. Farmers resisting adoption concluded that practising agroforestry would not have a positive impact on their reputation. They also attributed significantly lower scores to the perceived behavioural control variable. These results indicate that payments for ecosystem services will be unlikely to change farmers' behaviour, as long as their expectations and knowledge are not holistically addressed. There is therefore a need for transdisciplinary co-production of agro ecological knowledge, to cater for the increasing need for multifunctional agricultural landscapes.

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