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Could agroforestry help save the world?

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Abstract

The recent IPCC 1.5C Report makes very clear, if we did not already know, that humanity needs to employ all the ingenuity and tools at our disposal if we are to prevent planet Earth warming to an extent that will make life for our descendants vulnerable to much more difficult climatic conditions. The greenhouse emissions of the agriculture, land use change and forestry sectors will soon come under the sort of scrutiny and pressure that has hitherto focused primarily on energy and transport. When we consider the tools that can be used to reduce net emissions in the land sector, one of the most promising is agroforestry. Coming decades should be a golden era for agroforestry.

But as I reflect on my own professional career over the last 40 years, we have been promoting what seem to be the obvious benefits of agroforestry for at least forty years. Agroforestry is not new or novel. The benefits of integrating productive use of perennial woody vegetation into agricultural systems have long been well established and documented. Yet implementation of agroforestry remains patchy, partial, modest at best.

This presentation will explore why the dreams of agroforestry advocates (including me) have yet to be realised, drawing on a review of the last 40 years of Australian experience (Campbell et al 2017) and lessons from agroforestry projects funded by ACIAR in east Africa, south-east Asia and the Pacific over the last 30 years. Agroforestry is a more complex adoption challenge than most agricultural innovations, and this has important implications for research, extension, education and policy. Finally, suggestions that might take agroforestry to scale faster will be proposed.

Reference

1. **Campbell, Andrew**, Jason Alexandra and David Curtis (2017) "Reflections on four decades of land restoration in Australia" *The Rangeland Journal* 39(6) 405-416 http://www.publish.csiro.au/RJ/RJ17056