

ATTITUDES AND CONSTRAINTS TO AGROFORESTRY IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES: EXAMPLES FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND USA

Mike Jacobson

ABSTRACT

Agroforestry emerged on the international development arena in the 1970s and it is now widely adopted in many developing countries. Although agroforestry uses low cost inputs and provides multiple benefits such as restoring soil fertility, increasing food and fiber production and alleviating poverty it still has many technical, environmental, and socioeconomic factors that limit success. It is referred to by some as the “poor mans technology.” Lack of institutional capacities and inappropriate technologies are common constraints to agroforestry adoption by farmers in developing countries. South Africa is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that has until recently essentially ignored the role of agroforestry in farming systems. A major reason for the lack of agroforestry in South Africa is due to its past focus on intensive production agriculture and forestry. Similar to South Africa, but unlike most developing countries, the United States has substantial infrastructure and institutions for production agriculture and forestry. However, in the United States farmers and family forest owners are encouraged to use agroforestry practices to improve farming systems, restore degraded environments, and supplement landowner incomes.

This paper discusses the results of surveys of farmers, landowners, and communities regarding the potential and interest for agroforestry in Pennsylvania USA, and in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. Although these areas have very different social, political, and environmental situations, the constraints and attitudes toward agroforestry are in many ways similar. This paper discusses these similarities and differences in agroforestry adoption potential and reflects on the results to suggest activities to increase interest in agroforestry.

AUTHOR

Mike Jacobson
Assistant Professor/Extension Forester
Pennsylvania State University, School of Forest Resources
7 Ferguson Building
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: (814) 863-0401
Fax: (814) 865-6275
mgj2@psu.edu