Introduction:
Integrating trees into farmland provide many benefits, from increases in agricultural yield, property value and a range of other social and environmental benefits that are rarely accounted for. However establishing trees on farms requires effort and resources and a realization and understanding of these benefits.

Understanding farmer motivations and barriers to adoption of trees on farms is key to promoting adoption of profitable trees in configurations that will increase farm profitability and contribute to the states forestry and agricultural sectors.

Trees improve pasture production
For example, at a field near Cressy in Tasmania, pasture growth across 80% of the paddock is improved by as much as 15% (equating to an additional 3.8kg dry pasture biomass/ha/day) in the peak season of autumn and up to 6% in other seasons. Both wind speed and evaporation are substantially reduced irrespective of season. Yet not all farms in the area are benefiting from treed shelter.

Farmer perceived benefits of trees
- Shelter
- Biodiversity
- Aesthetics
- Direct economic benefits
- Restoration
- Other benefits such as privacy, security and property value

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Farmers have relatively narrow perceptions of agroforestry
Most farmers thought of monoculture plantations for commercial harvest when talking about agroforestry, rather than other configurations of trees on farms such as along riparian areas or in shelter belts. However, our field studies demonstrated that trees can add significant value to other parts of the farm enterprise, as well as through direct returns from harvest, if they are located appropriately.

Support for trees is high
Trees were highly valued as part of the landscape by farmers and a number of benefits of trees on farms were recognized by farmers.
Encouraging farmer engagement in establishing trees
The most common opportunities to encourage more planting of trees by farmers include:

- Support farmers to plan their tree plantings to match their objectives.
- Investment strategies to help manage upfront costs such as fencing.
- Produce positive success stories about agroforestry to counteract the negative perceptions of the failed forestry Managed Investment Schemes (MIS).
- Reduce costs and risks by networking and cooperative arrangements (shared machinery, skill networks).
- Simplify market information and potential market opportunities.
- Raise awareness of the multiple benefits of trees and how to maximize returns from these benefit streams.
- Develop policy and cohesion across primary industries and support organisations to work together and promote trees.

Three main views of trees on farms
Farmers interviewed can be grouped into 3 broad categories:

1. Those who see trees as a valuable component of the farm in all types of farming enterprises.
2. Those who see trees as not being valuable enough to justify the cost of planning, planting, management and use of prime land.
3. Those who see trees as being vital beyond the farm scale and essential to have on farm regardless of cost or economic return.

Most respondents fell into category 1, suggesting that a ‘hearts and minds’ approach to encouraging trees on farms (for economic and social, as well as environmental imperatives) will encourage greater adoption by farmers.

Understanding farmer motivations helps us to tailor recommendations to individual farmer or landowner objectives.

How to find out more
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