Info

Working Trees

What are agroforestry's income opportunities?

Agroforestry is an approach to land use that incorporates trees and shrubs into agricultural systems and allows for the production of trees, crops and/or livestock from the same piece of land. It offers ways to take advantage of profitable product markets and, at the same time, helps improve the land and the environment.

Look at the fields, woods, streamsides and fence rows around a farm or ranch. Are any of these areas under utilized? There are many opportunities for farmers and ranchers to introduce agroforestry practices on their land, which may open up new income possibilities while adding conservation benefits. Get started by taking a closer look at your land.

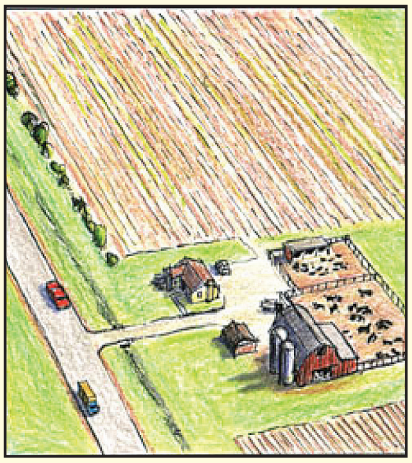
Does your farm or ranch have ... unsheltered farmsteads and livestock areas, fence lines or degraded windbreaks?

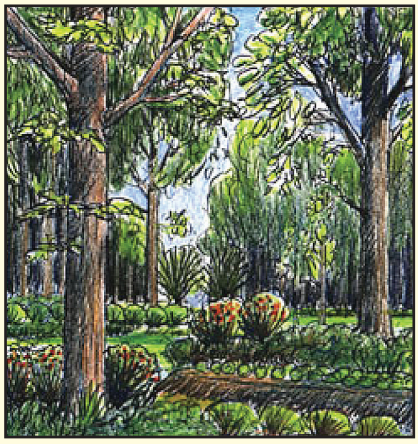
Income Opportunities:

Wood fiber, lumber, specialty forest products, food

Agroforestry Practice: windbreak

Multiple row windbreaks are places to produce marketable products like hybrid poplar, wood, nuts, apples, cherries, blackberries and woody floral products. Evergreens can be sold as Christmas trees, boughs for seasonal floral products or as landscaping plants, while adding color to farms and providing protection for birds and other wildlife.





Does your farm or ranch have ... neglected or under utilized woodlots?

Income Opportunities:

Wood for energy, lumber, specialty forest products, food

Agroforestry Practice: forest farming

Well-managed woodlots can potentially produce high quality lumber, firewood and valuable specialty forest products like maple syrup, ginseng and other medicinal plants, which are grown under shade. Pine straw may be another income-generating option from loblolly or longleaf pine plantations where there are markets.

Does your farm or ranch have ... marginally productive fields?

Income Opportunities:

Wood fiber, lumber, fruit, nuts and many other crops

Agroforestry Practice: alley cropping

Blueberries, chokecherries, elderberries, chestnuts, hazelnuts, and many others have great potential when marketed as locally grown products. Possible inter-crops include vegetables, horticultural plants, forages and traditional row crops. This system will be producing valuable products while protecting the land.

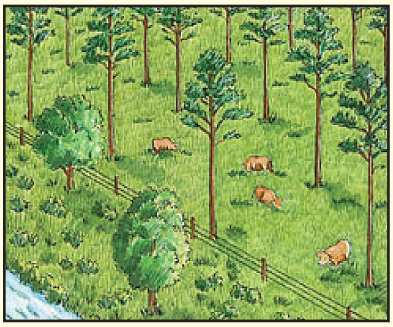
Does your farm or ranch have ... areas along streams, lakes or rivers?

Income Opportunities:

Wood fiber, lumber, specialty forest products, wood for energy

Agroforestry Practice: riparian forest buffer

Trees, shrubs, forbs and grasses along a waterway can be designed to achieve conservation purposes such as improved water quality and reduced flood damage, while also yielding a variety of products. These include wood from high-value species such as walnut, oak, maple, plants used for medicinal and botanical purposes, food (berries, nuts and mushrooms), specialty woods and woody florals.



Does your farm or ranch have ... open pastures with no shade?

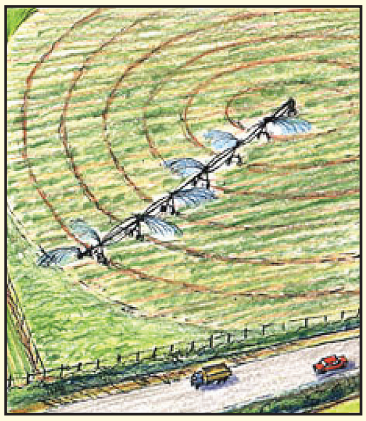
Income Opportunities:

Wood fiber, lumber, specialty products, livestock, wood for energy, pine straw

Agroforestry Practice: silvopasture

Tree canopies provide livestock with shade and wind protection and may yield additional income when the trees or tree products are harvested. The branches and leaves of some trees can be pruned from the trees and fed directly to livestock. Pine stands and nut and fruit orchards may be grazed to produce income before and while trees are bearing and growing.

Does your farm or ranch have ... pivot irrigation corners, small out-of-the-way parcels?



Income Opportunities:

Fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs, woody florals, lease hunting

Agroforestry Practice: alley cropping or forest farming

In addition to the crops mentioned above, Alley Cropping or Forest Farming practices can produce vegetables or fast-growing trees like hybrid poplar or hybrid cottonwood that can be harvested and sold for pulpwood, wood for energy and other solid wood products. Some forest product companies may offer advanced purchase or lease agreements that provide annual payments before the trees are harvested. Because these plantings also attract wildlife, hunting leases are a possible income source.

This information sheet is adapted from "Discovering Profits in Unlikely Places: Agroforestry Opportunities for Added Income," by Scott Josiah, 2000, University of Minnesota. www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/naturalresources/DD7407.html

More information on the Web

USDA National Agroforestry Center www.unl.edu/nac
Natural Resources Conservation Service www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/forestry/sustain
The Center for Agroforestry www.centerforagroforestry.org/profit
The Association for Temperate Agroforestry www.aftaweb.org/what_is_agroforestry.php
The University of Minnesota www.extension.umn.edu/agroforestry/about.html
The Center for Subtropical Agroforestry http://sfrc.ifas.ufl.edu/cstaf

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Contact: USDA National Agroforestry Center, 402-437-5178 ext. 4011, fax 402-437-5172, 1945 N. 38th St., Lincoln, Nebraska 68583-0822. *www.unl.edu/nac*

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