



# Agroforests: an original agro-forestry model from smallholder farmers for environmental conservation and sustainable development

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## Abstract

Agroforests are defined as complex agroforestry systems which look like and function as natural forest ecosystems, but are integrated into agricultural management systems. Their conception, their management and their economic and environmental qualities, clearly differentiate them from better known "simple" agroforestry associations as alley cropping, intercropping or hedgerow systems.

Different types of agroforests are conceived and managed by farmers over the Indonesian archipelago. Most of them evolved from shifting cultivation systems in forest areas. They appear in various forms and imply very different components from a region to another, but all exhibit the same fundamental ecological, technical and socio-economic qualities, such as soil protection, biodiversity conservation, use of simple techniques and technologies, high compatibility with local knowledge and representation systems, provision of good levels of monetary income, high returns to labour.

This paper will examine these qualities and draw conclusions on the potentials of agroforests for sustainable development of forest margins in the humid tropics. Among others, we will discuss the role of agroforests in the maintenance of site fertility and of forest biodiversity, their importance in preserving a large potential of possible economic choices for further development, and their contribution to capital accumulation processes for household development.

Agroforestry or Agroforestries?

