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Agroforestry: An economic appraisal of the benefits of intercropping trees with grassland in Lowland Britain

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Abstract

A mathematical model simulating the effect of intercropping trees (ash) with grassland on wood production, grass yields and output of sheepmeat is described. Using the model, an assessment has been made of the implications of varying the density and the planting pattern of the trees on the combined income from the sale of wood and livestock over a number of years. The resultant incomes have been compared with that from an equivalent unafforested area to assess the likely economic implications of intercropping trees with grass. At a discount rate of 5%, the indications are that combining wood and sheepmeat production on the same area could be financially attractive. At higher discount rates, the economic attraction of growing trees is more dependent on an increase in timber prices relative to those prevailing at present. However, given the large number of assumptions necessitated by the limited availability

of data and in the absence of any means of validating the model, extreme care is needed in interpreting the results. Confident economic projections of the value of intercropping trees with grass await further experimental work on appropriate growth models for open-grown trees, light interception, tree rooting patterns and water uptake of tree roots.



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