

Project Title

An investigation into the composition, management, and economics of silvopastures in the northeastern United States, an emerging regional practice.

Principal Investigator

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Abstract

The sustainable management of livestock, forage, and trees on the same unit of land, defined as silvopasture, has been attracting interest in the northeastern United States. Although silvopasture is considered to be a sustainable agroforestry practice, it is easily confused with unmanaged woodland grazing which is common in this region. According to the USDA Census of Agriculture pastured woodlands account for approximately one out of every six acres of pasture in the region; it is unclear if these pastures are sustainably managed. Additionally, the existence, extent, and type of silvopasture systems (sustainably managed woodland pastures), in the northeast is currently unknown. The series of interviews and inventories proposed here will document and make available specific experiences of farmers with the practice of silvopasture in the region. It will also document the structural and management characteristics (such as pasture rotation length and stocking rate) of established silvopastures currently being utilized on farms in the region. These will provide valuable examples for land managers who are considering adoption of silvopasture systems and conservation organizations who find themselves interacting with this emerging practice. A documented assessment of existing silvopasture practices is crucial to the sustainable development of silvopasturing in the northeastern United States and is a major step in halting the practice of unmanaged woodland grazing by showcasing sustainable management options for integrated pastures. Results of this project will reach farmers, foresters, and natural resource professionals through peer-reviewed publications and presentations offered at professional meetings in both the fields of forestry and agriculture. Additionally, a webinar will be offered in 2015 showcasing the results of this project.