

# RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AGROFORESTRY LANDSCAPES: IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRITOURISM

Jie Gao

Dr. Carla Barbieri, Thesis Supervisor

## ABSTRACT

This study assessed residents' perceptions of the visual appeal of agroforestry landscapes for recreational purposes in Missouri, Pennsylvania and Texas. Specific objectives of this study were: (1) to identify the features of agroforestry landscapes that are more visually appealing to visit a farm for recreation; (2) to assess the perceived benefits of agroforestry landscapes; (3) to compare residents' preferences of agroforestry landscapes features across respondents with different characteristics; and (4) to contrast residents' perceived benefits of agroforestry landscapes across different respondents segments. Data were collected in 2011 using an online survey questionnaire from three non-random panels of residents in Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Texas ( $n = 250$  each). Results showed that "wildlife", "water resources", "heritage resources", and "farm animals" are the most preferred individual landscape features. MANOVA showed significant differences on preferences of landscape features across gender, levels of agritourism experience, and relationships with a farm/forested land. Females, *Recurrent Agritourists*, and those with *Direct* or *Indirect Relationship* to a land showed higher preferences for most landscape features as compared to their counterparts. Overall respondents perceived that both conventional and agroforestry farms are equally important in providing socio-economic benefits to society, while agroforestry farms are slightly more important regarding the provision of eco-physical benefits. MANOVA tests showed significant differences only between male and female respondents on their perceived importance of eco-physical and socio-economic benefits that both types of farms provide. Theoretical and practical implications of study results are discussed.