

Public Abstract

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Managing agricultural lands to provide ecosystem services (ES), such as natural pollination, may be essential for the long-term sustainability of agriculture. Most agricultural lands, however, are managed for the short-term production of food, fiber, and fuel, often at the expense of other ES, such as water quality and biodiversity. This dissertation explores cooperative solutions to the problem, where farmers work together to provide ES. We find that natural pest control, pollinating services and water quality are the agricultural-related ES most suited to cooperative management. We find that most Missouri farmers are willing to cooperate to control pests, and simple, local cooperative efforts may be more popular than more formal, regional efforts. In addition, the benefits of cooperation, environmental concern, social capital, extension agent contact and farmer preference for group work, are much more important than trust in determining which farmers may be willing to cooperate. This dissertation is important because it may help policy-makers and social entrepreneurs to organize farmers and to encourage the cooperative management of important agricultural-related ES.