

Agroforestry: a key land use system for sustainable food production and public health

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Abstract

Agroforestry is a climate resilient agricultural land use system that includes trees and woody shrubs. The environmental benefits of agroforestry systems are well known, but their broader contributions to global public health have been understudied. This article presents the potential contributions of agroforestry systems to public health, discusses considerations for implementation, and recommends ways to support uptake through research and practice. Agroforestry systems may contribute to public health through improved food and nutritional access, enhanced food sovereignty and community well-being, increased environmental quality and health, and impacts on communicable and non-communicable disease. Despite the many ways that agroforestry systems may contribute to public health and planetary health, it is not well described in the health literature and has not gained traction as a public health practice. Increased agroforestry research and support from the public health community may benefit short- and long-term human and ecosystem health in our changing environment.