For a universal classification of agroforestry

I. Transitioning to Viable Policies

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Since the birth of agroforestry in the years 1970s, its classification is not yet stabilized. Different countries, different institutions, use different classifying rules. For instance, the USA use alley cropping, forest farming, riparian buffers, silvopasture and windbreaks as major agroforestry categories. In Europe, the following agroforestry typology has been proposed: trees within parcels (silvopastoral, silvoarable and agrosilvopastoral) and trees between parcels (linear agroforestry). For World Agroforestry (ICRAF), agroforestry comprises trees on farms and in agricultural landscapes, farming in forests and along forest margins and tree-crop production, including cocoa, coffee, rubber, and oil palm. This varied terminology makes it very difficult for the non -specialist to understand what is being talked about when one of these categories is used to describe an agroforestry practice. Agroforestry can be classified according to different criteria, e.g., structure (arrangement of components in time and space), function (productive or service role), socio-economic criteria (subsistence, commercial, large vs small farm), or ecological criteria (tropical, temperate, highlands, lowlands, etc.). Historically, structural criteria characterizing the presence of components have been preferred, i.e. agrisilviculture for trees and crops, silvopastoralism for trees and pasture or animals and agrosilvopastoralism for trees with both crops and pasture or animals. However, this basic classifying scheme has failed to translate into a pragmatic and widely accepted classification. It is possible to classify agroforestry according to simple structural criteria referring to what can be seen at the first glance. Five categories are necessary for that: Crops under tree cover ; Agroforests ; Agroforestry in a linear arrangement ; Animal agroforestry ; Sequential agroforestry. These categories are presented, illustrated, and discussed. A universal classification of agroforestry will help designing policies leading to a better adoption of agroforestry practices.