
Introduction: How do trees fit into cotton farms?

Modern farms need to run as efficiently as possible, so any investment should be made with a clear goal and based on good information. Planting or retaining trees and other vegetation can be an investment in the future of your farm. Trees and vegetation have the capacity to provide positive benefits for farming, but if they are not included into an overall property plan, their benefits may not be optimised.

By preparing an overall tree retention plan at the development stage, many of the benefits of the trees can be maximised, and the need for future replanting minimised. Such plans can be developed with the best advice from land management consultants or relevant government agencies.

This book outlines a number of uses trees could have on Australian cotton farms. In some cases, a variety of benefits can come from the same trees, but in other cases, you will need to use a different design, layout and management for each different purpose.

Costs for planting trees are estimated at between \$1.00 and \$10.00 per plant in the ground and growing. Such costs indicate that large scale planting is a sizeable investment.

Retaining existing vegetation such as remnant bush or regrowth can often be a cost-effective solution. In some cases such areas may need to be modified for example, thinning thick regrowth to make it more effective for drift capture, or thickening up some bush to make better habitat for beneficial insects.

Managing areas of trees or bushland can be very rewarding and it can provide diversity in a landscape dominated by farming. Such areas can be good for recreation as well as being functional for the farm.

This book is designed to help cotton farmers decide about and plan ways to include trees and native bush within modern and future farming practices.

In planning to make the most of trees on your farm, you need to consider the following points

- What are the main roles trees could play on your farm?
- What design principles are needed to make sure the trees do these jobs well?
- How much will it cost and how can it fit into existing farm layouts?
- What can you do to retain native bush and trees that have been planted?
- How much information on management and establishment do you need to make sound decisions before committing labour, finance and land for tree planting and retention?