Assisted regeneration could make farmers money

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Southwood remnant. Credit: Dr John Dwyer

Researchers have found that assisting vegetation to grow back naturally could be a far more profitable way for farmers to lock in carbon than the more commonly considered method of planting trees and shrubs.

PhD researcher Megan Evans from The Australian National University (ANU) said farmers could earn carbon credits for little to no cost, while also helping Australia curb carbon emissions, attributed to global warming.

Carbon farming provides landholders an opportunity to earn carbon credits by restoring or establishing vegetation on their properties.

"Landholders could have the opportunity to make money through the carbon market or through the Emissions Reduction Fund in Australia," Ms Evans said.

"A lot of these landscapes are also important areas for threatened species and ecosystems."

The research is the first to examine the economic value of assisted natural regeneration of vegetation in relation to carbon farming.

Ms Evans said the assisted natural regeneration of land would be economically viable for less than half the cost of environmental plantings.

Assisted natural regeneration provided an opportunity to recover these environmental values at a large scale as well as delivering an economic benefit, she said.

"This would not be as possible with the more commonly considered method of planting small trees and shrubs, which has a much higher up-front cost relative to assisted natural regeneration."

The research considered the economics of carbon farming in Queensland, where 30.6 million hectares of agricultural landscapes may be suitable for carbon farming.

The paper has been published in the latest edition of *Environmental Science & Policy*.

More information: "Carbon farming via assisted natural regeneration

as a cost-effective mechanism for restoring biodiversity in agricultural landscapes," *Environmental Science & Policy*, Volume 50, June 2015, Pages 114-129, ISSN 1462-9011, dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2015.02.003.

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