

A PRODUCER'S GUIDE TO RESEARCH PARTICIPATION AT THE CENTER FOR AGROFORESTRY

<https://centerforagroforestry.org/>
@MizzouAgroforestry



The Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri (est. 1998) is a globally recognized research center that studies different components of agroforestry systems. Current research topics include specialty tree and shrub crop breeding (such as chestnuts, black walnuts, elderberries, and hazelnuts); human health and ecological impacts of agroforestry systems; social and financial barriers for agroforestry adoption; and more.

How are Producers Involved in Research at the Center?

Producer voices and involvement are pivotal to ensuring that our research is practical and useful for end users. Research projects and programs at the Center for Agroforestry often call upon producers to offer their knowledge, experience, and perspectives. This can happen in multiple ways, such as:

Interviews

In-person, phone, or virtual discussions where researchers ask a series of questions to document a participant's opinions, perspectives, or experiences.

Focus Groups

A group of participants, usually ranging from 5 to 10 people, selected to discuss and provide feedback together on a specific topic (e.g. pest management strategy, piece of technology, etc.).

Surveys

Paper or online questionnaires that gauge a person's opinion or experience with a certain topic.

Participatory Research

Opportunities for producers to collaborate in the research process and inform solutions to community-based issues. These projects can include planting specific species, implementing certain practices, adopting specific management strategies, hosting research, or developing on-farm demonstration sites.

Research Development

Participants, typically aligned with an intended audience, may be invited to assist with various stages of research. For example, a tree nut researcher may seek out current nut growers to provide feedback on a proposed planting design and project timeline. Common forms of participant involvement in research development include:

Advisory Groups - Producer or community groups selected to provide feedback and insight into the development, progression, and/or findings of a project.

Pilot Testing - Stakeholder groups formed for initial testing of research tools (such as surveys, new technologies, products, etc.) before their official launch.



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Examples of Producer Involvement in Agroforestry Research



Between 2023 – 2024, a PhD student created a **producer advisory group** with 5 participants to provide feedback and insight into the development, progression, and findings of a long-term woodland silvopasture project at University of Missouri's Thompson Research Farm. In exchange for their counsel, producers participated in focused workshops on key aspects of establishing and managing a woodland silvopasture including woodland management, prescribed burning, and forage establishment. Collaborations with university personnel, non-profit organizations, and local production companies facilitated farm tours and hands-on workshops within each management focus. Participants were reimbursed for their mileage and compensated for their expertise and time.

In 2023, a PhD student sought to understand the incentives and obstacles facing elderberry growers in the state of Missouri. She used social media channels, grower networks, and existing contacts to distribute a **survey to current elderberry growers** to learn about their experiences. Approximately 75 growers completed the survey, which took approximately 20 minutes and asked key questions about their production, processing, and marketing as well as challenges they faced. Respondents were compensated with gift cards.



The **Chestnut Improvement Network (CIN)** is an active on-farm participatory research program where growers can become Breeding Members. Interested chestnut growers can purchase a minimum of 250 seedlings representing 5 different seedling families from the Center for Agroforestry's chestnut breeding program. There is no cost of membership beyond the initial purchase of the CIN plant material. Breeding Members then collaborate with CIN research staff to evaluate and make field selections from these families. Benefits of CIN participation include technical assistance from CIN staff, education on traits of importance and how/when to track them, collaborations with researchers for field selections, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing opportunities.

How Can I Participate in Research at the Center for Agroforestry?

Our active research projects are always changing, so it is best to stay connected with us through channels such as our monthly **"Action in Agroforestry" e-newsletter**, our website **CenterforAgroforestry.org**, or our social media pages **@MizzouAgroforestry**. Researchers will often use these channels to post calls/announcements when searching for partners, collaborators, or participants.

Additionally, staying involved with relevant producer networks is also a good strategy. Researchers from the Center for Agroforestry, as well as other universities or organizations, will often seek out these networks when searching for research participants who fit their criteria.



What Can I Expect as a Research Participant?

Frequently Asked Questions

Compensation

Some projects may offer compensation for participant involvement, such as a gift card, entry into a raffle giveaway or mileage reimbursement. Recruitment materials will state when compensation is available, but it is not always included in research projects.

Privacy and Protection

Researchers must protect their participants and keep their information confidential. This process is managed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB oversees and approves all human-subjects-based research projects at the University of Missouri to ensure adequate protections over the collection, handling, and storage of participant data.

Time Commitment

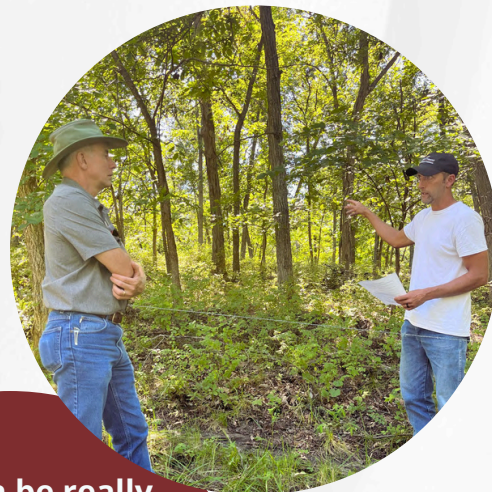
Research projects can vary widely in level of time commitment. **Short-term commitments** can include surveys (5 minutes to an hour) or interviews (20 minutes to 1+ hours) that may vary in length depending on the topic. Focus groups may take one or multiple hours depending on the number of participants in the group, the topic to be discussed, and the structure of the session(s). **Long-term commitments** can include on-farm participatory research, such as the example outlined on page 2, depending on the scope of the project and the types of species, practices, and/or management strategies being assessed.

Before you consent to participate, a researcher should inform you how much time is expected. With many projects, such as surveys or interviews, you can request to stop participation any time.

This publication was supported by the North Central SARE Graduate Student Grant, Award Number GNC22-347.

Please note that the expectations for participants will vary depending on the kind of research being conducted.

Below are some general guidelines of what one might expect to encounter as a research participant.



"You can be really confident [in your knowledge] and still learn an amazing amount of information from someone else's experience or perspective."

– 2024 Research Participant



More Information

For additional information on how to participate in ongoing or future research at the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, or to gain further information about active research programs and projects, please visit our website at <https://CenterForAgroforestry.org/>



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