



A successful demonstration of sustainable farm practices is being conducted in Gippsland by Clinton Tepler, a trained forester. Clinton has applied his knowledge of trees and planted out a 3 acre site and is growing a series of grasses and grain crops in the inter rows. He calls his system Multi Storey farming. (MSF) MSF is unique because it places equal importance on agriculture and trees, offering through integration, with each sector benefiting the other. To attain the potential benefits, the design of the system is critical to maximizing its potential. Tree spacing and species, agricultural system selection and livestock management need to match site type and capability for the objective of the client to be realized. Clinton stresses the following points.

You don't have to be big to be successful

MSF can be undertaken on both large and small-scale farm. Scale is not critical to the success of MSF. It is more about the quality of the integration of each storey. MSF has the potential to significantly increase productivity and profitability per ha and therefore make smaller enterprise more sustainable and viable.

A bigger engine - top to bottom

MSF offers substantial productivity improvements through the optimal use of soil resources and sunlight. Pasture and trees both use the topsoil and subsoil, and photosynthetic capacity is increased through different storeys of vegetation that can attain heights of 30 meters plus!

View trees for what they are

Trees are renewable assets that has been placed on this earth for many reasons. One of those is to help manage our farmland in sustainable, productive, fruitful and enjoyable fashion. Don't sell them short. If you have experienced trees as liability, ask yourself why they have become a liability? How can they be turned into an asset?

Consider all the storeys

For MSF to work in an optimal fashion, we need to consider the integration of soil, pasture/crops, livestock and trees in one system. It is okay if MSF on adjacent paddock or farm looks different. The system is considerable flexible and can be easily tailored to meet the objectives of different landlords.

Continuous management is vital

MSF is not designed to be established and then forgotten. MSF required continual monitoring and adaptive management to achieve the best outcome. Poor management will lead to poor outcomes.

Plan beyond the next election

MSF is dynamic system that changes as the trees grow. Therefore, initial planning needs to consider how the system might function in 20 years time when trees are close to their final size

Farming Secrets says: MSF Has Many Benefits That Can Be Incorporated On Most Farms

Ref: Clinton Tepler and Western Port Catchment Landcare Group