

Foreword

In the coming decade, farmers in the tropics will plant millions of trees in their fields. Twenty years ago most new trees on farms would have been wildings, nurtured wherever they germinated. What will change is that more trees will be deliberately planted in chosen niches on farms. Some of these plantings will be through direct sowing but in general they will come from seedlings or rooted cuttings raised in a nursery.

Research today into the domestication and performance of hundreds of agroforestry tree species is accompanying efforts to see the results of our research reach more people. The starting point for this is the tree, and the starting point for the tree is the nursery.

A great deal has been published about tree nurseries, but it concentrates on commercial plantation species. In this volume, the author has incorporated ideas and experiences from her own work and that of partners dealing with agroforestry tree species, and findings from published literature, to produce an invaluable technical guide.

Good tree nursery practices for research nurseries is more than a checklist of do's and don't's for nursery managers and researchers. It presents concise but thorough information on all aspects of raising high-quality planting stock, with lists of contacts and nursery suppliers. In addition to general recipes and suggestions, tips are provided for developing specific nursery approaches to cater for the diversity of tree species, locations and nursery resources available.

By producing and using better quality tree seedlings in research nurseries, the results of such research will provide maximum benefit to small-scale farmers who are planting trees. Farmers are asking for tree stock with good survival rates, fast early growth and predictability of performance. Researchers experimenting to meet these aims need to use high-quality planting materials.

Greater recognition of the role of good tree nursery practices and quality tree seedlings in ensuring sustainable and profitable agroforestry systems is needed. This manual aims to promote such recognition among researchers. A companion volume, *Good tree nursery practices for community nurseries*, aims to do the same among farmers, NGOs and community groups. Let us hope that they and others change the common slogan of "plant a tree" to "plant a quality seedling".

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