CLASS NOTES

Season 1, Episode 7: Forestry & Finance: The Economics of U.S. Christmas Tree Farms

Featured Guests: Dr. Jamie Bookwalter and Dr. Will Kohlway, North Carolina State Extension

Key Takeaways

- Many considerations go into the decision-making process when choosing a real or artificial Christmas tree.
- The average Christmas tree takes 12 years to reach maturity, and the majority are grown in only a few counties.
- North Carolina is one of the largest Christmas tree producing areas, and its Christmas tree farmers were heavily impacted by Hurricane Helene.
- Because of the length of time it takes to prepare a tree for harvest, the economic impacts of these losses may not be felt in its entirety for several years down the line.
- Christmas trees are a part of the larger Forestry industry. Forests provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and enhanced water quality.

Additional Resources

- National Christmas Tree Association: https://realchristmastrees.org/
- North Carolina State Extension Christmas Trees: https://christmastrees.ces.ncsu.edu/

Discussion Questions

- If you are purchasing a Christmas tree, would you choose a real or artificial tree? Where would you purchase it from and why?
- What different types of ecosystem services can you think of that forests provide?
- Which one do you think is more eco-friendly?
- What do you value most in your decision-making process?
- How would the impact to a tree farm from a natural disaster be different from the impact to other agricultural commodity productions? How do you think this impacts their preparation and recovery?
- Is there an ethical obligation to recover forests after a natural disaster? Who does that responsibility fall to and how can it best be accomplished?
- For a farm centered around a holiday product, what challenges does that introduce to the business model?

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