

Tree planting

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There was an interesting, encouraging but realistic article in the

Guardian today on tree planting. The easiest way to cut carbon emissions is not to produce the carbon in the first place. One if not the easiest way to do this is in the area of agriculture and one of these areas is forestry. It seems as part of the Paris climate agreement countries have pledged to plant trees and lots of them. China has pledged to plant a forest the size of Ireland. Countries in latin America have pledged to restore 20M Ha of damaged forest and in Africa pledged have been made to restore 100M Ha. India has said they will plant 13M Ha hectares. Last year volunteers made a start on this planting over 66 million trees [in one day](#) A whole heap of other countries in Europe have also made pledges. Worldwide its now 120 countries. There are many good reasons for planting trees. These include wellbeing (mental health benefits, physical health benefits (from natural products), but also other tangible physical benefits. These include creating or increasing rainfall and holding soil together. Trees also act as windbreaks and can be used for fuel. Chopping forests down risk creating desert. I saw this first hand over 20 years ago in Sumatra. So why the enthusiasm? Its easy to see governments see this as an easy win. In principle planting trees is not unpopular. We need some caution though. Mistakes have been made in the past. In the UK monocultural plantations of non native species were planted by government. These proved unpopular. In addition private forests in the UK have been badly managed. This is an issue with new planting it needs looking after. I have written before about a carbon offsetting tree scheme by a rock star in a very remote part of Scotland, the very young trees had all died. In the developed world the best way is to involve local populations. This has been done successfully in Mali and Pakistan using a system agriculture called agroforestry. In this crops and trees are interspersed. Another note of caution. Whilst deforestation has slowed in countries such as Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia a good deal of logging (illegal or legal) is still taking place, mainly to plant monoculture such as palm oil. The easiest forest is the one still standing not the one to be planted from scratch. Neil

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