A forest economist seeks to understand human decisions that impact forests.

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Important Scientist Characteristics:
Determination, because I usually don't get everything right the first time (or the second or third time)! Self-awareness to realize when I am getting things wrong, and creativity to find ways around the problems that are keeping me from getting it right!

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: Agroforestry means including trees in fields together with crops or livestock. Agroforestry can provide a lot of benefits for the environment, but is it good business? What programs would help farmers try something new like agroforestry?

Technology or equipment used in research:
I use a standard laptop computer. With that computer I can do things like simulate thousands or millions of possible scenarios for tree and crop growth, and prices for buying and selling products like timber and crops.

Most Exciting Discovery
If we had programs that paid farmers for their trees taking carbon dioxide out of the air, then some kinds of agroforestry would make more money than growing crops alone. However, planting trees reduces farmers' flexibility, so they still might not want to do it.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist? I have always been fascinated by the natural world. After studying chemistry in college, I joined the U.S. Peace Corps in Paraguay, and I met many farmers. I realized that humans make decisions that impact the environment for good and bad, and science will help humans make better decisions.

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