
Editorial

***Tropical and
Subtropical
Agroecosystems***

SCOPE, SECTIONS, POLICIES AND LANGUAGE ISSUES IN TSA

Tropical and Subtropical Agroecosystems (TSA) has declared from its beginning the following focus and scope “The Journal is an international peer-reviewed publication devoted to disseminate all information contributing to the understanding and development of agroecosystems in tropical and subtropical areas. The Journal recognizes the multidisciplinary nature of its scope and encourages the submission of material from all of the disciplines involved in this area. Contributions are welcomed in relation to the study of particular components of the agroecosystems (i.e. plant, animal, soil) as well as the resulting interactions and their relationship/impact on society and environment (socio-economic aspects).”

The way we understand this scope has been a matter of eventual discussions between the editor and interested reviewers, as well as some members of the editorial board, a clarification being frequently requested. Here we offer a more in deep description of what the scope is intended to cover. Tropical and Subtropical Agroecosystems is devoted to all agricultural and biological studies which can serve to increase the understanding, improve the efficiency, and lead to sustainability of agroecosystems. Understanding by agroecosystems the study unit of agricultural production systems where human control is set as the bottom line on the interaction with a set of natural resources immersed in a landscape, contributing to the production of feed, foods and raw materials that society as a whole demand, as well as the improvement of the livelihood of rural population. Thus, expected contributions are in terms of animal production, crop production, ecosystem maintenance, environmental services, etc.

Some “conventional” researchers feel that agroecosystems or systems studies are not “hard” science and find difficult to review “research papers” focused on a multidisciplinary or “non-conventional” approach. However, these types of papers are clearly needed and find their righteous place in TSA. Thus, in order to differentiate them from “conventional research papers” a new section has been created with a more clear definition of what is expected.

Agroecosystems studies. This is a multidisciplinary section, including multitrophic research in agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and livestock production systems. Agroecosystems studies are meant not solely to describe the current situation, but suggest methodological approaches, compare scenarios (SWOT, Ishikawa, etc.), develop models and projections, analyze historical context while giving value to the existing condition. Local knowledge with new applications or traditional applications with management or technological improvements are also welcomed. Interdisciplinary work to review of policies, laws, and standards, or to find solutions for natural resources and agroecosystems management is also encouraged, as well as novel processes or new perspectives of topics leading to the understanding and development of tropical and subtropical agroecosystems with a proper methodological or scientific support.

As not every piece of research can deal with the multidisciplinary approach expected when dealing with agroecosystems, we have received and continue to receive research manuscripts dealing with particular aspects/components of agroecosystems. They will be allocated on the **Research papers** and **Short note** sections. We are convinced that **Agroecosystems studies** and **Research papers** are equally valuable, hence they do not have any particular characteristic to distinguish them apart, as **Short notes, Reviews, Forum** and **Letters** do have (a section descriptor above the paper’s title). The only distinction between **Agroecosystems studies** and **Research papers** will be found in the table of contents where both section will be presented.

We have also redefined the **Forum** and **Letter** sections, starting from next issue:

Forum. Editorial promoting discussion of topics in agroecosystems. It includes new or controversial topics which are presented and discussed with references support which might include unpublished information (submitted or in press) by the author. It should include a brief summary (c. 5-10 lines) clearly stating the point raised/discussed. It will be subject to peer review.

Letters. Brief comment, discussion, rebuttal of information presented in a paper published in TSA. It includes the reply by the author(s) of the referred paper. The letter should contribute to clarify issues raised in the published paper. It will published after assessment by the editor, if positive, the author of the original paper will be given the opportunity to prepare a reply which will be published in the same issue.

We hope this new description will clarify the journal aims and its sections scope. However, it is also clearly necessary to clarify what we do not expect to be submitted to TSA, which are papers with main emphasis on urban landscape, animal welfare, human health, human and veterinary pharmacology, surgery and closely related areas, meat quality *per se* or closely related papers of food science as those focused on human sensorial analysis (nevertheless papers dealing with food and feed composition and animal feeding to improve animal product quality are welcomed). Manuscripts dealing with subjects related to pure or analytical chemistry methods, as well as those evaluating pesticides, herbicides or closely related products *per se* and not as controls treatments when evaluating sustainable alternatives are also not encouraged.

As a rule of thumb, we would welcome documents dealing with the productive side of agroecosystems as a whole or focused on its components (i.e. soil, water, plants, animals or fauna), as well as those dealing with its description and maintenance (ecological/environmental, economically, biological diversity). From the social point of view, we welcome papers involving peasants/campesinos/producers/farmers in studies as those already described in the **Agroecosystems studies** section.

In a different matter, The Journal is now reaching its seventh year of publication. Volume 1, issue 1, was published in 2002 and issue 2-3 was published in 2003 being a special issue (see web page). All three issues of volume 2 were published in 2003. Since then every year three regular issues are published each year, and special issues are kept in separate volumes. With the inclusion of the Journal in the “Índice de Revistas Mexicanas de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica” of CONACyT-México (www.conacyt.mx/Indice/Indice_6.html), we have had an increment in the number of submission from mexican authors, as now work published in TSA is recognized by diverse mexican evaluation systems. The journal has grown from publishing around five papers per issue to more than fifteen in this volume. We have no intention to increase periodicity in the short time; instead the number of papers per issue will keep increasing.

Due to the recent increase of submission in Spanish language, the current proportion of published English manuscript has dropped from 80-90% to 60%. That is as low as we want it to be. TSA journal has from its beginning set a policy of accepting papers in either Spanish or English language as this feature do not seems to jeopardize its chance to be indexed by the major services. However, policies of major indexing services do have some restrictions; papers in languages other than English must have English summary/abstract (TSA does have it), and majority of published papers should be in English. We understand a majority as a proportion higher than 60%. Hence we are in the need to establish the policy of scheduling issues with at least 60% of papers in English language. Thus, accepted manuscripts in Spanish will be scheduled for publication in order to keep the 60:40 % English:Spanish proportion. As English manuscript will have priority, authors of papers initially submitted in Spanish that are accepted for publication, do have the opportunity to submit the corrected manuscript in English, as long as they also provide a letter of the translation service (or native speaker) employed to translate the paper, which will generally result in a faster publication process than those papers in Spanish.

Finally, many authors frequently ask about the impact factor (IF) by ISI of TSA. We all need to be aware of the evaluation processes and time lapse involved in getting a journal covered by ISI and hence having an IF (thomsonreuters.com/business_units/scientific/free/essays/journalselection/). Since 2007 TSA is being evaluated by ISI. The current public policy of ISI does not state the length of the evaluation period; however they have told TSA that it might take longer than two years to get a result. Because we believe in the quality and potential impact of the issues covered by TSA, we ask our readers and contributing authors to cite those papers published in TSA that can support subjects in their work to be published by ISI covered journals. This might eventually increase the non-official IF and hence get TSA finally covered. After that, it takes two more years to get an official ISI IF. This is a common problem faced by young journals being highly cited or not. The following editorial by “journal of biology” is an example of this topic and is recommended for interested readers (<http://jbiol.com/content/6/3/5>).

We sincerely hope this editorial will assist readers and authors understanding current policies of TSA.

Carlos A. Sandoval Castro and Juan A. Villanueva Jiménez
Editors.