

Mapping forest encroachments will take 16 years, FSI says

12 August 2019

FSI attributes the delays in mapping is to many states not having provided data on forest dwellers and satellite imagery's inability to grasp every facet of authentication described by law—non-timber forest produce, grazing, etc, won't show up in satellite images.



FSI used satellite images from 2005/2009 to 2018-19. (Reuters)

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) has said that it will take around 16 years to map alleged encroachments in forest areas. Following the Supreme Court's February 28 order, FSI was supposed to carry out satellite surveys to assess encroachment. FSI used satellite images from 2005/2009 to 2018-19. However, the 16 years that it has asked for from the SC pushes 200 million tribal and other traditional forest dwellers into uncertainty. Moreover, the time-frame means the extent of encroachment will have grown significantly compared to now. According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, till September 30, 2018, 4.2 million individual and community claims by forest dwellers were filed, of which, 1.9 million were rejected.

FSI attributes the delays in mapping is to many states not having provided data on forest dwellers and satellite imagery's inability to grasp every facet of authentication described by law—non-timber forest produce, grazing, etc, won't show up in satellite images. The FSI also claimed shortage of staff and infrastructure. Satellite imagery can be supplemented with drone image-capturing and livelihood & resource-mapping can be used by authorities. Moreover, civil society organisations working with tribal groups for FRA should provide the data and reports they have gathered over the years to FSI. If the Centre is keen on striking a balance between the rights of forest dwellers, development and the environment and forests, strengthening infrastructure and human resources at FSI is must—FDI estimates this would cost a mere Rs 48 crore. The FSI clearly needs to pace up the survey, but states, the Centre and civil society organisations, too, must assist FSI to ensure a just society for millions of forest dwellers.

Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/mapping-forest-encroachments-will-take-16-years-fsi-says/1672880/>