

## Forest Certification

Dr VK Bahuguna

September 17, 2023, 16:07:43



Forest Certification is the buzz word these days in most of the discussions in India at the policy and other levels as many people and organizations are jockeying around the government of India for a system to certify the wood produced in the country as Forest deforestation has direct links with the growth of population and industrial growth and development. In the recently ended G 20 summit Chaired so ably by India and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi the world leaders promised to work for protection of environment and nature as a shared responsibility for a better world to live. Ever since the first meet on global Environment in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro In Brazil, the world leaders had been continuously discussing the measures to be taken at the global level to check destruction of natural forests and protection of environment in various multi-lateral inter-governmental and other forums. Every one from developed to developing countries have been expressing solidarity for the protection of environment and conservation of forests. However, the perception and motives of the developed and developing world has been different. For example, in the United Nation Forum for Forests (UNFF) the developed world wanted to adopt a legally binding instrument on how to manage the forests to tackle deforestation. In the second UNFF summit in early 2004 India and other developing countries strongly opposed the legally binding instrument on the forests as a huge population is living in and around the forests are dependent on the forests and other natural resources for their livelihoods and hence such instruments are neither necessary nor expedient. At the same time as in 2022 out of the 4.1 billion hectares of world forests (31% of the global landmass) around 4.1 million hectares equivalent to 11 football field per minutes were lost as per the research published by the World Resources Institute. This loss of forest produced 2.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emission which incidentally is equivalent to India's emission of burning fossil fuel. Around 15 billion trees are cut down every year. The Global Forest Watch project – using satellite imagery – estimates that global tree loss in 2019 was 24 million hectares. According to the FAO, Nigeria has the world's highest deforestation rate of primary forests. It has lost more than half of its primary forest in the last five years.

In view of emerging scenario a few concerned scientists and activists have proposed forest certification in early nineties to protect forest from deforestation and enforce sustainable forest management. It gradually became a tool to force the developing tropical countries to manage their forest sustainably. Many developed countries like America developed their own systems. Though it is said to be voluntary but had assumed the status of a trade barrier. In India, it was started first when in early 2000 the exporters of Indian wooden handicrafts were forced to get certificate from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) a Canada based organization about the sustainability of the wood harvested for making and exporting the handicrafts. Ever since then there emerged a possibility of creating a business in the name of certification because the Indian handicraft export is worth more than Rs 155 billion Rupees in 2022. The Canada based FSC and Geneva based Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) with the help of some Indian businessmen and other interested individuals started developing models for the certification of the forests. Most of the material for handicrafts and wood comes from private tree growers up to the tune of 85% of the wood in India but wrongfully the focus started shifting on government controlled natural forests which are managed through working plans which is based on the periodically up dated working plan code. The working plan code has set criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of the forests and thus there is no need for the market-based certification mechanism for the government-controlled forests in India. Further, as a nation we are the net importer of timber and if once we fall in this trap, we will be willy-nilly creating a mechanism akin to legally binding instrument.

This certification business is a trade barrier but no country is willing to take stand to oppose it officially because the euphemism is that it is voluntary and market based. So most of the countries have created their own forest certification mechanism. Now Ministry of Environment has apparently decided to create mechanism so that there is no hassles for the exporters because for many years the certifications were issued without proper field checks by the private agencies and it became a money earning venture for the so-called experts supported by the foreign bodies. Because of the private agencies' involvement, it was a big failure and a scam. Considering the overall international situation this writer support creation of a mechanism for certification provided it does not allow any foreign monitoring of management of four forests. The government of India need to look into the American and Russian system of certification. American Tree Farm System and Sustainable Forestry Initiatives are providing flexible and range of systems like separate mechanism for small tree growers as well as landscape based single system. In India we have a very stable and professionally sound forestry system available. The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM),

Regional Offices of the Ministry and huge professionals as chartered foresters. A National Forest Certification Council should be set up. The IIFM Bhopal which has been doing some work on it for last few years could be the nodal agency and coordinating secretariat for this purpose. The ICFRE has reach all over the country with solid scientific back up. ICFRE should be assigned the auditing task and and to issue the certificate in the certification process and provide and train the chartered foresters who can be employed by it. The Certification body should include expert from Industry, exporters and state representatives. The work of Quality Council of India on this subject should be transferred to IIFM and ICFRE as Quality Council lacks the necessary forestry expertise needed to do this job.

(The author is former Director- General of ICFRE, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Forest and climate Change Government of India)

**(Tripurainfo)**

### You can post your comments below

Name \*

Email \*

Address

Comments \*

### Posted comments

| Posted On | Name | Email | Comment |
|-----------|------|-------|---------|
|-----------|------|-------|---------|

---

## TRIPURAINFO

City Office

HGB Road, Post Office Choumohoni, Beside Tripura Women's Police Station,  
Agartala, West Tripura, INDIA.

### Tripura

[About Tripura](#)

[Governor](#)

[Chief Minister](#)

### Services

[Matrimonials](#)

[Jobs Info](#)

[Property Info](#)

### Archives

[English Articles](#)

[Bengali Articles](#)

[News Archives](#)