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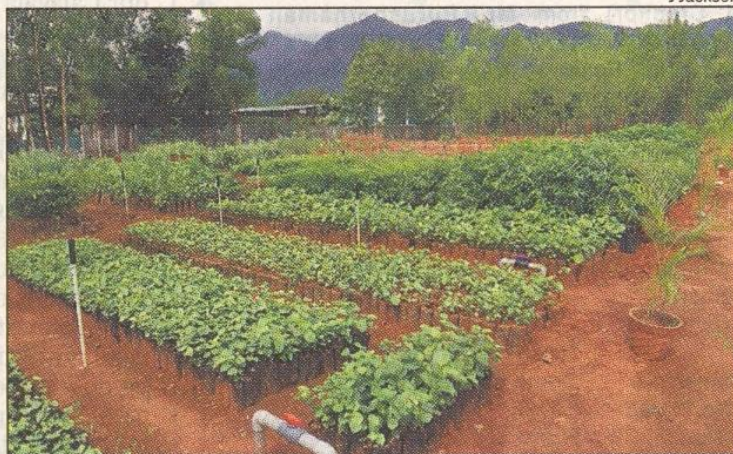
# Forest college's R&D nursery creating cloned trees

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**Coimbatore:** Despite a power shutdown on Kotagiri Road, where TNAU's forest college and research institute (FCRI) is located, work continues at a brisk pace at the newly-inaugurated research and development nursery.

While some workers monitor the pop-up sprinklers which only mist, and not water, the new clones, others carefully observe the newly-mated lemon-scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) and kadam varieties.

The R&D nursery, inaugurated a week ago, is creating a clone bank for 24 tree varieties that have a ready demand in the market. The varieties were chosen based on Tamil Nadu Agro climatic zones and wood-based industries' requirements.



J Jackson

**MONEY GROWS ON TREES!** The nursery is creating a clone bank for 24 tree varieties that have a ready demand in the market

"The 24 varieties are categorized based on industries it serves like pulpwood, plywood, timber, energy, oilseed and high-value species. We developed them by identifying superior varieties and species in the last 20 years, improved them, cloned them and mass-

multiplied them," said FCRI dean K T Parthiban. "We have clones with high cellulose and low lignin for paper industries, medium dense wood for plywood industries and such distinct characteristics for each variety."

The institute has already

released six of the 24 varieties including casuarina MTP 1 and 2, Melia dubia MTP1 and 2, kadam MTP 1 and eucalyptus MTP 1. "While casuarina is meant for pulpwood, Melia dubia can be used for pulpwood within 18 to 24 months and plywood after three to five years," said Parthiban. "The kadam MTP1 and eucalyptus MTP1 are both multipurpose trees. While kadam can be used for plywood, pencil and fuel after five years, eucalyptus can be used for pulp, plywood and energy."

Scientists at the university are working on releasing the remaining 18 varieties, including Toona T CO2 for plywood, subabul LL 45 for pulpwood and energy, teak TK07 and mahogany SM19 for timber. "While some are being validated by industries, others are being cloned," said head of department of agroforestry I Sekar.

"Top paper, plywood and timber industries have validated our varieties and readily buy wood from farmers after the trees mature. In fact, we get into a tripartite agreement with every farmer planting our clones. The third party is the industry and support price is fixed. So, once the trees mature, the farmer just contacts the industry that will collect them and pay up immediately."

The clones are already being cultivated by 55,000 farmers across 75,000 hectares across the state for the last 10 years. They want to reach 1.5 lakh hectares by multiplying and releasing clones from the new R&D lab. FCRI has also formed a consortium with other stakeholders in agroforestry, including wood-based industries, established tree farmers, tree fellers, wood chippers and agroforestry-based business incubators.