

**Forest dept. preparing data bank on sandalwood trees**

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Forest Department officials recording the details of a sandalwood tree on a private land in Marayur, Idukki.

For the first time, the Forest Department is preparing a data bank on sandalwood trees in private land and those owned by institutions and government departments.

A geo-tag will be prepared and it will help in identifying a particular tree, its location, and physical details, and it will be digitised to keep the data on the records of forest and revenue departments.

**Theft**

The data bank is being prepared in the wake of an increased number of sandalwood theft from private land. At present, the Forest Department has no data on the sandalwood trees in private land, though they are geo-tagged in Marayur Sandalwood Division and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, the main areas of sandalwood directly under the Forest Department.

Marayur Divisional Forest Officer B. Renjith said that the work on geo-tagging the sandalwood in private land would begin next week. A 20- member students team from the College of Forestry

under Kerala Agriculture University would do the work. The data collected including the width and height of each tree would be digitised and updated every five years, he said adding that notices were already given to private individuals asking for the number of trees under their ownership.

Marayur forest range officer M.G. Vinodkumar said that though the private individuals were the owners of sandalwood trees on their land, in protecting them, they lagged behind resulting in sandalwood thefts. "The price for sandalwood is given to the owners of private land when put in the auction. Only a minor amount is deducted as handling charges," he said.

The geo-tagging will help in identifying a particular tree, easy accessibility to the location its monetary value and other details. In Anchunadu valley including Marayur, there are a number of sandalwood trees in private land. It is also alleged that farmers often destroy sandalwood at early ages.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/forest-dept-preparing-data-bank-on-sandalwood-trees/article37168366.ece>