



Indian paper industry urges govt to allow pulpwood plantation in degraded land

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NEW DELHI: The Indian paper industry, which is facing inadequate raw material availability, has urged the government to offer degraded forest land and non-forest government land near mills for pulpwood plantation, a move that will also help increase the green cover in the country. Raw material security is necessary for the paper industry to become self-reliant, said the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) in its pre-budget submission to the finance ministry, asking to consider its proposal for allowing pulpwood plantation in degraded land. Being a wood fibre-deficient country, inadequate raw material availability has emerged as a major constraint for the domestic paper industry in meeting the growing demand for paper led by drivers such as growth in the education sector and discouraging use of single-use plastic, said an IPMA statement.

IPMA President A S Mehta, "We sincerely want the government to consider our proposal of offering degraded land to the industry for pulpwood plantation. Restoration of degraded land through plantation by the paper industry could help India meet its target of increasing green cover in the country and make India a world leader in paper manufacturing." Terming it as a "win-win", he said this will also lead to the greening of India, unlocking the significant potential for employment generation, especially in rural areas.

According to IPMA, the organised paper industry has invested around Rs 25,000 crore in the past few years but raw material constraints are putting a spanner in the works. "Current demand for wood, one of the key raw materials, by India's paper industry is about 11 million tonnes per annum (TPA), against domestic availability of nine million TPA, and is projected to rise to 15 million TPA by 2024-25 at the current rates of growth," it said. The paper industry has brought around 1.2 million hectares of land under plantations through industry-driven agro/ farm forestry, said IPMA adding that India's paper industry is wood-positive as it plants more trees than it harvests. It may be recalled that under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), India needs to bring an additional 25-30 million hectares of degraded land under forest and tree cover to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. "The government should consider making degraded forest land and non-forest government land available to the paper industry in close proximity of the mills for plantation activities. "India's paper industry looks forward to partnering in building Green India and contributing to the national objective of bringing 33 per cent of the landmass in India under tree cover," it said.

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