

Agri Business

TREES OUTSIDE FOREST PROJECT

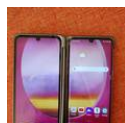
Intense promotion of agro forestry will make India net exporter of wood products: Expert panel

V Sajeed Kumar Kochi | Updated on December 01, 2020 | Published on December 01, 2020



Aggressive adoption of agro forestry under Trees Outside Forests (TOF) project could propel India to a position of net exporter of wood and wood products from its current status of net importer.

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TOF has significantly buffered the pressure on the country's declining forest resources besides helping to meet the burgeoning need for domestic biomass and industrial wood, said an expert committee report

on the strategy for “Increasing Green Cover outside Reserved Forest Area”.

Quoting an FAO study, the report said 93 per cent of industrial wood demand is met from TOF. The latest India State of Forest Report pegs forest cover at 70.82 million hectares against 33 per cent of vegetated cover in the National Forest Policy underlining the fact that India holds huge potential in TOF area, particularly through expansion of agro forestry.

Enhance farmers’ income

The committee said the growth of agro forestry will be a win-win for both the agriculture sector and the forest sector as it enables the farming community to enhance its income.

The expert committee was constituted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change to formulate a strategy to increase the green cover/tree cover outside recorded forest areas and particularly agro forestry.

India has set a goal to have 33 per cent of its geographical area under Forest and Tree Cover (FTC). The Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets the creation of an additional forest/tree cover by 2030 as committed by the country under the Paris Agreement of UNFCCC.

Additional cover

The creation of an additional tree cover through agro forestry will have many spins off benefits such as higher income for farmers and extra earnings from tree cropping.

With the availability of large number of government and banking sector schemes to encourage tree cultivation outside forest regions, the committee stressed on the need for developing a few business models

on pilot basis to grow trees outside the domain of routine project funding.

It recommended short rotation crops to allow farmers reap the benefit of wood harvest in a shorter period. The report suggested rationalisation of existing regulatory framework to boost incentives and strengthen business models and highlighted policy initiatives and acceptability of TOF in shaping agro forestry in Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

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