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**Karnataka: Forest Development Corporation wants to grow eucalyptus trees; conservationists say 'no'**

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BENGALURU: Officials from Karnataka State Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) are approaching the state government and the Karnataka forest department, seeking permission to grow eucalyptus trees in the lands leased to them.

Even before the proposal is submitted it has been strongly criticised by conservationists, experts and even some serving forest department officials.

Of the 44,000 hectares land leased to KFDC, the officials are proposing to grow Eucalyptus in areas that face the threat of encroachment, more so in areas like Kolar, Hassan, Dharwad and other dry lands. The permission is being sought for growing the species, commercially selling them to paper mills as raw material.

An official from KFDC told *The New Indian Express*: “The proposal is being sent to the government, with the scientific backing that the roots of the species do not go more than five feet below the earth and so does not suck out all the water. It is also a fast-growing species, so with continued monitoring the species will grow and be sold to paper mills. This will ensure a check is maintained on the land constantly to keep away encroachers. Farmers also have no problem with growing the species as it requires little or no maintenance.”

However, conservationists state that the species has been banned by the courts and the Ministry of Environment and Forests. It sucks out all the water from the soil and should not be encouraged. On one hand, where the department is working to clear eucalyptus, on the other, KFDC is proposing to grow them.

K M Chinnappa, Trustee, Wildlife First, said it is a bad idea and should not be encouraged. Instead, the government can think of bamboo and other native species which will not just control encroachment but will also be useful.

senior forest department official said: “We are supporting the proposal but not clearing it as it is for the government to take a call. We are in a fix. Though the intention is to help paper mills and is commercially viable, on the other, the species is banned by the government. Interestingly the ban rests upon government and forest lands, but private companies continue to grow.”

Tara Anuradha, Chairperson of KFDC, said the proposal will be given to the government and they will make the final decision.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, R K Singh said that the matter is for the government to clear and KFDC should see what is economically and ecologically viable.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2022/jun/22/karnataka-forest-development-corporation-wants-to-grow-eucalyptus-trees-conservationists-say-39no39-2468461.html>