

No plan to change 'forest cover' definition at present: Govt

04 February 2022

New Delhi: India has "no plan", at present, to change the definition of "forest cover and very dense forest", Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State, [Ministry of Environment](#), Forest & Climate Change, has said in the Rajya Sabha.

The definition of forest cover in ISFR represents true picture as described, he added.

The minister was responding to MP Vandana Chavan's question: "If the government is aware that the current definition of 'forest cover' in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) does not differentiate between natural forests and plantations, thereby providing an incomplete picture of the status of forests, whether the ISFR used ancillary field datasets to define 'very dense' forests and also, whether the government planned to change the definition of forest cover and very dense forests to better reflect country's actual forest cover."

India's definition of forest has been taken on the basis of three criteria as per the decision under Kyoto Protocol and very well accepted by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for their reporting or communications, the Rajya Sabha was told.

The forest can be defined by any country depending upon the capacities and capabilities of the country. The three criteria based on which the forests are defined, comprises, crown cover percentage, minimum area of stand and minimum height of trees.

"The forest cover is defined as 'all land, more than one hectare in area, with a tree canopy density of more than 10 per cent irrespective of ownership and legal status. Such land may not necessarily be a recorded forest area. It also includes orchards, bamboo and palm'," the minister elaborated.

Further the minister said: "In ISFR-2021 published by the Ministry on January 13, 2022, the forest cover figures are divided as 'Inside Recorded Forest Area' and 'Outside Recorded Forest Area'. Those 'Inside Recorded Forest Area' are basically natural forests and plantations of the Forest Department. The forest cover 'Outside Recorded Forest Area' are mango orchards, coconut plantations, block plantations of agro-forestry."

"Thus, data of mango plantations etc is automatically getting separated out as the Forest Survey of India is reporting the figures of 'Outside Recorded Forest Area' separately," he added.

The interpretation of satellite data for classifying 'Very Dense Forest' (VDF) is also supported by the ancillary data such as field inventory data of FSI, ground truthing data and high-resolution satellite imagery wherever required, he added.

Source: <https://www.thehansindia.com/news/national/no-plan-to-change-forest-cover-definition-at-present-govt-727737>