

Rs 457 crore NABARD loan to help TN restore 33,290 ha of degraded forest

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CHENNAI: The State government on Monday announced an ambitious project to restore 33,290 hectares of degraded forest land in Tamil Nadu over the next five years. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs 457 crore loan for implementing the 'Restoration of Degraded Forests Landscape Project'.

According to Supriya Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Forests and Climate Change Department, a total of 33.50 lakh seedlings will be planted under the project. "Forest areas with less than 0.4 density and forests of important watersheds, to improve recharge of groundwater, have been identified under the project. As of 2021, about 11,792 sqkm of forest area (including grasslands) has less than 0.4 density. Areas from where invasive species were removed will also be covered under the project," she said.

Based on a proposal sent by the State, the Centre has sanctioned "Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project for Climate Change Response (TBGPCCR)", a JICA-funded project, to be implemented at an outlay of Rs 920.52 crore over eight years from 2022-23 to 2029-30. The project aims to increase carbon storage by 4 lakh MT by 2032, restore 3.6 hectares of coral reef area, 600 hectares of sea grass and 300 hectares of seaweed, increase mangrove cover area by 1,050 hectares, and increase Trees Outside Forest (TOF) cover by 60,000 hectares.

"In the first year, it is proposed to plant and raise 68.40 lakh seedlings in urban and periurban areas and establish hi-tech central nurseries in eight forestry extension centres at an outlay of Rs 116.81 crore," sources said. The government is also working on a policy to control and eliminate invasive alien species in forest areas. Tamil Nadu, including the Western Ghats, is among the chief invasion hotspots in the country. An expert committee constituted by the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court estimated the area under five major invasive alien species to be around 2,68,100 hectares.

While Rs 5 crore has been allocated by the State this year for removing invasive species, Rs 17.42 crore has also been earmarked under the JICA-Tamil Nadu funded Biodiversity Conservation and Greening Project for Climate Change Response Project for removing such species.

In numbers: tn's Green cover

As per the latest India's State of Forest Report, 2021, the forest cover in the State is 626,419.23 sq km which is 20.31% of the State's Geographical area

The State has 3,593.01 sq.km of very dense forest (2.76 % of geographical area), 11,034.03 sq.km of moderately dense forest (8.48%) and 11,792.19 sq.km of open forest (9.07%)

Forest cover inside the Recorded Forest Area is 17531 sq km and the forest cover outside the RFA is 8888 sq km

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/apr/26/rs-457-crore-nabard-loan-to-help-tn-restore-33290-ha-of-degraded-forest-2446516.html>