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Social forestry fails to evoke good response

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Dharwad: In a bid to increase green cover and area under forest to meet the standard requirement of 33% of the total geographical area, the forest department has launched several afforestation schemes, including distribution of saplings.

However due to lack of proper knowledge and coordination, the schemes have not been successful to the expected level.

In Dharwad district, the forest department has launched 'Laksha Vruksha' scheme which envisages planting and growing one lakh saplings per year. As part of this, the saplings are planted under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme at schools, colleges, campus of private institutions and open government spaces. In addition, there are schemes to grow trees by planting saplings near agriculture farms and in between crops.

The forest department is distributing saplings free of cost for plantation and pays a maintenance charge of Rs 35 for the first year, Rs 40 for the second year and Rs 50 for third year per tree to farmers. The scheme envisages planting of 400 trees per hectare. Malabar neem, mulberry and mahogany are being grown in nurseries, and 6.13 lakh saplings have thus been raised. But farmers are not eager to purchase them. Lack of information among farmers about the disposal of the fully grown trees is another factor why the scheme is not succeeding.

DCF Vivek Kavari said the demand for fast-growing trees is high. The department has distributed saplings of Malbar neem, mahogany, sandalwood and bamboo. So far in Kundgol, Navalgund, Kalghatagi and Hubballi zone, 6.13 lakh saplings, including 1.5 lakh mulberry saplings, have been distributed, the officer said.

The social forestry scheme has to be implemented in villages under 144 GPs in Dharwad district. Though there is adequate staff strength to implement the scheme, there is shortage of staff to reach the target of planting in a short period. There have been instances of plants getting lost due to non-cooperation of people, summer and other factors.

Panchayat development officers have been tasked to monitor the implementation of social forestry scheme in their respective jurisdictions.

While the scheme is doing well in Navalgund and Kalghatgi, the plantation programme is confined to planting saplings on World Environment Day, rued an environmentalist.