

Tripura attempting to boost economy with agar plantation

09 October 2022

Agar tree or *Aquilaria malaccensis*, a major source of medicines and perfumes, might be a critically endangered species on the IUCN list, but it grows in abundance in Tripura, giving the state a glorious opportunity to commercially cultivate the plant and boost the economy, a top forest official said.

Agar tree or *Aquilaria malaccensis*, a major source of medicines and perfumes, might be a critically endangered species on the IUCN list, but it grows in abundance in Tripura, giving the state a glorious opportunity to commercially cultivate the plant and boost the economy, a top forest official said.

Capital city Agartala has been named after the evergreen tree, he noted.

"Intercropping adaptation could make Agar a preferred cash crop, given the low input for management and growth," said Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) KS Sethi said.

Officials said the Tripura government, under its agarwood policy launched last year, aims to double plantation by 2025.

Agar trade is expected to generate around Rs 2,000 crore per annum for the state, they said.

The state government has applied for certification from Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for exporting Agarwood and other extracted products, stated Sethi.

"We are in touch with the CITES authorities for necessary clearances and certification after which we will be able to export Agarwood," he maintained.

Notably, Tripura aims to export 75,000 kg of agar chips and 1,500 kg of agar oil in the current fiscal, according to the policy.

"The state forest department is taking initiatives to set up a dedicated Agar market in North Tripura district and open another Agar International Trade and Research Centre (AITRC) in Agartala," the PCCF said.

The centre will also facilitate linking of Agar markets, he underlined, adding that funds have been allocated in the last state budget for setting up the research centre.

P L Agarwal, the director of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) Centre of Excellence, who looks after the Agar project in the state, said North Tripura has the highest concentration of Agar trees "So far, 1.13 crore Agar trees have been enumerated in the North Tripura district. In our census, it was found that around 56 lakhs trees have matured only recently. For the last couple of years, the state government has been making efforts to ensure the proliferation of Agar trees," said Agarwal.

Last year, around 10 lakh saplings were planted in the entire state, he said.

As many as 20 lakh Agar nurseries are expected to be raised in the next plantation season (April to October), he pointed out.

Both Sethi and Agarwal have recently visited Kadamtala in North Tripura, where the dedicated Agar market, with around 20 stalls, will be set up soon.

"Only growers having trade licences will be allowed to sell agar products, including oil, at the market," Agarwal added.

Source:<https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/tripura-attempting-to-boost-economy-with-agar-plantation-articleshow.html>