

*Draft*

# National Forest Policy, 2016

*Empowered Communities, Healthy Ecosystems, Happy Nation*



**Indian Institute of Forest Management**

The draft of the National Forest Policy, 2016 has been prepared by the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal (IIFM) based on village level focus group discussions, regional and national level consultations, inputs from various stakeholders and analysis of primary and secondary datasets carried out during the years 2015 and 2016. We are grateful to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India (MoEF&CC) for entrusting this task to IIFM, and acknowledge the financial support received for it from the UNDP.

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**Cover page illustration:**

*An artist's impression inspired by Warli folk art depicting the forest dependent communities on the inside, and other stakeholders on the outside. This policy strives to safeguard the country's natural heritage by empowering and enabling the local communities. The flow of benefits from the resultant healthy ecosystems to the entire nation is depicted in green.*

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# National Forest Policy, 2016

*Empowered Communities, Healthy Ecosystems, Happy Nation*

## 1. PREAMBLE

**Recognizing** that the National Forest Policy of 1988 prioritized forests for maintaining environmental stability and ecological balance, ushered in participatory forest management, gave a fillip to farm forestry and provided the local communities with the first charge on forest produce;

**Reaffirming** that it resulted in stabilizing the extent of the forests, despite competing demands from a rising population, industrialization and rapid economic growth;

**Taking note** that the last few decades also witnessed a decline in the quality of forests, impacts of climate change, rising human-wildlife conflict, intensifying water crises, growing air pollution on one hand, and multi-stakeholder oversight in forestry decision making, rights based framework to empower forest dependent communities, new technological advancements and higher levels of environmental awareness on the other;



A need was felt to revise the National Forest Policy, 1988 to integrate the vision of sustainable forest management based on the principles of ecosystem approach, landscape level planning and the learnings from participatory forest management while building on our rich cultural heritage of co-existence and eco-centrism.

## **2. GOAL**

Improve the health and vitality of forest ecosystems to meet the present and future needs of ecological security and biodiversity conservation with empowered and enabled communities.

## **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1** Continue with the national goal to have a minimum of one third of the total geographical area under forest or tree cover. Other ecosystems such as alpine meadows, grasslands, deserts, marine and coastal areas etc. should be protected and managed as well.
- 3.2** Adopt and institutionalise ecosystem approach in forest management at landscape level by including forestry and other natural resource based systems covering government owned, community owned, common and private lands.





- 3.3** Reverse the trend of degradation by arresting the decline in the extent of dense forests and by taking up large scale restoration of degraded forests.
- 3.4** Safeguard forest lands by exercising strict restraint on diversion for non-forestry purposes.
- 3.5** Bring one third of the government owned forests under the Community Forest Management (CFM) regime by the end of the next decade, with adequate safeguards.
- 3.6** Manage protected areas and other wildlife rich areas with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation and enriching other ecosystem services.
- 3.7** Factor green accounting, valuation of ecosystem services and climate change concerns adequately into the planning and management of all forests, protected areas and other ecosystems.
- 3.8** Double the tree cover outside forests by the end of the next decade by incentivizing agro-forestry and farm forestry, facilitating assured returns, with enabling regulations and by promoting the use of wood products.
- 3.9** Protect catchments of rivers and wetlands to enhance the hydrological contribution of forests in ground water recharge, water flows and water purification.



- 3.10** Integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in forest management and enhance by one third the carbon-dioxide equivalent sequestered in forests and trees by the end of the next decade.
- 3.11** Incentivize sustainability in community managed, community owned and private forests.
- 3.12** Expand greening of urban spaces to enhance citizen well-being.
- 3.13** Ensure effective translation of this policy into action by establishing credible measuring, monitoring and evaluation framework, ensuring good governance, providing commensurate financial support and developing an implementation framework with periodic review.

#### **4. POLICY DIRECTIONS**

##### **4.1 Nurture healthy ecosystems**

Healthy ecosystems are the planet's life support system and are indispensable for all life forms as they provide valuable ecosystem services such as food, water, clean air, shelter, soil conservation, flood control, climate amelioration etc. Human interventions are altering the capacity of these natural ecosystems to provide these services and there is an urgent need to reverse this trend by adopting following approaches:



#### ***4.1.1 Ensure adequate extent***

Rather than an exclusive focus on forest and tree cover, targeted efforts should be made to preserve the country's varied ecosystems including alpine meadows, grasslands, deserts, marine and coastal areas etc. The national goal to have a minimum of one third of the total geographical area under forest and tree cover should be continued. States achieving or exceeding this should be adequately incentivized and compensated financially for providing additional ecosystem services to the nation.

#### ***4.1.2 Enhance quality and productivity***

Many of our forest ecosystems have been significantly altered due to land conversion, pollution, over population, deforestation etc. with devastating impacts on biological diversity and livelihoods. The decline in the extent of dense forests should be reversed. The degraded forests should be restored by promoting natural regeneration, and locally suitable, ecologically viable and technologically robust afforestation and reforestation measures. Healthy ecosystems will in turn enhance the sustainable production of ecosystem services such as forage, fuel, timber, non-timber forest produce and provisioning of clean air and water.



#### **4.1.3 Sustain resilience**

Healthy, well-functioning ecosystems are crucial for sustaining livelihoods and human well-being. The resilience of the ecosystems and the embedded biodiversity to land use changes and climate change should be enhanced by taking up mitigation and adaptation interventions to sustain their ecological functions.

#### **4.1.4 Reduce threats**

Damage to forests from encroachments, illegal tree-felling, grazing, firewood collection, use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc. should be discouraged. Fresh encroachments along with intrusion of horticulture, spices and other crops on forest lands needs to be effectively stopped. Viable alternatives for reducing dependence of forest communities on forest resources should be promoted. Organic farming should be promoted especially in the forest fringe villages.

#### **4.1.5 Restore village common lands**

The common property and common pool resources in villages are depleting and as a result the stress on forest for fodder, fuel wood and other resources has increased.



There is a need to enhance the sustainable supply of biomass by managing these village commons using participatory approaches under the overall supervision of the gram sabha.

#### ***4.1.6 Incentivize sustainability in community managed, community owned and private forests***

The forests in the country are managed under diverse tenurial systems. Other than the government owned model, there are community managed, community owned and private forests as well. These forests also provide significant ecosystem services. There is a need to recognise and incentivize the management practices of such forests towards sustainable forest management by providing necessary technical, financial and institutional support and easing the regulatory regime. Forests in the north-eastern region, sacred groves, community conserved areas and other such forests are rich in biodiversity and have different and unique tenurial systems. These should be intensively studied and their sustainable management institutionalised in consultation with the local communities.



#### **4.1.7 Encourage forest certification**

Mechanisms such as forest and chain of custody certification that promote sustainable management of forest resources should be encouraged through development of appropriate standards and institutional framework.

### **4.2 Safeguard forest lands**

Forest lands are precious national assets and play a vital role in ensuring ecological security of the country. These lands are gradually declining due to their diversion for meeting the needs of economic growth and due to encroachments. Thus to safeguard forest lands the following interventions should be planned:

**4.2.1** Existing forest lands need to be protected and their diversion taken up only as a last resort after a complete and exhaustive scoping for alternatives such as alternate lands, alternate technology and options for substitution. The funds accrued in the form of the net present value from the diversion of forest lands should be utilized to acquire critical non-forest lands to establish corridors to provide safe passage to wildlife. These acquired non-forest lands should be adequately protected and their boundaries demarcated and digitized. Such



areas should be restored to enhance the quality of the ecological services they provide in line with clause 4.1.2 above in consultation with local community. Also, when this diversion takes place in wildlife habitats, suitable remedial measures should be provided to ensure connectivity for free and safe movement of wild animals.

**4.2.2** Forest land diversion projects related to mining, quarrying, construction of dams, roads and other linear infrastructure etc. need to adopt special caution. Use of state-of-the-art technology which causes minimum pollution and damage should be promoted. Construction of mountain and hill roads needs to shift to environment friendly techniques.

**4.2.3** Compliance to conditions of forest land diversion should be ensured and monitoring of impacts needs to be strengthened.

**4.2.4** Forest settlement, digitization and spatial mapping should be accorded special priority by allocating special funds and adequately trained human resources. The settlement process of forests and protected areas, with clear reconciliation with revenue records, needs to be completed before the end of the next decade, in a time bound manner.



### 4.3 Conserve forests by empowering communities

The country already has more than two decades of experience in participatory forest management which has resulted in large-scale capacity building at the local level. In order to further strengthen and institutionalise partnerships with local communities, and build their capacity in forest management and sustainable use, the following steps should be taken:

**4.3.1** A national Community Forest Management (CFM) Mission shall be launched. This mission should be provided with a legal basis. An enabling Operational Framework for this mission should be designed in accordance with the prevalent laws. This mission should be guided by the following fourteen fundamental principles:

**4.3.1.1** It should support the graduation of well performing participatory forest management institutions to the Community Forest Management (CFM) regime.

**4.3.1.2** CFM landscape should be delineated and mapped having well defined boundaries with demarcation and digitization. All landscape elements viz. forests, contiguous common and private lands





should be brought under the CFM regime for landscape level management.

**4.3.1.3** Clear baselines and controls should be established regarding the conservation and livelihoods provisioning of the CFM landscapes to enable effective monitoring and impact evaluation.

**4.3.1.4** Democratic mechanisms that facilitate resource users to participate in the decision-making process and ensure equitable access and benefit sharing are put in place. Equitable space for women, poor, marginalized and vulnerable people should be ensured.

**4.3.1.5** CFM Committees (CFMCs) should be constituted by the gram sabha to carry out the local management functions including formulation and implementation of the Community Ecosystem Management Plan (CEMP).

**4.3.1.6** CFM landscape should be managed as per the provisions of the approved CEMP. These gram sabha level plans prepared by the CFMCs need to be vetted by the forest department, approved by the gram sabha and harmonized with other natural resource management plans at the local level. Adequate



technical and financial support to implement such plans should be ensured.

**4.3.1.7** Community management rules should be framed within the overall CFM Operational Framework and approved by the gram sabha, including access to and sustainable use of the natural resources.

**4.3.1.8** Community based monitoring mechanisms approved by the gram sabha should be in place.

**4.3.1.9** A scale of graduated sanctions and penalties should be devised for violation of the community management rules, within the CFM Operational Framework and approved by the gram sabha.

**4.3.1.10** Efficient, just and transparent mechanisms of conflict resolution and grievance redressal within and among CFM landscapes are evolved and made operational.

**4.3.1.11** Also, mechanisms to integrate, converge and synergize with other natural resources management related committees at the gram sabha level should be developed.



**4.3.1.12** Federations of CFM institutions should be promoted to perform aggregated functions, responsibilities and actions.

**4.3.1.13** Effective internal monitoring systems including record keeping and MIS should be in place.

**4.3.1.14** Regular independent and objective evaluation mechanisms to assess the status of conservation and livelihoods in the CFM landscapes should be developed with suitable provisions for rewards and rectification.

**4.3.2** Institutions governing community managed forests can also be brought under the CFM framework on their demand, and by adhering to the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) principle.

**4.3.3** The forest fringe villages are often left out or marginalized in development programmes. Poor farming infrastructure and extension services, crop depredation by wild animals and lack of quality education and vocational skills make them prone to becoming trapped in poverty. Urgent steps should be taken to provide additional financial, technical and community mobilization support to transform the villages adjacent to the forests and protected areas by creating state-of-the-art physical,



social and economic infrastructure and eliminating poverty. Implementation of ongoing national, state and local level development programmes should be prioritized and converged in these villages.

**4.3.4** Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) such as medicinal and aromatic plants, oil seeds, resins, wild edibles, fibre, bamboo, grass etc. provide sustenance to forest dependent communities by supplementing their food and livelihood security. Such produce should be harvested in a sustainable manner while ensuring employment and income opportunities for the local communities. The potential of such produce to meet the demand in high-end markets should be explored, and a part of the revenue ploughed back for conservation of this resource.

#### **4.4 Strengthen wildlife management**

India has a rich wildlife heritage and biological diversity embedded in varied ecosystems. Despite serious conservation challenges, it has demonstrated gains in protection of flagship species, securing key habitats and re-establishing wildlife populations. However, our wildlife and wild spaces are being increasingly altered by increasing anthropogenic pressures, rising human animal



conflicts, illegal trade in wild species and climate change impacts. Hence, there is an urgent need to renew our efforts to safeguard wildlife and secure their habitats by adhering to the following prescriptions:

**4.4.1** Manage protected areas, other wildlife rich areas and corridors with the primary objective of biodiversity conservation, while enhancing other ecosystem services. Voluntary and attractive relocation packages of villages from within national parks, other wildlife rich areas and corridors should be developed. Such areas should be effectively secured by strengthening enforcement, restoring habitats and establishing ecological corridors.

**4.4.2** Threat assessment of species and recovery measures based on population and habitat viability parameters should form an integral and regular part of management practices.

**4.4.3** Manage and mitigate human wildlife conflicts by taking up habitat enrichment. Provide adequate and timely compensation in case of injury or loss of human life, property, crop damage or livestock casualties. To manage problem animals, establish rescue centres and develop a team of well-equipped and trained personnel.



**4.4.4** Introduction of exotic species through public or private sources should be prohibited, unless long-term scientific studies undertaken by specialists in ecology, forestry and agriculture have established that they are suitable and have no adverse impacts on native vegetation, wildlife or environment.

**4.4.5** Invasive species such as *Lantana*, *Parthenium* etc. have occupied large tracts in forest habitats. These need to be eradicated by supporting the transition to native species.

**4.4.6** Establish regional forensic labs to support wildlife crime detection and prosecution. Build capacity among the front line staff and equip them for better detection and conviction in wildlife cases.

**4.4.7** Sound ecotourism models should be developed with a focus on conservation to ensure nature education of the visitors while supplementing the livelihood needs of the local communities. Ensure that tourism is responsible, does not negatively impact wildlife and its habitat and maximizes the incomes of the local community.

**4.4.8** Effectively communicate the values and benefits of protected areas to various stakeholders.



Ecosystem services valuation and green accounting should be built into Information, Education and Communication (IEC) plans.

**4.4.9** Zoological gardens, botanical gardens and biodiversity parks would be managed for awareness creation and nature education.

#### **4.5 Promote agro-forestry and farm forestry**

Agro-forestry and farm forestry have taken deep roots in the country and Trees Outside Forests (TOF) are contributing to increase in tree cover and enhancing ecosystem services, while meeting a bulk of the country's wood demand and providing climate resilient incomes to the farmers. On the supply side, this sector is passing through a phase of large-scale wood imports and volatile markets with falling returns on investment for the farmers. On the demand side, despite being a renewable and sustainable natural resource, there has been a continued emphasis on wood substitution with other high carbon footprint materials. Wood has a significantly lower carbon footprint than many of the substitutes that consume fossil fuels in their production. Use of wood also has the potential to create new green jobs by giving a boost to indigenous manufacturing using locally grown raw



material. Thus promotion of wood use obtained from sustainably managed forests and trees would play a positive role in mitigating climate change and ensuring sustainable living. Hence, actions both in the supply and demand side need to be taken as under:

**4.5.1** Large scale expansion of agro-forestry and farm forestry should be encouraged through commensurate incentives and operational support systems such as lowering the input costs and enabling access to reasonably priced quality planting material.

**4.5.2** Price assurance to the farmers would be facilitated by putting in place pre-production agreements between the farmers and the forest based industries with commitments related to price and quantity. These agreements can result in a win-win situation by lowering the investment risk of the farmers while ensuring assured supply of raw material to the industry.

**4.5.3** Commercial plantations on forest lands, should avoid direct competition with the farmers by creating product differentiation with preferably mutually exclusive tree species.

**4.5.4** Shift from regulating to promoting cultivation, harvesting, transportation and marketing of wood.





**4.5.5** Agro-forestry and farm forestry crops should also be included in the national crop insurance scheme.

**4.5.6** An intensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign would be launched to align mindsets with *wood is good*.

#### **4.6 Facilitate forest industry interface**

There is a need to stimulate growth in the forest based industry sector. This sector being labour intensive can create green jobs while mitigating climate change. These forest based industries face constraints in ensuring an assured supply of raw material along with licensing issues and as a consequence imports are on the rise. The forest corporations and industrial units need to step up forestry plantations for meeting the demand of raw material without directly competing with farmers. They also need to induct young professionals in their workforce to mainstream new technical and management advancements. Forest based industries have already established captive plantations in partnership with the farmers. This partnership needs to be further expanded to ensure an assured supply of raw material to the industries with mutually beneficial arrangements.



#### **4.7 Manage forest catchments and watersheds to revive streams**

Water is critical for all life forms, and is one of the most valuable outputs from forests. However, the role of natural forests in provisioning clean water deserves far greater attention. While the demand for quality water is growing, the lean season flows from headwater streams is declining. Healthy forested ecosystems will help recharge aquifers by increasing percolation and reducing surface runoff, thereby nourishing springs, streams, rivers and other aquatic systems. There is a need to preserve and further enhance the hydrological contribution of forest and other ecosystems by taking following steps:

**4.7.1** Recognize runoff regulation, aquifer recharge and water purification functions as the major tangible ecosystem services from forests. Adequately factor green accounting and valuation of ecosystem services into the planning and management of all forests, protected areas and other ecosystems.

**4.7.2** Identify, delineate and map forests and other ecosystems that function as key catchments and demarcate and digitize their boundaries.



**4.7.3** Commensurate investments should be made to launch a national forest streams revival programme in a mission mode.

**4.7.4** Prepare and implement forest hydrology based stream revival plans to augment the potential of these catchments to sustain and enhance their base flows.

**4.7.5** In mountain ecosystems, a network of naturally emanating springs and streams largely ensure water security. These water sources should be sustained by scientifically identifying the recharge areas and taking up groundwater recharge measures to replenish the aquifers.

**4.7.6** Multi-disciplinary teams of forest scientists, forest managers, hydro-geologists, forest hydrologists, traditional knowledge holders and other related disciplines should be formed to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate these stream revival plans.

**4.7.7** Strengthen technological capabilities at landscape level for enhanced understanding of the effects of forests and forestry management on the quantity and quality of water.



**4.7.8** Embed forest hydrology and hydro-geology in forest education, planning, management, research and training.

#### **4.8 Integrate climate change concerns in forest management**

Forests sequester carbon and produce wood thereby assisting in climate change mitigation. Use of wood products results in the substitution of more emission-intensive resources, while creating a pool of carbon with delayed release. An increase in wood consumption would lock many additional million tonnes of carbon dioxide in wood products. While forests and trees help to mitigate climate change effects, they also get impacted by it. Climate change impacts the structure, composition and functions of forest ecosystems, progressively affecting the embedded and dependent life forms. A changing climate accentuates many of the threats forest ecosystems face from catastrophic events such as pest outbreaks, forest disease, wild fires, drought, storms etc., resulting in habitat degradation, species extinction and impairing the flow of ecosystem services. Urgent and strategic actions need to be taken to strengthen forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation as indicated below:



**4.8.1** Massive afforestation and reforestation would be taken up (as detailed in clause 4.1) to create an additional carbon sink while increasing the forest and tree cover and enhancing ecosystem services.

**4.8.2** The agro-forestry and farm forestry sector should be harnessed to its full potential (as detailed in clause 4.4).

**4.8.3** Sensitive ecosystems such as coastal and marine areas, mangroves, temperate and sub-alpine forests, alpine meadows, Western and Eastern Ghats etc. should be specially safeguarded.

**4.8.4** With changes in climate and land use, fire is increasingly being viewed as a major threat to many forests and their biodiversity. Rising intensity and frequency of forest fires and their spread is resulting in substantial loss of forest functions and related ecosystem services every year. Due to severe droughts, temperate broadleaf forests, sub-alpine conifer forests, wet evergreen forests and others have now become susceptible to forest fires. Adequate measures should be taken to safeguard ecosystems, map the vulnerable areas and develop and strengthen early warning systems and



methods to control fire based on remote sensing technology and community participation. Also, awareness should be created about causes and impacts of fire on forests and local livelihoods.

**4.8.5** Climate change concerns should be effectively factored into all the forest and wildlife areas management plans and Community Ecosystem Management Plans.

**4.8.6** Commensurate investments should be made for implementing such plans as well as for assessing and reducing the vulnerability of forests and other natural ecosystems to climate change impacts.

## **4.9 Expand urban greens**

Urban greens include woodlands, wetlands, parks, gardens, avenue plantations, block plantations etc. These forests bring many aesthetic, recreational, environmental and economic benefits to cities and their dwellers. They need to be managed as urban forest ecosystems to enhance optimal urban forest cover and to nurture and sustain urban health, clean air and related benefits. Management plans need to be prepared and implemented in consonance with the development plan of smart cities to meet community aspirations.



#### **4.10 Establish credible measuring, monitoring and evaluation framework**

Measurement is the key to understanding and improvement. Policies and programmes need to be effectively measured to be able to track progress and verify whether the intended objectives are being achieved. A credible monitoring and evaluation framework will result in a better understanding of the complexities involved in grounding conservation and livelihoods interventions across the ecologically, culturally and sociologically diverse landscape of the nation. It will help analyze what worked and what didn't and why and thus provide valuable inputs to evidence-based policy in future. A system of regular, objective and effective monitoring and evaluation framework, hosted by a national institution, and covering all the forest divisions and circles of the nation, should be established having the following features:

**4.10.1** Establish baselines and controls to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation.

**4.10.2** Design a matrix of ecosystem specific, objectively verifiable indicators for tracking the progress



towards achieving the goal, objectives, and policy directions as listed above. This indicator matrix will provide the basis for performance assessment and outcome based monitoring and evaluation.

**4.10.3** Develop a policy adherence and sustainability reporting system for forest governance. Monitor every territorial, wildlife and other functional divisions of the country objectively using this system every year and make the progress reports available on a public, web-based, geo-portal.

**4.10.4** Undertake independent evaluations covering all the territorial and wildlife circles of the country biennially using a standard national evaluation framework. All such evaluation reports should be made publicly available in the national portal.

**4.10.5** Best performing CFMCs, local governments, forest divisions, forest circles, states, civil society and national institutions should be recognized and rewarded every year. Best practices, success stories and innovations should be shared and learnings upscaled both within and across states.





#### **4.11 Develop a national forest ecosystems management information system**

Non availability of pan country reliable and compatible datasets in the forestry sector is a matter of serious concern. Such comprehensive and reliable datasets are essential for scientific planning and management, as a decision support system, for conflict management and also fulfilling international obligations. A comprehensive and reliable management information system with following features should be established:

**4.11.1** Comprehensive and reliable data collection on various parameters of the forestry sector such as the resource, goods and services, infrastructure, staffing, marketing, finance, interventions etc. are needed to be collected, compiled and analyzed on a regular basis. Systems need to be designed and put in place to ensure a regular flow of reliable data from the states and other sources and making it available in the public domain.

**4.11.2** A national forest ecosystems management information system (MIS) should be developed and made operational using the latest information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure regular flow of comprehensive and reliable information. This web based



geo-portal in public domain should provide such information as open data products.

**4.11.3** Integrate this MIS with other data banks, secondary information sources and inventories.

#### **4.12 Assimilate international commitments**

India is party to a number of international conventions and instruments which have a direct bearing on sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation and climate change. Ensure integration and assimilation of these multilateral agreements and other regional instruments and protocols into forestry programmes, strategies and plans.

### **5. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The public service delivery should be strengthened by optimizing human resource availability at all levels, massive capacity building efforts, strengthening delivery systems, reinforcing transparency and accountability measures, prompt grievance redressal and use of cutting edge technology. An illustrative list of good governance measures is given below, which should be further strengthened with feedback received during monitoring and evaluation:



- 5.1** A systematic assessment of the requirement of the human resource capital through periodic studies should be undertaken and such requirements fulfilled in a phased manner. Institutional restructuring to enable effective implementation of this policy should be facilitated wherever needed. Human resource strategy for professional foresters and forest scientists should aim at attracting and retaining qualified and motivated personnel, keeping in view, particularly the arduous nature of duties often in remote and inhospitable places. Opportunities for professional growth and specialization should be provided and proper utilization of such specialization should be ensured.
- 5.2** Massive capacity building efforts should be made to imbibe the necessary professional knowledge, skills and experience amongst a range of stakeholders to ground the ecosystem based approach in the country. A pool of national, regional and state level institutions, an array of civil society organizations, a cadre of master trainers, an army of barefoot ecologists and community resource persons, illustrative training resource kit and resource divisions in every circle should be put in place as the foundation of the ecosystem based approach. Passionate and capable human resource would be encouraged at all



levels to function as agents of change. Mid-career training at all levels of forest administration would be evolved and adopted to enhance skills, supervision abilities, policy formulation and planning capabilities. Enhancement of skills of people employed in seasonal operations such as nursery raising, sustainable harvesting, ecological monitoring, value addition to forest produce etc. should also be taken up by developing module based training programs.

Strengthen public delivery systems by modernizing the infrastructure and staffing arrangements on the supply side, while building the capacity of the gram sabha, community forest management committees, women and youth on the demand side. Gaps in infrastructure, modernizing and upgrading needs, filling the vacancies in frontline staff, enabling their mobility and communication, career development, improving service conditions etc. should be identified and provided in a time bound manner. Timely recruitment at various levels in forest and allied wings should be accorded top priority in order to ensure availability of trained manpower.

- 5.3** Administrative and institutional reforms should be undertaken to improve accountability, transparency,



delivery and community empowerment at the grassroots level. There is a need to build transparent, participatory, accountable, inclusive and sustainable institutions at all levels to promote good governance through fair decision-making and benefit sharing to ensure forest sustainability.

- 5.4** Reinforce transparency and accountability measures in procurement of materials and wage payments. Payments need to be transferred directly into bank accounts of the beneficiaries and firms and use of biometric devices, geo-coded and time-stamped photographs, apps in smart phone, electronic fund transfers etc. should become a standard practice.
- 5.5** Outcome based monitoring mechanisms should be embedded in management by developing the necessary skills and suitably adapting the processes and information systems.
- 5.6** Effective social audits should be carried out regularly by the gram sabha to evaluate the performance of the various programmes and take corrective action, wherever needed.
- 5.7** An accessible and responsive grievance redressal mechanism should be put in place at all levels.



## **6. RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

Forestry research should address the current challenges faced by the forestry sector. Research should be undertaken to address challenges related to low productivity, agro-forestry and farm forestry, health of ecosystems and their restoration, conservation of biodiversity, valuing and quantifying ecosystem services, assessing their sustainable use, contribution to the country's economy, socio-economic dimension of forests, climate change etc. To facilitate contemporary research and education following measures should be taken:

- 6.1** Participatory action research should be undertaken to address the key gap areas in the sector.
- 6.2** A national network of forest field labs should be established for long term ecological monitoring. Pan India studies should be taken up on the various pressing issues in forestry management. These studies taken up by a pool of institutions periodically, following a standard research framework, will assist in the creation of national level datasets to enable evidence-based policy.



- 6.3** Infrastructure and skilled manpower required for research should be strengthened keeping in view the future trends in forestry management.
- 6.4** Ecosystem approach should be embedded in forestry education and training institutions by suitably updating their syllabi. The teaching methods should adopt more applied and field based approaches aligning with the skill sets needed in this sector.
- 6.5** Avenues for creating green jobs for forestry professionals should be explored.
- 6.6** The sectoral research and education institutions should be strengthened, supported and provided the required autonomy to function and develop domain specific expertise and its utilization.
- 6.7** Forestry education institutes need to actively encourage interaction with forest based industries. Forestry establishments should initiate outsourcing of their functions wherever feasible, so that a demand for trained professionals is created in the sector.



## 7. EXTENSION AND AWARENESS

Conservation and development of forest and related ecosystems cannot succeed without the willing support, involvement and cooperation of the people. It is essential, therefore, to inculcate in the people, a direct interest in forests, in their development and conservation, and to make them conscious of the values of trees, wildlife and nature in general. This can be achieved through the active involvement and participation of local governments, schools, colleges, NGOs, community based organizations, clubs, PSUs, businesses, trade unions and other institutions. Extension of forests, trees and wildlife and creating awareness regarding their importance should be encouraged by taking the following measures:

- 7.1 Farmers and interested persons should be provided opportunities through institutions like *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, *Van Vigyan Kendras*, Trainers' Training Centres etc. to learn agro-forestry and farm forestry techniques to optimize the use of their land and water resources.





- 7.2** Short term extension courses and lectures, forest *melas* etc should be organised to educate farmers and other stakeholders. For this purpose, suitable programmes should be propagated through mass media, audio visual aids and the extension machinery.
- 7.3** Village and block level forest extension agents like *van mitras* may be recognized and engaged for disseminating contemporary forestry related knowledge and best practices.
- 7.4** A land to lab to land (LLL) programme should be developed to identify the local forestry issues, engage with experts, develop participatory technology and take up field trials so as to provide site specific solutions to the farmers.
- 7.5** Children in schools and colleges should be actively roped in to spread the message of conservation and sustainable use. Activity based learning should be promoted.
- 7.6** National and state awards should be instituted to recognize and reward exemplary work, both in the individual and institutional categories.



## **8. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

- 8.1** Appropriate laws, rules and regulations, as per requirement, should be made and existing ones suitably amended for the effective implementation of this policy.
- 8.2** Institutionalized legal support should form an integral part of the forest administration and management.
- 8.3** A National Board of Forestry and State Boards of Forestry should be established for ensuring inter-sectoral convergence, simplification of procedures, conflict resolution and periodic review.
- 8.4** An inter-ministerial action plan should be formulated with action points with respect to the policy directions, where definitive targets, milestone activities, timelines (short term, medium term and long term) and outcome indicators will be provided along with the Ministries/Departments responsible for implementing the actions. An inter-ministerial committee should be set up to periodically monitor the achievements and progress made under this action plan.



## **9. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

- 9.1** Forests and trees constitute nearly one fourth of the geographic area of the country. Protection of this vast and valuable resource, improving and increasing the forest and tree cover requires adequate investment keeping in view the pressures on these forests, and the ecosystem services that they provide to the nation. Large tracts of forest area in the country have degraded due to immense biotic pressure and lack of adequate investment.
- 9.2** The budget of the forestry sector should be appropriately enhanced so that the objectives enshrined in this policy can be achieved. Investments on infrastructure and livelihood support for the forest dependent communities and forest management would be stepped up as they are equity enhancing and need to be given utmost priority.
- 9.3** Keeping in view the seasonal, continuous and time bound nature of forestry works, the fund flow mechanism should be devised in a manner that ensures availability of funds for various activities at appropriate time of the year.



- 9.4** Environmental cess, green tax, carbon tax etc. may be levied on certain products and services for facilitating ecologically responsible behaviour, garnering citizen's contribution and supplementing financial resources.

## **10. HARMONIZE WITH OTHER POLICIES AND LAWS**

Forests influence, and in-turn are influenced by activities and functions of different sectors such as mining, water, roads, tourism, agriculture, rural development, industry, irrigation, etc. Necessary collaborative steps should be undertaken to ensure that the policies, laws and programmes of various sectors are in harmony with the objectives of this policy and conflicts and contradictions, if any, should be resolved comprehensively.

## **11. IMPLEMENTATION AND WAY FORWARD**

This policy envisages that a national implementation framework be put in place within six months of the notification, to deliver on these policy commitments. States should also draft their state forest policies and prepare an implementation framework. Such implementation framework would specify measurable targets, objectively verifiable indicators, financial



allocations, time schedules etc. using the logical framework approach. It should also reflect learning from past experience, identify administrative reforms required, public financing needed, institutional design, human resource strategies, re-structuring of institutions and forest management at all levels and measures for improving institutional capacity. While the major role will be of forestry establishments, elements of inter-sectoral nature need to be facilitated from appropriate levels.

## **12. PERIODIC REVIEW**

The National Board of Forestry shall review the implementation of this policy once every three years. The State Boards of Forestry shall review the implementation annually. The achievements and progress made in implementing the 13 objectives, 55 policy directions and 8 supporting elements should be monitored and suitable action taken to ensure a smooth and time-bound translation of this policy into action.



## THE ESSENCE

*The vision of the National Forest Policy, 2016 is, "empowered communities, healthy ecosystems, happy nation". It aims to improve the health and vitality of the forest ecosystems to meet the present and future needs of ecological security, livelihood sustenance and conserving biological diversity. It endeavours to safeguard our natural heritage, cultural identity and social capital and bequeath it in full measure to our future generations.*

*The National Forest Policy, 2016 marks a paradigm shift, by switching the focus from forests to landscapes, from canopy cover to healthy ecosystems, from substituting wood to promoting sustainable wood use, from participatory approaches to empowerment, from joint forest management to community forest management and from qualitative policy statements to a results based policy framework,*

*It provides new policy directions on integrating climate change concerns in forest management, managing forest catchments and watersheds to revive streams, enabling the establishment of wildlife corridors, incentivizing sustainability in community managed, community owned and private forests, expanding urban greens and developing a national forest information system with emphasis on good governance, transparency, proactive disclosure and an effective on-ground translation of the policy following an implementation framework with periodic review.*

*This policy has the potential to lift the forest dwellers out of poverty, breathe vitality back into our wilderness and accelerate inclusive growth of our nation.*











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**The future depends on  
what we do in the present.**

**– Mahatma Gandhi**

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