

Desertification of land

45. SHRIMATI VANDANA CHAVAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the total area of land across the country that has been degraded or desertified;

(b) whether it is a fact that some species of animals have become extinct in the country due to desertification;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps the Ministry has undertaken and is planning to undertake to meet its target of restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) As per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared for the period 2011-2013, by the Space Applications Centre, 29.32 % *i.e.* 96.4 million hectares of the Total Geographical Area of the country is undergoing the process of degradation.

(b) and (c) Zoological Survey of India has not reported any species of animals to have become extinct due to desertification in the country.

(d) National Afforestation & Eco Development Board (NAEB) Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is implementing the "National Afforestation Programme (NAP)" for ecological restoration of degraded forest areas under which an area of over 2 million ha has been approved for afforestation at a cost of ₹3874 crore. NAP also supports Soil Moisture Conservation activities to improve the soil moisture regime in the implementation area along with providing livelihood support for the locals. This multi activity, multi target, multi benefit approach matches with the proposed Land Degradation Neutrality strategy.

Various other schemes like Green India Mission, fund accumulated under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), Nagar Van Yojana etc. also help in checking degradation and restoration of forest landscape. MoEF&CC also promote tree outside forests realizing that the country has a huge potential for increasing its Trees Outside Forest (TOF) area primarily through expansion of agroforestry, optimum use of wastelands and vacant lands.

Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development is contemplating to initiate a new programme under which it is proposed to sanction new projects covering 5 million ha/year from 2020-21 to 2023-24. It is also proposed to complete 577 ongoing projects which have life span upto 2021-22 subject to approval of the Government for continuation of the existing scheme beyond March, 2020.

Helping farmers in reducing stubble burning

46. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is a major cause of air pollution in north India;

(b) whether it is also a fact that farmers have little choice in getting their fields ready for the next crop as other options like machines are a financial burden on the farmers; and

(c) if so, the steps being taken to help farmers in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) to (c) Stubble burning in states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and biomass burning in Delhi during the months of October and November, is one of the contributors to the poor air quality in North India specifically in Delhi and NCR, amongst other factors like industrial emissions, vehicular emissions, road and soil dust, construction and demolition activities and adverse meteorological conditions etc. As per, SAFAR portal (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune) the stubble burning was estimated to have contributed between 2% to 46% for PM_{2.5} levels in Delhi during October- November 2019 and the contribution was more than 30% only for 3 days during the said period.

In order to control stubble burning, a new Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for *in-situ* Management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi' is being administered by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, with allocation of Central funds to the tune of ₹ 1178.47 crore.