

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO: 163
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.03.2025

Indian State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023

163* SHRI SAKET GOKHALE:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) the reasons as to why coconut, oil palm and rubber plantations are also counted as forest cover in the ISFR 2023 and whether that is in line with global standards;
- (b) whether it is a fact that ISFR, while calculating increased forest cover, factors in a contribution of 13.25 per cent from mango plantations and 4.37 per cent from coconut plantations; and
- (c) whether the Forest Survey of India (FSI) has digitized maps of all forests that come under the purview of the Forest Conservation Act 1980, as directed by Supreme Court of India in 2011, while preparing the ISFR 2023?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

- (a) to (c) The statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to part (a) to (c) of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 163 due for reply on 13.03.2025 regarding 'Indian State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023' asked by Shri Saket Gokhale:

- (a) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, carries out the assessment of forest cover of the country biennially since 1987 and the findings are published in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The forest cover assessment is a wall-to-wall mapping exercise based on remote sensing supported by intensive ground verification and field data from the National Forest Inventory.

Assessment of forest cover being published in ISFR is based on the definition of "Forest Cover" adopted by the country in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol Decision. As per Decision 19/CP.9 - Kyoto Protocol, the forest can be defined by any country depending upon the capacities and capabilities of the country and is as follows:

- Crown cover percentage: Tree crown cover - 10 to 30 %
- Minimum area of stand: area between 0.05 and 1 ha, and
- Minimum height of trees: Potential to reach a minimum height at maturity in situ of 2 m to 5 m

Based on above technical parameters, "Forest Cover" in ISFR refers to all lands, more than or equal to one hectare in area, with a tree canopy of more than or equal to 10%, irrespective of ownership and legal status; and includes orchards, bamboo, and palm.

Thus, the definition of Forest Cover adopted by the FSI conforms to the provisions of Kyoto Protocol as given above. This definition of Forest Cover adopted by FSI for ISFR is being used in all international communications such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), etc. and is in line with global standards.

- (b) As stated above, 'Forest Cover' refers to all lands, more than or equal to one hectare in area, with a tree canopy of more than or equal to 10%, irrespective of ownership and legal status, hence, tree canopy of any tree species meeting these criteria are accounted for forest cover.

'Tree Cover' comprises all tree patches outside the forest area, which are less than one hectare in extent including all the scattered trees found in the rural and urban settings, and not captured under the forest cover assessment.

As per ISFR 2023, the total Forest and Tree Cover of the country is 8,27,356.95 square kilometre which is 25.17% of the geographical area of the country. This includes 7,15,342. 61 square kilometre as Forest Cover and 1,12,014.34 square kilometre as Tree Cover.

Further, 'Tree Outside Forests' (TOF) refers to all trees growing outside recorded forest areas irrespective of patch size. Hence, the TOF includes the tree cover and forest cover outside the recorded forest area. As per ISFR 2023, the extent of TOF has been estimated

to be 30.70 million ha which is 37.11 per cent of the total forest and tree cover in the country.

Forest cover and growing stock in trees outside forests are different attributes. FSI follows different methodologies for estimation of these two attributes.

As per ISFR 2023, the total growing stock of wood in trees outside forests is 1,950.75 million cubic metre, in which, mango plantation (*Magnifera indica*) contributes maximum volume as 258.50 million cubic meter which is 13.25 per cent to the total volume and coconut plantation (*Cocos nucifera*) contributes volume as 81.25 million cubic meter which is 4.16 per cent of the total growing stocks in trees outside forests.

- (c) Survey and demarcation including boundary digitization of recorded forest area is the mandate of respective State Government/ UT Administration. Forest Survey of India (FSI) has received boundaries of Recorded Forest Area(RFA) in digital format from 25 State/UT Forest Departments. Database provided by State/UT Forest Departments in this regard has been incorporated in the Web-GIS based Decision Support System (DSS) portal made by FSI for the purpose of scrutiny of projects of forest clearances under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam,1980.
