

Plantations are Forests - Says Forest Survey

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- The latest “Forest Survey of India” report has changed the calculation method for India’s forest cover to include plantations on private lands.

\n

- This is not just naive but also deceptive and runs the risk of seeing conservation funds being diverted to satiate private interests.

\n

\n\n

Why is the recent change in the classification problematic?

\n\n

\n

- It is common knowledge that private plantations of teak, eucalyptus and poplar are undertaken to earn incomes.

\n

- Such plantations can’t be substitutes for natural forests with their wildlife and immense biodiversity.

\n

- Natural forests have multiple ecosystem functions, none of which can be provided by commercial plantations.

\n

- Classifying tree plantations as forests is hence a fallacy that ignores the reams of research and evidence which show otherwise.

\n

- Hence, there is suspicion that the move is intended to aid private profits by relaxing restrictions and siphoning off conservation funds.

\n

\n\n

How does the ecological conservation scenario look?

\n\n

\n

- Data shows that there is a clear increase in average global temperatures due to the rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
\n
- Frequency of heat-waves, floods, droughts, and unseasonal rainfall is also increasing - all of which are thought to be the effects of global warming.
\n
- Protecting and restoring natural forests (not plantations) is one of the best ways to mitigate climate change.
\n
- Some argue that private funds can be mobilised by classifying plantations as forest, but they seem to be ignoring the ecological cost of such a move.
\n
- Besides, more than \$7 billion of public “Compensatory Afforestation Fund” (CAF) is lying unused currently - which needs to be used up effectively.
\n

\n\n

What is the way ahead?

\n\n

- \n
- Multiple peasant and tribal communities have for long worked for the conservation of their neighbourhood forests.
\n
- Tribal claims of ownership over the use of sustainable forest resources have now been legally recognized by under the “Forest Rights Act of 2006”.
\n
- Bettering the implementation of the act and strengthened cooperation with grassroots institutions are vital to further conservation efforts.
\n
- Governments should consider devolving afforestation funds to the gram sabhas and build a sustained movement for conserving forests.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering