

## **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*