

National Agroforestry Policy

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After becoming the first country in the world to frame an agroforestry policy, India has gone ahead and allocated Rs 444 crore to promote agroforestry in the country. The National Agroforestry Policy 2014, announced on February 10, has the potential to substantially reduce poverty in rural India and revive agroforestry industry.

Agroforestry is a farming practice in which trees, crops and fodder are grown together on a farmland. Over 80 per cent farmers in India are small land-holders (owning less than two hectares). “Agroforestry will increase biodiversity in small farmlands, which will help mitigate climate change and improve the quality of soil. Also, as land-holding size is shrinking, combining tree farming with agriculture is the only way to optimise farm productivity.



Objective of National Agroforestry Policy

- Establishment of a National Agroforestry Mission/Agroforestry Board to implement the national policy by establishing coordination and synergy among various stakeholders.



- Enhancing the productivity, livelihood opportunities of rural households particularly of the small holder farmers through agroforestry.
- To meet the increasing demand for timber, food, fuel etc.; conservation of natural resources, protection of environment and increasing forest cover etc.

Salient features

Establishment of national level institutions to promote agroforestry

The policy aims to establish a Mission/Board to implement the national agroforestry policy. This is due to the fact that institutional set up will offer the platform for the multiple-stakeholders to coordinate and identify the priorities and strategies so that agroforestry gets equal treatment with other agricultural enterprises.

As ministry of agriculture has the mandate for agroforestry, the policy envisaged that the mission/board to be located in the Department of agriculture and Cooperation. The mission/Board shall comprise representatives from the Department of Agriculture Research & Education (DARE), Ministry of Environment & Forest (MoEF), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MN&RE), International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF, South Asia Office), Planning Commission, National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), Non-Governmental Organizations, representatives of Industry, NABARD, Agricultural Universities, State Governments, etc.

The policy provides that the state governments shall identify a nodal department for implementing the agroforestry mission/board. At the district level, Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) may be the nodal agency.

Research and capacity building

Research & Development (R&D) shall be the responsibility of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Expertise of the Indian Council for forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) also needs to be capitalised in this endeavour.

Simplification of regulatory mechanism

The policy objectives takes into consideration the Forest Rights Act (FRA), Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) etc. Decentralized institutions of local governance, such as the PRI, Gram Sabhas, Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), Eco Development Committees or other similar people's institutions have to play a greater role in the regulatory mechanisms.



Initially 20 important multipurpose tree species at the national level will be exempted from all restrictions pertaining to harvesting, transportation and marketing grown under agroforestry systems.

Institutional credit and insurance coverage

Dedicated Farmers Producers Organization (FPO) needs to be promoted to take up agroforestry at higher level.

Improving farmers' access to quality planting material

The policy encourages the participation of private sector in production and development of supply chain of quality materials as private sector can play a vital role in augmenting supplies of quality planting materials.

Strengthening market access

The marketing infrastructure needs to be strengthened with more private sector participation.

Issues and challenges

- Agroforestry is a long term concept, but farmers are more interested in short term hassle free gains and therefore are opting more in for horticulture than the agroforestry.
- Region specific agroforestry models for small, marginal and large farmers have not been developed satisfactorily.
- Not much emphasis has been placed on unique and hi-tech agroforestry systems like aqua-forestry.
- The policy is silent about managing the challenges of primitive agroforestry system, namely shifting cultivation.
- The government system related to agroforestry is still ambiguous and corruption rules the roost.
- Inadequate awareness and knowledge dissemination and poor policy initiatives failed to popularize agroforestry among farmers.
- Role of business and development sectors is unsatisfactory.

Way forward

- Agroforestry can be placed as a priority area under Corporate Social Responsibility programmes



- States have to create an enabling environment by simplifying the rules and regulations related to the agroforestry.
- Public private partnership (PPP) initiatives need to be encouraged for promotion of agroforestry in road side/canal side/barren community land.
- Market driven models of agroforestry which are suitable for different ecological conditions needs to be developed to incentivise farmers for adopting agroforestry as a viable alternative.
- Wood based industries need to be encouraged as end user for promoting agroforestry, value chain development etc.
- Agroforestry farmers should be provided with incentives on input subsidy, post harvest management facilities etc.
- Agroforestry research wing of ICFRE needs to be strengthened for the growth of private research and extension services.

