

CHAPTER 11

National Forest Policy - 1988

1. Preamble

In Resolution No.13/52-F, dated the 12th May, 1952, the Government of India in the erstwhile Ministry of Food and Agriculture enunciated a Forest Policy to be followed in the management of State Forests in the country. However, over the years, forests in the country have suffered serious depletion. This is attributable to relentless pressures arising from ever-increasing demand for fuel wood, fodder and timber; inadequacy of protection measures; diversion of forest lands to non-forest uses without ensuring compensatory afforestation and essential environmental safeguards; and the tendency to look upon forests as revenue earning resource. The need to review the situation and to Conservation includes preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilisation, restoration, and revise the National Forest Policy.

2. Basic Objectives

The basic objectives that should govern the National Policy are the following:

- 2.1.1 Maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and, where necessary, restoration of the ecological balance that has been adversely disturbed by serious depletion of the forests of the country.
- 2.1.2 Conserving the natural heritage of the country by preserving the remaining natural forests with the vast variety of flora and fauna, which represent the remarkable biological diversity and genetic resources of the country.
- 2.1.3 Checking soil erosion and denudation in the catchment areas of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs in the interest of soil and water conservation, for mitigation floods and droughts and for the retardation of siltation of reservoirs.
- 2.1.4 Checking the extension of sand dunes in the desert areas of Rajasthan and along the coastal tracts.
- 2.1.5 Increasing substantially the forest/tree cover in the country through massive afforestation and social forestry programmes, especially on

all denuded, degraded and unproductive lands.

- 2.1.6 Meeting the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal populations.
- 2.1.7 Increasing the productivity of forests to meet essential national needs.
- 2.1.8 Encouraging efficient utilisation of forest produce and maximising substitution of wood.
- 2.1.9 Creating a massive people's movement with the involvement of women, for achieving these objectives and to minimise pressure on existing forests.
- 2.2 The Principal aim of Forest Policy must be to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium which are vital for sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plant. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim.

3. Essentials of Forest Management

- 3.1 Existing forests and forest lands should be fully protected and their productivity improved. Forest and vegetal cover should be increased rapidly on hill slopes, in catchment areas of rivers, lakes and reservoirs and ocean shores and on semi-arid and desert tracts.
- 3.2 Diversion of good and productive agricultural lands to forestry should be discouraged in view of the need for increased food production.
- 3.3 For the conservation of total biological diversity, the network of national parks, sanctuaries, biosphere reserves and other protected areas should be strengthened and extended adequately.
- 3.4 Provision of sufficient fodder, fuel and pasture, specially in areas adjoining forest, is necessary in order to prevent depletion of forests beyond the sustainable limit. Since fuel wood continues to be the predominant source of energy in rural areas, the programme of afforestation should be intensified with special emphasis on augmenting fuel wood production to the requirement of the rural people.

4. Strategy

4.1 Area under forests

The national goal should be to have a minimum of one-third of the total area of the country under forest or tree cover. In the hills and in mountainous regions, the aim should be to maintain two-third of the

area under such cover in order to prevent erosion and land degradation and to ensure the stability of the fragile eco-system.

4.2 Afforestation Social Forestry & Farm Forestry

- 4.2.1 A massive need-based and time bound programme of afforestation and tree planting, with particular emphasis on fuel wood and fodder development, on all degraded and denuded lands in the country, whether forest or non-forest land, is a national imperative.
- 4.2.2 It is necessary to encourage the planting of trees alongside of roads, railway lines, rivers and streams and canals, and other unutilized lands under State/corporate, institutional or private ownership. Green belts should be raised in urban/industrial areas as well as in arid tracts. Such a programme will help to check erosion and desertification as well as improve the microclimate.
- 4.2.3 Village and community lands, including those on foreshores and environs of tanks, not requires for other productive uses, should be taken up for the development of tree crops and fodder resources. Technical assistance and other inputs necessary for initiating such programmes should belong to the panchayat where the lands are vested in them; in all other cases, such programmes should belong to the panchayat where the lands are vested in them; in all other cases, such revenues should be shared with the local communities in order to provide an incentive to them. The vesting, in individuals, particularly from the weaker section (such as landless labour, small and marginal farmers, scheduled castes, tribal, women) of certain ownership rights over trees, could be considered, subject to appropriate regulations; beneficiaries would be entitled to usufruct and would in turn be responsible for their security and maintenance.
- 4.2.4 Land laws should be so modified where ever necessary so as to facilitate and motivate individuals and institutions to undertake tree-farming and grow fodder plants, grasses and legumes on their own land. Wherever possible, degraded lands should be made available for this purpose either on lease or on the basis of a tree-patta scheme. Such leasing of the land should be subject to the land grant rules and land ceiling laws. Steps necessary to encourage them to do so must be taken.

4.3 Management of State Forests

- 4.3.1 Schemes and projects, which interfere with forests that clothe steep slopes, catchments of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, geologically unstable terrain and such other ecological sensitive areas should be

severely restricted. Tropical rain/moist forests, particularly in area like Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, should be totally safeguarded.

- 4.3.2 No forest should be permitted to be worked without the Government having approved the management plan, which should be in a prescribed format and in keeping with the National Forest Policy. The Central Government should issue necessary guidelines to the State Government in this regard and monitor compliance.
- 4.3.3 In order to meet the growing needs for essential goods and services which the forests provide, it is necessary to enhance forest cover and productivity of the forests through the application of scientific and technical inputs. Production forestry programmes, which aiming at enhancing the forest cover in the country and meeting national needs, should also be oriented to narrowing, by the turn of the century, the increasing gap between demand and such supply of fuel wood. No such programme, however, should entail clear felling of adequately stocked natural forests. Nor should exotic species be introduced, through public or private sources, unless long-term scientific trials undertaken by specialists in ecology, forestry and agriculture have established that they are suitable and have no adverse impact on native vegetation and environment.

4.3.4 Rights and Concessions

- 4.3.4.1 The rights and concessions, including grazing, should always remain related to the carrying capacity of forests. The capacity itself should be optimised by increased investment, silvicultural research and development of the area. Stall-feeding of cattle should be encouraged. The requirements of the community, which cannot be met by the rights and concessions so determined, should be met by development of social forestry outside the reserved forests.
- 4.3.4.2 The holders of customary rights and concessions in forest area should be motivated to identify themselves with the protection and development of forests from which they derive benefits. The rights and concessions from forest should primarily be for the bonafide use of the communities living within an around forest area, specially the tribals.
- 4.3.4.3 The life of tribals and other poor living within and near forests revolves around forests. The rights and concessions enjoyed by them should be fully protected. Their domestic requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and construction timer should be the first charge on forest produce. These and substitute materials should

be made available through conveniently located depots at reasonable prices.

- 4.3.4.4 Similar consideration should be given to scheduled castes and other poor living near forests. However, the area, which such consideration should cover, would be determined by the carrying capacity of the forests.

- 4.3.5 **Wood is in short supply.** The long-term solution for meeting the existing gap lies in increasing the productivity of forests, but to relieve the existing pressure on forests for the demands of railways sleepers, construction industry (particularly in the public sector), furniture and paneling, mine-pit props, paper and paper board etc. substitution of wood needs to be taken recourse to. Similarly, on the front of domestic energy, fuel wood needs to be substituted as far as practicable with alternate source like bio-gas, LPG and solar energy. Fuel-efficient 'Chulhas' as a measure of conservation of fuel wood need to be popularised in rural areas.

4.4 Diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes

- 4.4.1 Forest land or land with tree cover should not be treated merely as a resource readily available to be utilised for various projects and programmes, but as a national asset which requires to be properly safeguarded for providing sustained benefits to the entire community. Diversion of forest land for any non-forest purpose should be subject to the most careful examinations by specialists from the standpoint of social and environmental costs and benefits. Construction of dams and reservoirs, mining and industrial development and expansion of agriculture should be consistent with the needs for conservation of trees and forests. Projects, which involve such diversion, should at least provide in their investment budget, funds for regeneration/compensatory afforestation.
- 4.4.2 Beneficiaries who are allowed mining and quarrying in forest land in land covered by trees should be required to repair and re-vegetate the area in accordance with established forestry practices. No mining lease should be granted to any party, private or public, without a proper mine management plan appraised from the environmental angle and enforced by adequate machinery.

4.5 Wildlife Conservation

Forest Management should take special care of the needs of wildlife conservation, and forest management plans should include prescriptions for this purpose. It is specially essential to provide for

'corridors' linking the protected areas in order to maintain genetic continuity between artificially separated sub-sections of migrant wildlife.

4.6 Tribal people and forests

Having regard to the symbiotic relationship between the tribal people and forests, a primary task of all agencies responsible for forest management, including the forest development corporations should be to associate the tribal people closely in the protection, regeneration and development of forests as well as to provide gainful employment to people living in and around the forest. While safeguarding the customary rights and interests of such people, forestry programmes should pay special attention to the following:

One of the major causes for degradation of forest is illegal cutting and removal by contractors and their labour. In order to put an end to this practice, contractors should be replaced by institutions such as tribal cooperatives, labour cooperatives, government corporations, etc. as early as possible.

Protections, regeneration and optimum collection of minor forest produce along with institution arrangements for the marketing of such produce;

Development of forest villages on par with revenue villages;

Family oriented schemes for improving the status of the tribal beneficiaries; and

Undertaking integrated area development programmes to meet the needs of the tribal economy in and around the forest areas, including the provision of alternative sources of domestic energy on a subsidized basis, to reduce pressure on the existing forest areas.

4.7 Shifting Cultivation

Shifting cultivation is affecting the environment and productivity of land adversely. Alternative avenues of income, suitable harmonized with the right land use practices, should be devised to discourage shifting cultivation. Efforts should be made to contain such cultivation within the area already affected, by propagating improved agricultural practices. Area already damaged by such cultivation should be rehabilitated through social forestry and energy plantations.

4.8 Damage to Forest from Encroachments, Fires and Grazing

4.8.1 Encroachment of forest land has been on the increase. This trend has

to be arrested and effective action taken to prevent its continuance. There should be no regularisation of existing encroachments.

- 4.8.2 The incidence of forest fires in the country is high. Standing trees and fodder are destroyed on a large scale and natural regeneration annihilated by such fires. Special precautions should be taken during the fires season. Improved and modern management practices should be adopted to deal with forest fires.
- 4.8.3 Grazing in forest area should be regulated with the involvement of the community. Special conservation area, young plantations and regeneration area should be fully protected. Grazing and browsing in forest areas need to be controlled. Adequate grazing fees should be levied to discourage people in forest areas from maintaining large herds of non-essential livestock.

4.9 Forest based Industries

- 4.9.1 The main considerations governing establishment of forest-based industries and supply of raw material to them should be as follows:-
- 4.9.2 As far as possible, a forest-based industry should raise the raw material needed for meeting its own requirements, preferably by establishment of a direct relationship between the factory and the individuals who can grow the raw material by supporting the individuals with inputs including credit, constant technical advice and finally harvesting and transport services.
- 4.9.3 No forest-based enterprise, except that the village or cottage level, should be permitted in the future unless it has been first cleared after a careful scrutiny with regard to assured availability of raw material. In any case, the fuel, fodder and timber requirements of the local population should not be sacrificed for this purpose.
- 4.9.4 Forest based industries must not only provide employment to local people on priority but also involve them fully in raising trees and raw-material.
- 4.9.5 Natural forests serve as a gene pool resource and help to maintain ecological balance. Such forests will not, therefore, be made available to industries for undertaking plantation and for any other activities.
- 4.9.6 Farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers would be encouraged to grow, on marginal/degraded lands available with them, wood species required for industries. These may also be grown along with fuel and fodder species on community lands not required

for pasture purposes, and by Forest department/ corporations on degrade forests, not earmarked for natural regeneration.

4.9.7 The practice of supply of forest produce to industry at concessional prices should cease. Industry should be encouraged to use alternative raw materials. Import of wood and wood products should be liberalized.

4.9.8 The above considerations will, however, be subject to the current policy relating to land ceiling and land-laws.

4.10 Forest Extension

Forest conservation programme cannot succeed without the willing support and cooperation of the people. It is essential, therefore, to inculcate in the people, a direct interest in forests, their development and conservation, and to make them conscious of the value of trees, wildlife and nature in general. This can be achieved through the involvement of educational institutions, right from the primary stage. Farmers and interested people should be provided opportunities through institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Trainers' Training Centers to learn agri- silvicultural and silvicultural techniques to ensure optimum use of their land water resources. Short-term extension courses and lectures should be organised in order to educate farmers. For this purpose, it is essential that suitable programmes are propagated through mass media, audio-visual aids and the extension machinery.

4.11 Forestry Education

Forest should be recognised both as a scientific discipline as well as a profession. Agriculture universities and institutions dedicated to the development of forestry education should formulate curricula and courses for imparting academic education and promoting post-graduate research and professional excellence, keeping in view the manpower needs of the country. Academic and professional qualifications in forestry Service. Specialised and orientation courses for developing better management skills by in service training need to be encouraged, taking into account the latest development in forestry and related disciplines.

4.12 Forestry Research

With the increasing recognition of the importance of forests for environmental health, energy and employment, emphasis must be laid on scientific forestry research, necessitating adequate strengthening of the research base as well as new priorities for action.

Some broad priority areas of research and development needing special attention are:

- (i) Increasing the productivity of wood and other forest produce per unit of area per unit time by the application of modern scientific and technological methods.
- (ii) Revegetation of barren/marginal/waste/mined lands and watershed areas
- (iii) Effective conservation and management of existing forest resources (mainly natural forest eco-systems)
- (iv) Research related to social forestry for rural/tribal development.
- (v) Development of substitutes to replace wood and wood products.
- (vi) Research related to wildlife and management of national parks and sanctuaries.

4.13 Personnel Management

Government policies in personnel management for professional competence and status and attracting and retaining qualified and motivated personnel, keeping in view particularly the arduous nature of duties they have to perform, often in remote and inhospitable places.

4.14 Forest Survey and Data Base

Inadequacy of data regarding forest resources is a matter of concern because this creates a false sense of complacency. Priority needs to be accorded to updating information. For this purpose, periodical collection, collation and publication of reliable data on relevant aspects of forest management needs to be improved with recourse to modern technology and equipment.

4.15 Legal Support and Infrastructure Development

Appropriate legislation should be undertaken, supported by adequate infrastructure, at the Centre and State levels in order to implement the Policy effectively.

4.16 Financial Support for Forestry

The objectives of this revised Policy cannot be achieved without the investment of financial and other resources on a substantial scale. Such investment is indeed fully justified considering the contribution of forests in maintaining essential ecological processes and life-support systems and in preserving genetic diversity. Forests should not be looked upon as a source of revenue. Forests are a renewable

natural resource. They are a notional asset to be protected and enhanced for the well being of the people and the Nation.

5. Rajasthan Forest Policy Goal Optimum Forest Area

The present forest area of the State is only 9.56% of its total geographical area, which is far below the national average of 23% and 33% as envisaged by National Forest Policy 1988. Considering the existing extent of forest area and availability of non-forest wastelands, about 20% of the state's geographical area can be brought under forest or tree cover by adopting appropriate technologies and providing required level of investment.

5.1 Biodiversity Area

5.2.1 The existing area under various Protected Area Network (PAN) is 2.8% of the state's geographical area, which compares favorably with that recommended by the Wildlife Institute of India for Rajasthan which envisages 3.1% of geographical area of the state under PAN. The Wildlife Institute of India report has not included the proposed world heritage sites like Sambhar Lake, other wetlands, sacred groves, locally called Orans and other similar area rich in biodiversity, which are monuments of our rich cultural heritage. These widely dispersed areas provide ideal habitats to a variety of endemic flora and fauna. On a conservative estimate these areas constitute about 1.8% of the geographical area. Some of these areas have been already declared earlier as Closed Areas for the purpose of imposing ban on shooting of wild animals. These areas could be conveniently brought under scientific management for the purpose of biodiversity conservation. Considering all these aspects it is proposed to have 4.8% of geographical area of the state for biodiversity purposes.

5.2 Tribal Forest Interface

5.2.1 In view of traditional dependence of tribals on forests, it is necessary to systematically undertake programmes for forest protection, regeneration and development so as to provide gainful employment as well as safeguard their bonafide traditional user rights. The specific focus will be on development of NTFP for their own consumption and trade. Efforts will also be made to integrate tribal development activities with forestry development by dovetailing the activities of the tribal development

department with those of the forest department.

6. Rajasthan state forest policy objectives

- 6.1 In the foregoing background the State Forest Policy (SFP) objectives are envisaged as under:
- 6.1.1 Conservation of unique rich heritage, cultural and ethnical traditions of conservation of floral and faunal diversity and gene pool reserves through a network of protected area, such as National Parks, Sanctuaries, Biosphere Reserves and Closes Areas.
 - 6.1.2 Conservation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna of the state by undertaking in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures and establishing linkages with the natural habitats of the species for their rehabilitation.
 - 6.1.3 Providing proper protection to the wildlife in multiple use areas forming corridors and linking them up with the protected areas for genetic continuity.
 - 6.1.4 Development of research and monitoring facilities for scientific understanding of species and ecosystems, population and habitats for sustainable management of biodiversity resources of the state.
 - 6.1.5 Protection and development of natural forest ecosystems for sustainable production and consumption of goods and services.
 - 6.1.6 Promoting eco-development around protected area with the involvement of local people and NGOs.
 - 6.1.7 Enhancing productivity of forests, public wastelands and optimising production from private degraded lands.
 - 6.1.8 Ecological restoration of all degraded forests, public wastelands (Community/Panchayat) and private degraded lands by using appropriate technology and management inputs based on land capability classes.
 - 6.1.9 Combating desertification by undertaking various measures, such as, in-situ soil and water conservation and water harvesting, sand dune stabilisation and promoting combined production systems, namely, agro-forestry, silvi-pastoral, agri-silvipastoral, agri-horticultural systems.
 - 6.1.10 Augmenting fuel wood, fodder, timber and non-timber

forest products for meeting the demands of local people and the state, with particular focus on fuel wood and fodder production.

- 6.1.11 Promoting efficient utilisation of forest products and maximising substitution of wood.
- 6.1.12 Empowerment of the village forest protection committees for sustainable management of the forests managed under Joint Forest Management Systems. Development of facilities for processing, grading, value addition and marketing of non-timber forest products specially in tribal areas.
- 6.1.13 Strengthening forestry research base for enhancing productivity of forests and promoting rational utilisation of forest products.
- 6.1.14 Extension and dissemination of research findings and proven technologies adoption by the users, government, non-governments and private individuals.
- 6.1.15 Providing support services to the farmers for promotion of agro-forestry through a system of incentives.
- 6.1.16 Instituting human resource development through a proper system of career planning development for upgrading the technical and professional skills of forestry personnel.
- 6.1.17 Shifting the onus of management of forests from the traditional management practices to people oriented approaches by internalising intensive and extensive participatory strategies in the working system of the Forest Department.
- 6.1.18 Education and awareness raising through interpretation aimed at public appreciation of the importance of wildlife to human society.
- 6.1.19 Bringing forestry close to people by creating massive people's movement with the involvement of women to minimise pressure on the existing forests.