

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 1806
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.12.2022

Definition of forest

1806. SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR:

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

- (a) whether a fertile tropical country like India has only 3 percent of its land covered by real dense forest;
- (b) whether the term forest refers to any area that has a tree canopy density of just 10 percent;
- (c) the height of trees that is needed to qualify as forest in India vis-a-vis international definitions; and
- (d) whether tea, coffee or other private plantations are now being counted as forest in order to increase statistics?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) The Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry carries out the assessment of forest cover of the country biennially since 1987 and the findings are published in 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 National Forest Inventory. As per latest ISFR 2021, Very Dense Forest (all land with tree canopy density of 70% and above) is 99,779 square kilometre which is 3.04% of the geographical area of the country.

(b) to (c) As per ISFR, 2021 forest area is defined as an area recorded as a forest in the Government records. However, forest cover is defined as all lands, more than one hectare in area, with a tree canopy density of more than 10 percent irrespective of ownership and legal status. Such land may not necessarily be a recorded forest area. It also includes orchards, bamboo and palm. As per decision taken in Conference of Parties (CP) 9-Kyoto Protocol, the forest can be defined by any country depending upon the capacities and capabilities of the country such as tree crown cover between 10 to 30% (India 10%) and minimum area of stand between 0.05 and 1.0 hectare (India 1.0 hectare) and minimum height of trees between of 2 to 5 m (India 2m). India's definition of forest cover has been taken on the basis of above three criteria only and very well accepted by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for their reporting/communications.

(d) The India State of Forest Report does not make any distinction between the origin of tree crops (whether natural or manmade), and forest cover includes all tree species along with bamboos, fruit bearing trees, coconut palm trees etc. on forest as well as private land grown over more than one hectare area and tree canopy density more than 10%.
