

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 2437
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.08.2023

Methodology for accurate assessment of forest cover

2437. SHRI NIRANJAN BISHI:

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

- (a) whether Government has any plan to improve the methodology used by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) for accurate assessment of forest cover, as the present broad definition has led to overestimation and masking of deforestation;
- (b) if so, details thereof; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (c) India's definition of forest, reported in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) has been taken based on the internationally accepted criteria. As per Decision 19/Conference of Parties (CP) 9-Kyoto Protocol, the forest can be defined by any country depending upon the capacities and capabilities of the country and is as follows:-

Forest is defined structurally on the basis of

- Crown cover percentage: Tree crown cover- 10 to 30% (India 10%)
- Minimum area of stand: area between 0.05 and 1 hectare (India 1.0 hectare) and
- Minimum height of trees: Potential to reach a minimum height at maturity in situ of 2 to 5 m (India 2m)

India's definition of forest has been taken based on above three criteria and very well accepted by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for their reporting and communications. Hence, the present definition of forest cover has not led to overestimation of forest cover and masking of deforestation.

The term forest cover has been clearly defined and specified in the ISFR. As per ISFR 2021, the term "Forest Cover" refers to "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 lands may not necessarily be a recorded forest area. It also includes orchards, bamboo and palm."

Forest Survey of India carries out biennial assessment of forest cover of the country, since 1987 and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report. As per ISFR 2021, the total forest cover of the country is 7,13,789 square kilometers which is 21.72% of the geographical area of the country. The current assessment shows that the total forest cover of the country has increased by 1540 square kilometre at the national level as compared to the previous assessment i.e. ISFR 2019. Further, the total forest and tree cover of the country as per ISFR 2021 assessment is 8,09,537 square kilometer which is 24.62% of the geographical area of the country.
