

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3072
TO BE ANSWERED ON 27.03.2025

Indian Forest Survey Report 2023

3072. SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY:

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

- (a) whether ISFR 2023 does not distinguish between plantations and natural forests in its assessment of increased forest cover;
- (b) whether Government considers revising its methodology to differentiate between natural forests, commercial plantations and urban tree cover;
- (c) the reasons for decrease in moderately dense forests and scrub areas and the steps taken by Government to prevent further degradation of these forests; and
- (d) whether report shows that very dense forests have declined outside recorded forest areas, indicating a loss of tree cover in non-protected areas, if so, whether Government is planning to bring such degraded forests under legal protection and conservation schemes?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, carries out the assessment of forest and tree cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in the 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 the National Forest Inventory.

Forest cover mapping for preparation of ISFR encompasses all types of lands without regard to their ownership, land use, or legal status. The methodology used by the Forest Survey of India for assessment of forest cover are based on internationally accepted criteria as per Decision 19/Conference of Parties (CoP) 9-Kyoto Protocol. Accordingly, assessment of forest cover encompasses all lands more than 1 hectare in area and with a canopy of more than 10% irrespective of ownership and legal status.

- (b) The methodology used in ISFR (India State of Forest Report) is based on satellite image interpretation for assessing the forest cover of the country. The first report of 1987 used LANDSAT-MSS satellite data with a spatial resolution of 80 m at 1:1 million scale whereas the latest report i.e. ISFR 2023 is based on Resourcesat-2 LISS III satellite images with a spatial resolution of 23.5 m and scale of 1:50,000. This improvement in methodology is solely based on better resolution satellite data. FSI has always kept pace with technological advancements and improved its assessment over the years.
- (c) The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change supports the efforts of the State Government through various schemes and programmes, which include National Mission for a Green India (GIM), Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, Nagar Van Yojana (NVY), Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) and Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). These funds support the efforts of the States and UTs for ecological restoration through afforestation in and outside forest areas, forest landscape restoration, habitat improvement, soil and water conservation measures and protection etc.

The assessment of forest cover is reported in three categories, namely, Very Dense Forest (VDF), Moderately Dense Forest (MDF) and Open Forest (OF). As per ISFR 2023, the forest cover change matrix shows that there is an overall increase of 2367.62 square kilometer in the very dense forest as compared to the ISFR 2021. The change in moderately dense forest between ISFR 2021 and ISFR 2023 is due to upgradation of density classes from MDF to VDF and also conversion from MDF to OF. Similarly, the reason for decrease in scrub is due to upgradation in higher density classes and conversion to non-forest. However, as per ISFR 2023, the total forest cover of the country has increased by 156.41 square kilometer as compared to the last assessment of 2021.

- (d) As per ISFR 2023, the very dense forests outside Recorded Forest Areas (RFA) has declined by 63.88 square kilometer (0.55%). However, overall there is an increase of 149.13 square kilometer in the total forest cover outside recorded forest area/ green wash as compared to the ISFR 2021. The protection, conservation and management of the forest resources are primarily the responsibility of the respective State Government and Union territory Administration. There are legal frameworks for the protection and management of forest and tree resources which include, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the State Forest Acts and Rules. The State Governments /UT Administrations take appropriate actions to protect forests and trees as per the provisions made under these Acts/ Rules. The details in this regard are maintained by the concerned State Government/ UT Administration.
