

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 277
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.12.2019

Desertification

*277. SHRI FEROZE VARUN GANDHI:

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

- (a) whether desertification is a huge threat to agricultural productivity in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government to combat desertification;
- (c) the total area of land under desertification in the country, State/UT-wise including Uttar Pradesh; and
- (d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 as committed at the UN Convention to combat desertification?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a), (b), (c) & (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARA (a), (b), (c) & (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. * 277 ON DESERTIFICATION DUE FOR REPLY ON 6.12.2019

(a) & (b) As per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared by the Space Applications Centre for the period 2011-2013, 29.32 % of the Total Geographical Area of the country i.e. 96.4 million hectares is undergoing the process of degradation. It is therefore an issue of increasing concern for agricultural productivity in the country.

Various steps have been taken by the Government of India to address the impact of desertification on agricultural productivity. For example, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has taken up various programmes like the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture which includes interventions such as the Soil Health Card, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna, Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North-Eastern Region, Rain Fed Area Development, National Agro-Forestry policy and the sub-Mission on Agro-Forestry, National Bamboo Mission, Prime Minister Krishi Sinchai Yojna- Per Drop More Crop (PMKSY)e.t.c.

The Integrated Watershed Management Programme (of the Watershed Management Division of the Ministry of Rural Development) was amalgamated as a Watershed Development Component of PMKSY in 2015-16 and an area of about 20.5 million hectares has been developed under completed and ongoing projects. Upto October 2019 an amount of Rs 17751.75 crore has been released to States as Central share for implementation of Watershed Development Project. Between 2014-15 to 2019-20 (upto September 2019), total 6,08,384 water harvesting structures were created/rejuvenated, an additional area of 13,47,527 hectares has been brought under protective irrigation, and 27,25,587 farmers have been benefitted during the said period. Under afforestation/horticultural activities 92,000 hectares degraded and rain-fed lands have been covered during 2018-19 and 2019-20 (upto second quarter).

Studies have also been carried out under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to combat desertification on various issues such as assessment of status of desertification in India's Arid Regions through satellite remote sensing and identification of field-based indicators; checking soil erosion, sand movement and control wind erosion through sand dune stabilisation, shelter-belt plantation and soil and water conservation; rehabilitation of mine spoil areas; methodology for reclaiming degraded land due to water logging and salinity-alkalinity etc.

(c) As per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared by the Space Applications Centre for the year 2011-13, state-wise data is as follows:

	Name of the State	Total Area under Desertification (hectares)	Total Area under Desertification (%)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	2298758	14.35
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	153933	1.84
3.	Assam	716596	9.14
4.	Bihar	694809	7.38
5.	Chhatisgarh	2211153	16.36
6.	Delhi	89868	60.60
7.	Goa	192973	52.13
8.	Gujarat	10261641	52.29
9.	Haryana	338964	7.67
10.	Himachal Pradesh	2394240	43.01

	Name of the State	Total Area under Desertification (hectares)	Total Area under Desertification (%)
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	7969607	35.86
12.	Jharkhand	5498726	68.98
13.	Karnataka	6951000	36.24
14.	Kerala	379587	9.77
15.	Madhya Pradesh	3804315	12.34
16.	Maharashtra	13825935	44.93
17.	Manipur	601959	26.96
18.	Meghalaya	494880	22.06
19.	Mizoram	187453	8.89
20.	Nagaland	786678	47.45
21.	Orissa	5304114	34.06
22.	Punjab	144653	2.87
23.	Rajasthan	21526512	62.90
24.	Sikkim	78749	11.10
25.	TamilNadu	1543898	11.87
26.	Telangana	3598856	31.34
27.	Tripura	437128	41.69
28.	Uttar Pradesh	1528997	6.35
29.	Uttarakhand	648253	12.12
30.	West Bengal	1733931	19.54
	Total	96398166	29.32

(d) India has committed to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) status by 2030. At the recently concluded 14th session of the Conference of Parties (CoP) of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification held in India in September, 2019, India has raised its ambition to restore degraded land from 21 mha to 26 mha by 2030.

National Afforestation & Eco Development Board (NAEB) Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is implementing the "National Afforestation Programme (NAP)" for ecological restoration of degraded forest areas under which since its inception, an area of over 2 million ha has been approved for afforestation at a cost of Rs.3874 crore. NAP also supports Soil Moisture Conservation activities to improve the soil moisture regime in the implementation area along with providing livelihood support for the locals. This multi activity, multi target, multi benefit approach matches with the proposed LDN strategy.

Various other schemes like Green India Mission, fund accumulated under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), Nagar Van Yojana etc. also help in checking degradation and restoration of forest landscape. MoEF&CC also promote tree outside forests realizing that the country has a huge potential for increasing its Trees Outside Forest (TOF) area primarily through expansion of agroforestry, optimum use of wastelands and vacant lands.
