

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3316
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.03.2020

Desertification

SHRI NALIN KUMAR KATEEL:

Will the MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is a continuous rise in desertification across the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has made any assessment of the extent of degraded land/desertification in the country;
- (c) if so, the details of the total area of land across the country that has been degraded in the last three years;
- (d) whether some species of animals have become extinct in the country due to desertification and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government has taken any measures to meet the target of restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

(a), (b) and (c) As per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared by the Space Applications Centre, 96.4 mha area of the Country is undergoing the process of degradation, i.e., 29.32% of the Total Geographical Area (TGA) of the country during 2011-13, whereas during 2003-05, the area undergoing the process of land degradation was 94.53 mha, i.e. 28.76% of TGA of India. There is a cumulative increase of 1.87 mha area undergoing process of desertification/land degradation in the country (constituting 0.57% of the TGA) during the time frame 2003-05 and 2011-13.

(d) Zoological Survey of India has not reported any species of animals to have become extinct due to desertification in the country.

(e) Yes, in the recently concluded 14th session of the Conference of Parties (CoP) of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held in India in September, 2019,

India announced its ambition to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and Govt. of India has undertaken various steps in this directions through relevant ministries.

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 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. 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 trees 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.

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) etc.

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.
