

Proceedings of Side Event

“Opportunities of Mitigating Climate Change through Forestry Sector in India” held on 2nd May 2017

**UNFF-12 Session at UNHQ, New York,
USA**



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Background

The Forestry Sector was identified to play a key role in the Paris Agreement for limiting rise of temperature within 2 degree Celsius and to aid in achieving net zero emissions beyond 2050. However, Forests are a source and sink of Green House Gases (GHG's). India has occupied only 3% carbon space globally. Thus it is not a part of the problem of climate change but wants to be part of the solution. India has taken voluntary targets of achieving additional 2.5-3 billion tons of CO₂e by 2030 from the Forestry Sector.

Technical session

The technical session was moderated by Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity Division, TERI.

The presentations were made by Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity Division, TERI; Mr Sachin Raj Jain, Convener- Treasurer, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF), Noida ; Dr Yogesh Gokhale, Fellow, TERI and Dr Ashish Aggrawal, Fellow, TERI.

Dr J V Sharma Director, Forestry & Biodiversity Division, TERI stated that the forest loss and forest degradation has a huge cost on the economy and impacts lives of poor especially forest dependent rural communities. Globally, deforestation and forest degradation accounts for nearly 17% of GHG emission. Therefore, in order to address climate change, arresting deforestation and forest degradation and ensuring sustainable management of forests becomes a high priority not only nationally but internationally. He further highlighted on India's INDC target of creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. The two approaches to achieve the INDC's mandate are conservation & afforestation while the important strategies are bringing more areas under forest and tree cover, improving the productivity of existing forests, applying interventions to enhance soil carbon, convergence with social sector schemes and preparedness to exploit full potential of REDD+ schemes. Dr Sharma also explained that there is need to have a massive financial investment for achieving this target along with community based forest governance, strengthening of monitoring, reporting and verification and generating political commitment. He further stated that one of the ways to generate financial resource for forestry sector is through creating national level market for carbon trading. The government has to take policy decision for corporates and industries to be carbon neutral.

Dr Ashish Aggarwal, Fellow, TERI gave details on status of forests and carbon forestry initiatives in India. He highlighted the change in forest cover in the country in last 12 years and the major reasons for it. He explained that India has managed to address the problem of deforestation but is struggling to cope up with the problem of forest degradation. He further explained the role of forests in sequestering carbon nationally and internationally. Dr Aggarwal stated that Forestry is at the centre-stage of global climate change negotiations as

it is a low cost carbon mitigation option. Recently, India has declared to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030 as a part of the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC). Realising the role that the forestry sector could play in climate change mitigation, afforestation and reforestation projects were recognised under CDM (Clean Development Mechanism). At present, there are 66 projects registered worldwide of which 19 are from India. In addition to CDM, there is also Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation REDD+ mechanism in order to conserve natural forests. Dr Aggarwal gave example of the Khasi Hills REDD+ project in Meghalaya. Under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, India has taken up the Green India Mission which targets treatment of 10 million hectares of degraded landscape through various measures of afforestation and conservation. Further, the Green India Mission aims to achieve enhanced CO₂ emissions reduction of 50-60 million tonnes annually by the year 2020. He concluded by highlighting the challenges in executing these carbon forestry initiatives.

Mr Sachin Raj Jain, Convener- Treasurer, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) in his remarks stated that forests are national resource of global concern. The forests particularly in developing countries like India are deforested and degraded with a rapid pace. Thus in-order to capture drivers of forest degradation, the global community has shown the window of forest based carbon financing through Afforestation Reforestation Clean Development Mechanism (AR-CDM) and Reduced Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) which should be used to its fullest potential.

Dr Yogesh Gokhale, Fellow, TERI highlighted the linkages between climate change and biodiversity conservation and ways to arrest loss of biodiversity through adaptation and mitigation.

Dr J V Sharma, Fellow, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity Division, TERI proposed the vote of thanks and concluded the event to be successful.

Key Findings of the Discussion:

In the light of the discussions, following points were taken into consideration:

1. Since Carbon Sequestration has global concern and there is need of huge financial resources, the Global Community should provide financial support in achieving the targets.
2. India is not able to take advantage of carbon trading due to lack of capacity, cumbersome process and high transaction cost. It would be appropriate to have methodologies registered specifically in Indian context so that more and more projects could be registered for taking carbon finance from forestry sector.
3. More focus to produce high yielding clones for trees grown in agro forestry.
4. Certification of forests will provide monitoring platform for improving the management practices in turn will improve the productivity of the forests.
5. A policy at national level is to be formulated for other sectors to be carbon neutral. It will provide opportunity for forestry sector to offset the emissions of other sector with benefit to the forestry sector for improving quality on one hand and will also help in the poverty alleviation of the forest dependent communities.

Annexure 1. Agenda of the Workshop

Opportunities for Mitigating Climate Change through Forestry Sector in India

Date: 2nd May, 2017 Time: 1:15 pm to 2:45 pm

Agenda

Moderator : Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity, TERI, New Delhi	
1.15 pm to 1.20 pm	Opening Remarks Representative from Government of India
1.20 pm to 1.35 pm	Road map for achieving India's NDC goals through forestry sector Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity, TERI, New Delhi
1.35 pm to 1.50 pm	Carbon Forestry initiatives in India Dr Ashish Aggarwal, Fellow, TERI, New Delhi
1.50 pm to 2.05 pm	Remarks Mr Sachin Raj Jain, Convener- Treasurer, Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF), Noida
2.05 pm to 2.30 pm	Open Discussion
2.30 pm to 2.40 pm	Biodiversity conservation and Climate change in India Dr Yogesh Gokhale, Fellow, TERI, New Delhi
2.40 pm to 2.45 pm	Concluding Remarks Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry & Biodiversity, TERI, New Delhi