



India State of Forest Report-2021

For Prelims: India State of Forest Report-2021, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

For Mains: India State of Forest Report-2021, Need to improve the forest cover in the country, Related challenges, Initiatives taken to improve Forest Cover

Why in News

Recently, the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** released the India State of Forest Report-2021.

In October, 2021 an amendment was proposed by MoEFCC to the [Forest \(Conservation\) Act, 1980](#) to bring significant changes to forest governance in India.

Key Points

▪ About:

- It is an assessment of **India's forest and tree cover**, published every two years by the Forest Survey of India.
- The first survey was published in 1987, and ISFR 2021 is the 17th.
- India is **one of the few countries in the world** that brings out such a survey every two years, and this is widely **considered comprehensive and robust**.
- The ISFR is used in **planning and formulation of policies** in forest management as well as forestry and agroforestry sectors.
- Three categories of forests are surveyed - **very dense forests** (canopy density over 70%), **moderately dense forests** (40-70%) and **open forests** (10-40%).
- Scrubs (canopy density less than 10%) are also surveyed but not categorised as forests.

▪ New Features of ISFR 2021:

- It has for the **first time assessed forest cover in tiger reserves, tiger corridors** and the **Gir forest** which houses the **Asiatic lion**.
- The forest cover in tiger corridors has increased by **37.15 sq km (0.32%) between 2011-2021**, but decreased by 22.6 sq km (0.04%) in tiger reserves.
- Forest cover has increased in 20 tiger reserves in these 10 years, and decreased in 32.
- **Buxa (West Bengal), Anamalai (Tamil Nadu) and Indravati reserves (Chhattisgarh)** have shown an **increase in forest cover** while the **highest losses** have been found in **Kawal (Telangana), Bhadra (Karnataka) and the Sunderbans reserves (West Bengal)**.
- **Pakke Tiger Reserve** in Arunachal Pradesh has the **highest forest cover**, at nearly 97%.

▪ Findings of the Report:

◦ Increment in Area:

- The **forest and tree cover in the country continues to increase** with an additional cover of 1,540 square kilometres over the past two years.
- India's forest cover is now **7,13,789 square kilometres, 21.71%** of the country's geographical area, an increase from **21.67% in 2019**.
- Tree cover has increased by 721 sq km.
 - Tree cover is defined as all tree patches of size less than one hectare occurring outside the **recorded forest area**. This covers trees in all formations including scattered trees.

◦ Increase/Decrease in Forests:

- The states that have shown the highest increase in forest cover are **Telangana (3.07%), Andhra Pradesh (2.22%) and Odisha (1.04%)**.
- Five states in the Northeast - **Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland** have all **shown loss in forest cover**.

◦ States with Highest Forest Area/Cover:

- **Area-wise: Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover** in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- **In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are** Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland.
 - The term '**forest area**' denotes the **legal status of the land** as per the government records, whereas the term '**forest cover**' indicates **presence of trees over any land**.

◦ Mangroves:

- **Mangroves** have shown an increase of 17 sq km. India's total mangrove cover is now 4,992 sq km.

◦ Forest Prone to Fires:

- 35.46% of the forest cover is prone to **forest fires**. Out of this, 2.81% is extremely prone, 7.85% is very highly prone and 11.51% is highly prone.
 - By 2030, **45-64% of forests** in India will experience the effects of **climate change** and rising temperatures.
 - Forests in all states (except Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland) will be highly vulnerable climate hot spots. Ladakh (forest cover 0.1-0.2%) is likely to be the most affected.

◦ Total Carbon Stock:

- The total **carbon stock** in the country's forests is estimated at 7,204 million

tonnes, an increase of 79.4 million tonnes since 2019.

- Forest carbon stock is the **amount of carbon that has been sequestered from the atmosphere** and is now stored within the forest ecosystem, mainly within living biomass and soil, and to a lesser extent also in dead wood and litter.
- **Bamboo Forests:**
 - Bamboo forests have grown from 13,882 million culms (stems) in 2019 to 53,336 million culms in 2021.
- **Concerns:**
 - **Decline in Natural Forests:**
 - There is a **1,582 sq km decline in moderately dense forests**, or “natural forests”.
 - The decline, in conjunction with an increase of 2,621 sq km in open forest areas – shows a degradation of forests in the country.
 - Also, scrub area has increased by 5,320 sq km – indicating the complete degradation of forests in these areas.
 - Very dense forests have increased by 501 sq km.
 - **Decline in Northeast Forest Cover:**
 - The forest cover in the region has shown an overall decline of 1,020 sq km in forest cover.
 - The Northeast states account for **7.98% of total geographical area but 23.75% of total forest cover**.
 - The decline in the Northeastern states has been attributed to a spate of natural calamities, particularly **landslides and heavy rains**, in the region as well as to anthropogenic activities such as **shifting agriculture, pressure of developmental activities and felling of trees**.

Governments Initiatives

- **National Mission for a Green India:**
 - It is one of the eight Missions under the [National Action Plan on Climate Change \(NAPCC\)](#).
 - It was launched in February, 2014 with the objective to safeguard the biological resources of our nation and associated livelihoods against the peril of adverse [climate change](#) and to recognise the vital impact of forestry on ecological sustainability, biodiversity conservation and food-, water- and livelihood-security.
- **[National Afforestation Programme \(NAP\):](#)**
 - It has been implemented since 2000 for the afforestation of degraded forest lands.
 - It is being implemented by the MoEFCC.
- **[Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority, \(CAMPA Funds\):](#)**
 - Launched in 2016, 90% of the fund is to be given to the states while 10% is to be retained by the Centre.
 - The funds can be used for treatment of catchment areas, assisted natural generation, forest management, wildlife protection and management, relocation of villages from protected areas, managing human-wildlife conflicts, training and awareness generation, supply of wood saving devices and allied activities.
- **National Action Programme to Combat Desertification:**
 - It was prepared in 2001 to address issues of increasing [desertification](#) and to take appropriate actions.
 - It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- **[Forest Fire Prevention & Management Scheme \(FFPM\):](#)**
 - It is the **only centrally funded program** specifically dedicated to assist the states in dealing with forest fires.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/india-state-of-forest-report-2021>