

SOCIAL FORESTRY AND FARM FORESTRY

(Item No. 6)

1. The forest area in Tamil Nadu extends to an area of 22,699 sq.kms. which occupy 17.45% of total geographical area of the State. The Tamil Nadu Government is striving hard to attain the national goal of achieving one-third of the total land area to be under forest cover. With this in aim the Government of Tamil Nadu is implementing various schemes funded by State, Central and External agencies. In recent years the social forestry, agro-forestry, farm-forestry and community forestry are gaining momentum. These programmes are implemented by Forest, Agriculture and Rural Development Departments.

Social Forestry and Farm Forestry

2. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is a pioneer in community forestry development and have raised about 1.3 lakhs hectares of woodlots in community lands. This was upgraded as social forestry programme with the assistance from Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) from 1981-82 and was in operation till March, 1996. The main objective was to involve the rural communities in creation and maintenance of village woodlots and raising tree plantations in community lands, private lands and in homesteads for meeting their local needs. An integrated approach for the involvement and participation of other departments namely Agriculture, Rural Development, Revenue Highways and Irrigation was needed to implement various schemes of the project. Rural Development Department was involved in implementing the Tree Patta Scheme, Agriculture Department was in charge of promoting agro forestry practices in dry lands and the Forest Department had been assigned with the task of raising community woodlots, seedlings production, research, training and extension. A similar project was also launched under Tamil Nadu Agricultural Development Project from 1991-92 with World Bank funding.

3. The social and farm forestry cover the following activities- (1) To raise Plantation of quick growing species to provide raw materials for the wood pulp based industries like paper, rayon, etc., (2) To raise, fuelwood plantation in forest areas adjoining cities, towns and in Padugai (river waste lands) lands in order to augment fuelwood resources to meeting the needs of the rural people, (3) To raise shelter belt plantation in forest lands along the coast in coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, and (4) To take up the afforestation work in all degraded forest areas to provide vegetative cover in degraded forest lands to improve the forest land productivity in the scrub jungle and also to meet the demand for small timber, fodder and other minor forest products.

4. In addition, social and farm forestry activities are also undertaken under various projects namely: (a) The Interface Forestry Programme, (b) National Wasteland Development Programme, (c) Western Ghat Development Programme, (d) Hill Area Development Programme, (e) Jawahar Velai Vaippu Thittam and (f) Integrated Tribal Development Programme. During the Eighth Five Year Plan period the following schemes were implemented under Social and Farm Forestry Sector by Forest Department in the State. They are: Plantation of pulpwood, fuelwood and softwood; raising of shelter belts, establishment of bamboo estate, etc. The Area covered under Social forestry during 8th plan period is 77838 hectares. In addition 245 Kms of avenue forestry had also been developed. The funding for social forestry sector came from State and Central Plan Scheme and External funding agencies which include SIDA, W.B & OECF. The total expenditure incurred by the Forest Department towards implementation of those schemes was Rs.16.832 lakhs during the same period.

Acts and Rule

5. For the protection and management of forests in the State the following Acts and Rules are in force:- (i) Tamil Nadu Forest Act 1882, (ii) Tamil Nadu Preservation of Private Forests Act 1949, (iii) Tamil Nadu Hill Area (Preservation of Trees) Act 1955, (iv) Wild life (Protection) Act 1972, (v) Environment (Protection) Act 1986, and (vi) Forest Conservation Act 1980. While the first four Acts are State legislations, the last two Acts are enacted by the Govt. of India. The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994 provides certain powers to Village Panchayat, Panchayat Union related to unreserved forests (Section 120, 121, 131 and 245).

Legal provisions

6. The Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act, 1994 provides powers to Village Panchayat and Panchayat Union Council related to transfer and resume unreserved forests lands (Section 120 and 121). Under Section 131 (e) and (f), no person shall plant any tree on any public road or other property vesting in or belonging to Government Village Panchayat or Panchayat Union Council or fell, remove destroy, lop or strip bark, leaves or fruits from or otherwise damage any tree which is growing on any such public road or other property or on any poramboke land, the use of which is regulated by a village panchayat.

Entrustment of Powers

7. This subject is directly linked to the subjects dealing with "Fuel and Fodder" (Item-12) and Minor Forest Produce (Item-7). Many of the recommendations made in these subject will be applicable here. Therefore, additional powers needed to be entrusted to local bodies have been suggested in the following statements. Village Panchayats will have ownership of the plantations raised in Village Panchayat vested lands. The Village Panchayats will identify and select beneficiaries under Government schemes. Panchayat Union Council will channelise funds to the Village Panchayats for implementation and undertake review. The District Panchayats will take up planning and advisory role in the matter.

I. VILLAGE PANCHAYAT

<i>ACTIVITY</i> (1)	<i>ENTRUSTMENT OF POWERS</i> (2)
1. Promotion of Social Forestry and Farm Forestry.	1. Promoting and propagating social and farm forestry for improving ecology and environment. 2. Identify community degraded and waste lands for social forestry and farm forestry and formulate and implement community farm and social forestry projects. 3. Leasing of Village Panchayat lands to the groups/individual interested in the establish-ment of the social forestry on sharing basis. 4. Promote fuel fodder and timber producing plants for local use. 5. Encourage private farmers to take up nurseries and plantation activities under farm-forestry and assist them, distribute seedlings/saplings. 6. Collection, distribution and sale of fuel, fodder and timber.

II. PANCHAYAT UNION

<i>ACTIVITY</i> (1)	<i>ENTRUSTMENT OF POWERS</i> (2)
1. Promotion of Social Forestry and Farm Forestry.	1. Promoting and propagating social and farm forestry for improving ecology and environment. 2. Identification of degraded and waste lands and Village Panchayat and Panchayat Union vested porambokes for formulation and implementation of social forestry projects for implementation directly or through Village Panchayats. 3. Implementation of social forestry projects of Panchayat Union Council and those assigned by the Government and District Panchayat, Plant trees along roads, rails and public places.

<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Production and supply of seedlings and samplings for social forestry and farm forestry projects. 5. Propagate fuel, fodder and timber producing plants amongst the villagers. 6. Establish nurseries for supply of seedlings and saplings to Panchayats and Public. 7. Arranging collection and sale of fuel, fodder and timber. 8. Review all Social and Farm forestry schemes implemented by Forest, Agriculture, Revenue and Rural Development Departments. Forest Rangers, Tahsildar, Assistant Director of Agriculture will attend such reviews.

III. DISTRICT PANCHAYAT

<i>ACTIVITY</i> <i>(1)</i>	<i>ENTRUSTMENT OF POWERS</i> <i>(2)</i>
1. Promotion of Social Forestry and Farm Forestry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the district potentialities in the promotion of social and farm forestry, prepare plans and projects for implementation through Panchayats, NGOs and line Departments. 2. Consolidating social forestry projects proposed by the Village Panchayats according to approval and sanctioning of funds, assigning projects to Panchayat Union Council and Village Panchayat. 3. Review periodically (once in 3 months) all social and farm forestry programmes, through the Standing Committee on Agriculture. 4. Advise Government on the problems and prospects of social and farm forestry promotion in the District.

Administrative Implications

8. The block plantation raised in community poramboke lands should be maintained by the Village Panchayats and Panchayat Unions in their respective vested lands through schemes like , Jawahar Velai Vaippu Thittam. The details of staff that have to be transferred consequent on the implementation of the above recommendations to the control of the Panchayat Raj Institutions are given below: Foresters, Rangers, and Divisional Forest Officers being Government Servants may be on deputation to the rural local bodies. Social Forestry workers and watchers may be transferred to Village Panchayats whose wages should be periodically reimbursed by Government.

<i>Level</i> <i>(1)</i>	<i>Function</i> <i>(2)</i>	<i>Staff</i> <i>(3)</i>	<i>Remarks</i> <i>(4)</i>
a. Village Panchayat	Protection and maintenance of existing plantations in Panchayat vested lands and poramboke hillocks.	Village Social Forestry Workers/ Forest Watchers (4022 Nos.)	Till 31.03.1996 financial allocation is met by External Aided Project. The rural local bodies will have to findout alternative sources of funds.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
b. Panchayat Union	Raising, maintenance and Protection of Plantations.	Foresters:338 Rangers : 67	
c. District Panchayat	Monitoring social and farm forestry activities.	Divisional Forest Officer in the Grade of Deputy Conservator of Forests : 13	

Financial Implications

9. The Forest Department was sharing the revenue obtained by harvesting the woodlots in the tank beds with the Panchayats on 50:50 basis, which was changed to 60:40 basis. Since the operation and maintenance of such woodlots will vest with Panchayats, 100% of the revenues shall go to respective Panchayat bodies. Government may make specific allocation to Village Panchayats and Panchayat Unions for implementing Social and farm forestry programmes under various State and Central sector projects. Implementation of the following schemes may be transferred to Panchayat Unions.

<i>Sl.No.</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Outlay (1996-97) Rs. in lakhs</i>
1.	Fuel Wood Plantations	236.51
2.	Shelter belt programmes in coastal areas	24.50
3.	Community Wasteland Development Programme	716.59
4.	Integrated Wasteland Development Programme	50.00
Total :		1027.60