

Regional Consultation on Agroforestry : the Way Forward

Concept Note

Agroforestry is an effective land use system which contributes to food, nutritional and environmental security. Beside its multifarious use as food, fuel, fodder, fibre and timber, it enables smallholder farmers to optimize their land use. Also agroforestry has significant potential to provide employment and additional income to farmers. Through Agroforestry, many countries are able to increase their forest/tree cover to meet specific national targets, which otherwise are quite difficult to achieve.

In the context of climate change, agroforestry helps in mitigating the same through microclimatic modification and carbon sequestration. Towards landscape management, agroforestry plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gas (GHS) emissions and acts as an effective means of environmental services. In fact, agroforestry can help in achieving resilience in agriculture while addressing effectively the threat of climate change.

Given the fact that land-holding size is shrinking, tree farming combined with agriculture is perhaps the only way forward to optimize farm productivity and thus, enhance livelihood opportunities of smallholder farmers, landless laborers and the women farmers.

Currently, there is growing concern about environmental degradation (soil erosion, salinity, sodicity, water logging, agricultural non-point source pollution, desertification etc.) owing to indiscriminate use of agricultural chemicals/other inputs and/or inappropriate land use systems. As a result, substantial areas of land have gone out of production. Agroforestry, as an alternate land use option, holds promise in such cases. A closer integration of agricultural crops and forest trees would be useful not only in checking further adverse effects of climate change as well as land degradation but also would ensure timber and firewood availability in the rural areas.

Despite its obvious benefits, agroforestry continues to face challenges such as unfavorable policy environment, lack of scientific knowledge and public awareness, legal constraints and poor coordination as well as convergence among the multiple sectors involved – namely, agriculture, forestry, rural development, environment and trade. Inadequate investment, lack of suitable extension strategies and weak market linkages are the real concerns for improving the livelihood of small holder farmers. Moreover, the development of agroforestry is impeded by legal, policy and institutional arrangements, its environmental benefits are mostly unrewarded, and the investments are often linked with long gestation periods. As a result, the potential of agroforestry has not been fully understood by the farmers and the farming communities.

Unfortunately, agroforestry has not gained the desired importance as a resource development option due to various factors as mentioned above. In the recent past, fortunately a paradigm shift towards environmental protection and sustainable land use has taken place all over the region and the tree-based production systems are being promoted the world over.

Ever since organized research in agroforestry started worldwide about 35 years ago, many countries in South Asia, including India, have remained in the forefront of agroforestry research. The Indian Council

of Agricultural Research had initiated a project called: All India Coordinated Research Project on Agroforestry way back in 1983. Subsequently, ICAR also established a National Research Centre for Agroforestry in 1988 which is recently upgraded as Central Agroforestry Research Institute from 2014.

The World Congress on Agroforestry was organized with a great success jointly by ICRAF (World Agroforestry Center) and ICAR in 2014 in New Delhi with the central theme “Trees for Life: Accelerating the Impacts of Agroforestry”. During the Congress India launched a National Agroforestry Policy. As a result, Agroforestry, Evergreen Agriculture, and smallholder production systems have attracted considerable attention of late. The World Congress had made several useful recommendations which when implemented will go a long way in stimulating large-scale adoption of agroforestry by the farmers and will provide much needed raw material to wood based industries on the one hand and play its role towards energy and environmental security on the other. It was also recognized that agroforestry is the only alternative to meet the target of increasing forest cover to 33% from the present less than 25% in India, restoring thus also the lands that are considered degraded presently. Therefore, a major role for agroforestry would be to provide environmental services such as increased coverage under vegetation and higher carbon sequestration.

The major hurdle in the implementation of the National Agroforestry Policy and the recommendations of the World Congress is lack of appropriate tree harvesting and transportation rules between and within a state. Further, there is lack of marketing, credit and insurance infrastructure in agroforestry sector. Research and technology gaps also need to be addressed.

In this context, it is proposed to organize a Regional Consultation on Agroforestry in South Asia from 8-10 October, 2015 at NASC complex to have a future Road Map defined for implementation by the stakeholders.

Objectives:

The objectives of the Regional Consultation are:

- i) To provide a platform to all the stakeholders for sharing experiences/ ideas to overcome the challenges in accelerating growth of agroforestry in the region,
- ii) To assess the current status on Agroforestry research in different countries of South Asia,
- iii) To understand national strategies towards adoption/promotion of agroforestry including states of National Action Plans,
- iv) To identify priority areas for research and development, including policy interventions needed and
- v) To finalize a ‘Road Map’ for regional collaboration/networking in agroforestry.

Organizers:

- Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
- World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
- Indian Society of Agroforestry

- Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI)

Dates and Venue:

8-10 October, 2015, NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi

Advisory Committee

Dr. S. Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR - Chairman

Dr. Raj Paroda, Chairman, TAAS - Co-Chairman

Mr. Siraj Hussain, Secretary, DAC - Member

Dr. Tony Simon, Director General, ICRAF - Member

Dr. Raghunath Ghodake, APAARI - Member

Dr Rita Sharma - Member

Organizing Committee

Dr. AK Sikka, DDG (NRM), ICAR - Chairman

Dr. J. Rizvi, ICRAF - Co-Chairman

Dr KD Singh- Member

Dr. NN Singh - Member

Anil Kumar, Director, CAFRI - Member

A. Arunchalam - Member

Dr. B. Mohan Kumar, ICAR - Member

Dr SK Dhyani, ICAR - Member Secretary

Technical committee

Dr. B. Mohan Kumar, ICAR – Convener

Dr. VP Singh, ICRAF

Dr. S.K. Dhyani, CAFRI

Dr. J. Rizvi, ICRAF

Dr. N.N. Singh, TAAS

