

# Community Farming

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In news

Karnataka Forest Department launches a pilot project to encourage community farming and help augment farm income of local villagers on the outskirts of M.M. Hills Wildlife Sanctuary.

Key updates

- The initiative is aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture practices, besides helping the villagers get good revenue.
- The Karnataka Forest Department, under the eco-development plan, has given 5 acres of land for the people of this remote village.
- Under this Community farming, the people will not use chemical fertilizers and envisage sustainable agriculture which can improve the environment and preserve resources.
- The dung will serve as manure and the idea is to go organic or take up natural farming
- Taking this into consideration, the forest department has installed a solar-powered water facility.
- A total of six to seven women farmers have already joined this initiative and are supported by several others.
- Besides growing vegetables including tomatoes, chilli, coriander and cucumber among others, sugarcane and millets will also be grown in this 5-acre land, which will be maintained by these women.
- As part of this initiative, a portion of the land will be developed as a grassland so as to ensure fodder for the cows.
- The authorities over this will also reduce the practice

of letting cattle inside the forest for grazing which tends to degrade the jungles

### Community farming and its importance

- It consists of a group of small and marginal farmers, and landless poor in a village who work together to utilize the cultivable waste lands or under-utilized lands to earn their livelihoods.
- The participating farmers can either take community or individual land on lease; or can pool land of individual farmers in a contiguous patch for such farming
- Community farming offers many benefits to farmers who want to practice sustainable agriculture and to communities who want fresh, healthy, locally-produced food.
- Community farms are locally owned and operated, and democratically controlled. Local farms keep money circulating in their communities rather than exporting it to absentee owners or shareholders, and the benefits are passed on to local restaurants, farmers markets, retailers, and consumers.
- Community farms build 'social capital' by involving a diverse group of individuals – farmers, community members, and organizations – with different skills and knowledge.
- This social capital, or wealth, helps create community amenities beyond food production, including environmental and agricultural education, recreational opportunities, and nature conservation areas.