

Social forestry

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- The National Commission on Agriculture, Government of India, first used the term 'social forestry' in 1976.
- It was then that India embarked upon a social forestry project with the aim of taking the pressure off the forests and making use of all unused and fallow land.
- Government forest areas that are close to human settlement and have been degraded over the years due to human activities needed to be afforested. Trees were to be planted in and around agricultural fields.
- Plantation of trees along railway lines and roadsides, and river and canal banks were carried out. They were planted in village common land, Government wasteland and Panchayat land.
- Social forestry also aims at raising plantations by the common man so as to meet the growing demand for timber, fuel wood, fodder, etc, thereby reducing the pressure on the traditional forest area. This concept of village forests to meet the needs of the rural people is not new. It has existed through the centuries all over the country but it was now given a new character.

Social forestry schemes can be categorized into groups : farm forestry, community forestry, extension forestry and agroforestry.

Farm forestry

- At present in almost all the countries where social forestry programmes have been taken up, both commercial and non commercial farm forestry is being promoted in one form or the other.
- Individual farmers are being encouraged to plant trees on their own farmland to meet the domestic needs of the family. In many areas this tradition of growing trees on

the farmland already exists.

- Non-commercial farm forestry is the main thrust of most of the social forestry projects in the country today.
- It is not always necessary that the farmer grows trees for fuel wood, but very often they are interested in growing trees without any economic motive.
- They may want it to provide shade for the agricultural crops; as wind shelters; soil conservation or to use wasteland.

Community forestry

- Raising of trees on community land and not on private land as in farm forestry. All these programmes aim to provide for the entire community and not for any individual.
- The government has the responsibility of providing seedlings, fertilizer but the community has to take responsibility for protecting the trees.
- Some communities manage the plantations sensibly and in a sustainable manner so that the village continues to benefit.

Extension forestry

- Planting of trees on the sides of roads, canals and railways, along with planting on wastelands is known as 'extension' forestry, increasing the boundaries of forests.
- Under this project there has been creation of wood lots in the village common lands, government wastelands and panchayat lands.
- Schemes for afforesting degraded government forests that are close to villages are being carried out all over the country.

Agro- forestry

- Planting of trees on and around agricultural boundaries,

and on marginal, private lands, in combination with agricultural crops is known as agroforestry.

- Social forestry schemes that have been started all over the country have made a considerable difference in overall forest cover in a short time.