

Social Forestry : Need for a Proper Perspective and Policy

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INTRODUCTION

The urgent need to develop social forestry shows a big imbalance in the demand for forest produce and its supply. For over a century we have concentrated more on the consumption of forest produce than on its production and regeneration.

The demand for wood, for paper and polyfibre manufacture is rapidly increasing as also for housing and furniture.

The area under forests, as also the number of trees inside and outside the forest areas is dwindling. Several irrigation and hydro-electricity projects have led to the destruction of some thick natural forests. With the increase in population, encroachments over forests for the purposes of cultivation are increasing. Shortage of fossil-fuel has made people use more and more wood fuel. A very large number of cattle has made encroachments for grazing, a very serious problem. Thus, on one hand there is an increase in demand for forest produce and on the other hand there is a decrease in the supply. This has created a near-crisis situation in the country.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL FORESTRY

The major objectives of the development of social forests are to meet the demand of rural population for fuel and fodder and to provide gainful employment to forest dwellers and particularly to the Adivasis.

The book under review is a collection of papers submitted to a workshop on social forestry.

Social forestry is not merely growing of trees, but it is growing trees with a particular social aspect. This aspect has been well-emphasised in Choudhary's paper "Social Forestry for Integrated Development". He rightly states that "the objectives of social forestry are not physical but human. They are: (1) To fulfill fodder,