

XIII.A.1. Internal Rural Migration and its Impact on Deforestations in Kerela

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The present paper analyses the demographic and economic factors particularly the role of internal rural migration in deforestation in Kerela which is known for its deficit in the food production and is also known for unabated deforestation. The present study has made use of secondary data as well as primary data.

Using secondary data the study analyses the land use change in Kerela over the years for which reliable data is available. The study also tries to establish the relationship between the demographic variables and land use changes in Kerela with the help of secondary data. In addition to the secondary data, the present paper uses primary data collected from a village in Idukki district in Kerala where deforestation and internal rural migration was very high.

From the analysis based on the official estimates, it appeared that the land uses in Kerela, except the forest land use have undergone considerable changes during the period 1960 to 1994. Analysis of forest are based on satellite data revealed that the forest area has declined considerably. Since it was in Idukki district that forest decline was highest with considerable migrant population, a detailed study was carried out in Pampavalley village of Idukki district to analyse the relationship between the two. The analysis revealed that the migration to the rural districts has led to deforestation. The deforested land which was initially used for the cultivation of food crops was later on used for the cultivation of commercial crops. This had implications on migration flow which further had impact on land use. In the initial period, inter-district rural migration has led extension of cultivation which is synonymous with deforestation. But in later periods migration flows itself came to be determined by the use of this forest converted agricultural land. Thus it was seen that interaction between migration and deforestation is a continuous process and therefore dynamic. The study also highlights the major ecological problems which resulted from this dynamic process of internal rural migration and deforestation.