

XIII.B.1. Farm Forestry in India - An overview

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Land and trees play an important role in maintaining the ecological balance along with promoting economic development of the rural areas. But the efforts made to increase food production brought all types of lands under cultivation irrespective of their suitability for annual crops. The increased demand for forest related products and diversion of forest land for agricultural purposes and other economic activities reduced the forest area and also the tree cover on plain lands. Destruction of forests and misutilisation of land resources generated severe problems of deforestation, soil erosion, depletion in the eco-base. Until recently the importance of these resources was not recognised. In India, the National Commission on Agriculture (1976) realising the problems and consequences of environmental degradation proposed measures to tackle these problems by recommending the Social Forestry Programme. Social Forestry Programme combination of farm forestry, community forestry and extension forestry, aimed at bringing unproductive government and community lands under trees for two purposes (1) to reduce the pressure on forest resources (2) to meet the demand for fuel wood, fodder and small timber. Farm forestry a component of social forestry was practised by farmers. Though several states participated in implementing the social forestry programme, farm forestry - a practice of growing trees on farm lands - got much favour from farmer. Among the notable states which achieved good success are Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The present paper tries to make an overview of the farm forestry programme in India, and then assesses the performance of farm forestry programme in Karnataka, in terms of farmers' participation, economic viability of the programme and the comparative economics of tree crops v/s annual crops in Kolar, a leading district in farm forestry programme in Karnataka.