

## Social Forestry for Sustainable Livelihood

**Bindu Bala**

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Zoology, College of Basic Sciences & Humanities, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India. Pin Code: 141004

**ARTICLE ID: 50**

### Introduction

Social forestry is the management and protection of forests and afforestation of barren and deforested lands to help environmental, social, and rural development. Social forestry was first used in India in 1976 by “The National Commission on Agriculture”, Government of India. The programme was launched as a mass mobilization programme with the intention of involving the common population.

### Objectives of the Social Forestry Programme

1. To fulfil the basic requirements of people such as fuel, fodder, small timber, supplementary food, and income from surplus forest products to the rural area.
2. To provide employment opportunities and to increase family income considerably for alleviating poverty.
3. To develop cottage industries in rural areas.
4. To organize rural people in their struggle for socioeconomic development and to integrate economic gains in the distribution of their benefits to the rural society.
5. To teach the value of village-level self-sufficiency and self-management in the production as well as distribution of forest products with social justice.
6. To form the villagers into a well-knit community and an effective functional unit of society that can shape its own destiny.
7. To play a vital role in the reclamation of degraded lands, conservation of soil and moisture, improvement of agricultural production, and prevention of environmental deterioration.
8. To increase the natural beauty of the landscape, create recreational forests for the benefit of the rural and urban populations.
9. To the protection of agricultural fields against wind speed and natural calamity.

10. To solve the food problem of the rural area to a great extent. Certain edible fruits like cashew, mango, coconut, and palms have high nutritional value and grow under the social forestry programme.
11. To utilize the available land according to its carrying capacity.

## Types of Social Forestry

### 1. Agro-forestry

Agro-forestry combines agriculture and forestry technologies to create a more integrated, diverse, productive, profitable, healthy, and sustainable land use system. Agro-forestry practices include:

- a. **Alley cropping:** It involves growing crops (grains, forage, vegetables, etc.) between trees planted in a row. For example soybean or corn could be grown when the trees are very small; then, as the tree canopy closes, forages could be harvested for hay; finally, when the trees are fully grown and the ground is more shaded, grazing livestock or shade tolerant crops like mushrooms or ornamental ferns could occupy the alleyways
- b. **Silvo pasture:** It is the combination of trees and pasture. Various multipurpose trees (protein-rich trees) are planted in or around farmlands and range lands for cut and carry fodder production to meet the feed requirement of livestock during the fodder deficit period in winter. Examples: *Acacia nilotica*, *Albizia lebbeck*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Leucaena leucocephala*, *Gliricidia sepium*, *Sesbania grandiflora*
- c. **Wind breaks:** Trees are planted in single or multiple rows along the edge of a field to reduce wind effects on crops or livestock. Windbreakers reduce wind velocity and water floods creating a moist, more favorable microclimate for the crop. In the winter they trap snow and protect livestock and crops from the chilling wind. Example: Cedar, Juniper, Fir
- d. **Riparian Forest buffers:** Trees, grasses, and shrubs are planted in areas along streams or rivers are called Riparian buffer strips. These plantations are designed to catch soil, excess nutrients, and chemical pesticides moving over land to water bodies. Buffer stripes also provide wildlife habitats and can be managed for special forest products. Examples: Silver maple



Alleycropping



Windbreaks

## 2. Farm Forestry

Farm forestry is the name given to programmes that promote commercial tree growing by farmers on their own land. It has been described by the World Bank as "the least costly and economically the most effective approach to afforestation of the rural areas". Examples: Fast-growing trees such as Eastern Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and hybrid Poplar (*Populus hybrids*) provides products such as wood fiber for pulp; high-value hardwoods such as Basswood (*Tilia americana*), Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) provides products such as high-value lumber, pulpwood, fuelwood, etc.

## 3. Community forestry

Community forestry is a village-level forestry activity, decided on collectively and implemented on communal land, where local populations participate in the planning, establishing, managing, and harvesting of forest crops, and so receive a major proportion of the socio-economic and ecological benefits from the forest. Administration and resource utilization of the forest occurs at the village and panchayat (an elected rural body) levels. Community forests are usually administered by a locally elected body, usually called the *Forest Protection Committee*, *Village Forest Committee*, or the *Village Forest Institution*. Legislation pertaining to communal forests varies from state to state, but typically the state government retains some administrative control over matters like staff appointment, and penalization of offenders. Such forests typically conform to the IUCN Category VI Protected Areas, but protection may be enforced by the local communities or the government depending on local legislation.

## 4. Extension Forestry

Extension forestry includes the activity of raising trees on farmlands, villages wastelands, and community forest areas and on lands along the sides of roads, canal banks, and railway lines. Example: *Mangifera indica*, *Tamarindus indica*, and *Cassia javanica*.

### **Important Schemes Being Implemented For Social Forestry:**

- Aerial seedling
- Area-oriented fuel wood and fodder scheme
- Decentralized nurseries programmes
- Margin money assistance scheme
- Operation soil watch
- Rural fuel wood plantation scheme
- Scheme on minor forest produce
- Silvo pasture scheme
- Tree Patta scheme

### **Conclusion**

India has a dominant rural population that still depends largely on fuel wood and other biomass for their daily needs. This demand for fuel wood will not come down but the area under forest will reduce further due to the growing population and increasing human activities. Social forestry relieves the pressure on the natural forests which can be maintained for the ecological balance. It employs the poor in the rural backward areas is ensured by selling people's own forest products to the market and by starting various small-scale industries like honey and oil manufacturing. It helps in the reduction of pollution and helps in the betterment of the environment.