

Agroforestry records rapid growth in State, finds out 'Wood Flow' study

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Farmers are taking up tree breeding in their lands with enthusiasm



Teak and turmeric grow together in an agroforestry farm in Coimbatore.— Photo: IFGTB

The 'Wood Flow' study taken by the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore, threw up a pleasant surprise. It is that the State has been recording a rapid growth in agroforestry and farm forestry sectors.

Institute Director N. Krishnakumar told *The Hindu* that many farmers had taken up raising commercial timber species in their lands.

Various factors contributed for the farmers taking up tree breeding in farm lands, the study revealed. One among them was the State government's initiative 'Tree Cultivation in Private Patta Lands,' which was launched a couple of years ago. This programme also motivated the farmers to raise commercial timber tree species in their farm lands, Dr. Krishnakumar said.

Casuarina, Eucalyptus, Bamboo, Malai Vembu, Kumil, Teak, Kadamba and Peru trees were among the 20 species, the Institute identified as commercial timber, which were in demand in various segments of wood-based industries. Casuarina and eucalyptus are in demand for pulpwood segment; 'Malai vembu' — plywood

and veneer; 'Peru tree' — matchstick making units and teak and other species are used for furniture.

The study further showed that the farmers were growing the timber species by adopting intercrop method. The trees were raised along with agricultural crops such as brinjal, onion, cotton, turmeric, tapioca, groundnut and a host of pulses. While the inter crops could be harvested within a short period of time, the timber species could be harvested within a few years, he said.

The study also showed that in the last three years, on an average, 5,000ha of farm lands in the State were used for tree cultivation. Over exploitation of groundwater led to scarcity, forcing the farmers to take up tree cultivation in their lands rather than raising commercial crops such as paddy or sugarcane, he added.

As far as tree cultivation was concerned, the farmers could create small ponds within their lands that could help them to meet out the water requirement for raising the trees.

Adopting such a practice would help the farmer at the same time reduce water consumption, he said.

Another important factor was the setting up of new bio-energy projects in the State, which used timber as their main raw material.

Required timber for this industry was being meted out from the farm lands that raised commercial timber species.

Assured buy back system introduced by the pulp wood industry and bio-energy companies also encouraged the farmers to take up tree cultivation, the study showed he added.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/agroforestry-records-rapid-growth-in-state-finds-out-wood-flow-study/article5057593.ece>