

Forests trump card in efforts to end global hunger

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The world's forests have great potential to improve the nutrition and ensure livelihoods of the people across the world, said researchers. .

About one in nine people globally still suffers from hunger with the majority of the hungry living in Africa and Asia.

The report released by the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) also underlines the need for the most vulnerable groups of society to have secure access to forest foods. "Forest foods often provide a safety net during periods of food shortages," said Bhaskar Vira from the University of Cambridge.

"In the study, we reveal impressive examples which show how forests and trees can complement agricultural production and contribute to the income of local people, especially in the most vulnerable regions of the world," noted Vira, chair of the Global Forest Expert Panel on Forests and Food Security, which compiled the report.

Tree foods are often rich in vitamins, proteins, and other nutrients and are associated with more diverse diets.

Wild meat, fish, and insects are also important forest food sources. Insects are an especially cheap, abundant source of protein, fat, vitamins and minerals. Forests are also essential for firewood and charcoal. In developing countries, 2.4 billion households use these renewable biofuels for cooking and heating.

Thus, in India and Nepal even better-off rural households depend on wood-fuels. Close to one out of six persons directly depends on forests for their food and income.PTI

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