

Khejri trees fast declining in desert dists, says CAZRI

[Shoeb Khan](#), TNN | Dec 15, 2015

JAIPUR: The number of Khejri trees, Rajasthan's state tree, is fast declining per hectare in the desert districts. This tree is maintaining the whole balance of ecosystem of Thar Desert by providing food for humans, fodder for animals and adding nutrients to the soil. The tree is declining due to indiscriminate use of groundwater, says a report prepared by Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) in Jodhpur.

The report says that 90 Khejri trees per hectare in rainfed areas were recorded in the 50s-60s in Nagaur, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jodhpur, Pali and Sirohi. It has alarmingly reduced to less than 35 per hectare in 12 dry districts of Rajasthan. The decline is due to the deepening of groundwater table, which added to fungal attacks in last two decades.

This tree is found in western Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh along with Tharparkar area in Pakistan. The presence of trees was used to determine the digging of wells since the ancient period.

"This tree has a tendency of growing in the driest of areas like Rajasthan. Its roots go as low as 30 metres to 45 metres, which is sufficient to absorb moisture from water table as low as 150 metres. When water goes down to the level of 150 metres, it absorbs less water making it vulnerable for fungal attacks," said Dr J C Tewari, principal scientist, forestry at CAZRI.

The tree has always turned out to be an added advantage for the villagers as it provides 'Sangri', which is used to prepare Kair Sangri, a highly nutritious local dish. It can fetch upto Rs 300 per kilo to the owner. Besides financial stability, these trees provide fodder for livestock along with adding nutrients in the soil cover. It is scientifically proven that Khejri trees ensure good crops of pearl millet, green gram, cluster bean, wheat, cotton, and rice.

"Its mere presence can improve the crop per hectare. Since the trees have declined, the soil cover has lost its nutrients. It has resulted in extensive use of fertilizers disrupting the natural soil cover," said Tewari.

Alarmed over the declining numbers of the tree, CAZRI has been promoting its plantation among the villagers.

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Khejri-trees-fast-declining-in-desert-dists-says-CAZRI/articleshow/50184203.cms>