

Proceedings of UNCCD COP 14 Side Event on: Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation

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NAFED



For more information

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Proceedings of UNCCD COP 14 Side Event on: Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation” held on 11th September, 2019

Introduction

More than 29% of India’s total land area is undergoing land degradation (SAC, 2016). This has significant implications for ensuring India’s food security, land resilience and climate mitigation. The costs imposed by this level of land degradation are large, conservatively estimated to account for at least 2.5% of India’s GDP in 2014/15 and about 15.9% of the GVA from the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors (TERI, 2017). Almost 82% of this cost is due to degradation while land use change accounts for only 18% of the total, underlining the need for a twin focus on restoring degraded ecosystems and preventing further deterioration. This is a serious concern since India aims to be land degradation-neutral by 2030, where any increases in land degradation are counter balanced by equivalent gains in land reclamation to ensure no additional net loss of land-based natural capital.

An integrated, inclusive approach to land governance and planning is a primary concern in India with the adoption of sustainable land management practices that ensure land productivity, soil and forest health, food, water, and livelihood security for current and future generations. Under the Sustainable Development Goals, target 15.3 provides a powerful tool for countries including India to, “combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world” with an ambitious target of achieving this by 2030. Although the challenges to achieving this target are immense, the opportunities beckon. Moreover, cost-effective mechanisms, policies and solutions do exist to achieve multiple SDGs including climate action, efficient land use, poverty reduction, food and water security, land use reclamation and restoration, and biodiversity conservation. Land degradation neutrality catalyses the achievement of these multiple goals and targets for a country’s path to sustainable development.

There is a need to address barriers to this vision of economically and environmentally beneficial land use and management to which India aspires. This includes issues such as extensive dependence on resources, failure to recognise the investment potential of land, and absence of trained staff. Contributing to forest degradation and loss of soil carbon is the extensive dependence on forests imposed by 200 million livestock along with consumption of an estimated 216 million tonnes of fuelwood by 800 million people. More than 31 million hectares of India’s forest cover are in the open or scrub category accounting for 40% of the total economic costs of land degradation for India. Absence of minimum support prices for trees grown under agroforestry schemes and punitive transit rules further impact the spread of agroforestry plantations and adoption by farmers.

In the last fifty years, the production of food grains in India has increased by more than five times. Despite this, approximately one-fourth of the world’s hungry people reside in India. Water scarcity, depleting ground water tables, inappropriate selection of crops and droughts are now commonplace with the plight of farmers taking centre stage in the political arena.

Back Drop

In association with National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED), the Forestry and Biodiversity Group of TERI organized a side event during the UNCCD COP 14 on "**Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation**" on 11th September, 2019 at India Expo Centre and Mart , Knowledge Park-II, Greater Noida Expressway (UP), Delhi-NCR, India.

This session brought together key stakeholders involved in the various facets of land governance and implementation to deliberate on appropriate solutions to these issues.

The focus was on:

- means of implementation to ensure that India reaches the goal of land degradation neutrality by 2030 including finance, technical and policy options;
- gap analysis of current approaches and
- ways to dovetail national and global goals including climate action, biodiversity conservation, land degradation and food security and leverage these existing commitments to sustainably manage our landscapes

The panel discussion was chaired by Shri Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forest & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. The key panellists at the event were, Shri S S Negi, Vice Chairman, Uttarakhand Rajya Gramin Evam Palayan Ayog, Dr Alka Bhargav, Additional Secretary, NRM & IC, Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Mr Rajat Bansal, District Magistrate, Dhamtari, Chattisgarh, Dr Julian Wright, Environment Adviser, DFID, Government of UK, Dr Indraneel Ghosh, Senior Technical Advisor, ProSoil, GIZ, India, Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI and Dr. Pia Sethi, Senior Fellow, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI. The side event was attended by 92 participants from various organizations working in diversified fields. Annexures 1 presents the detailed Agenda for the side event. Flyer of the event is placed at Annexure 2. List of participants is at Annexure 3 and Photographs of the event are placed at Annexure 4.

Panel discussion

The chair for the side event **Shri Siddhanta Das** made his welcoming remarks and highlighted 'landscape based catchment treatment of major river systems and extending tree cover outside forests' as major strategies to achieve India's commitment of sequestering additional 2.5-3.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2030. He added that the first such catchment treatment plan has been developed for River Ganga by FRI, and similar plans are being developed for 9 major river systems by ICFRE. Speaking about agro and farm forestry he explained the importance of wood as the only carbon neutral renewable resource and encouraged in achieving self-sufficiency in wood and wood products. According to him this will encourage farmers to grow tree outside forests can enhance incomes and accelerate the carbon sequestration process.

Next in her context setting presentation, **Dr Pia Sethi**, pointed out that forest degradation accounts for nearly 55% of the total cost of land degradation in India, stating that India would need approximately Rs 3000 billion to restore its land by 2030. She drew attention towards the fact that the annual costs of land degradation are higher than the total cost of restoration and therefore, thus it makes both business and ecological sense to restore land.

She also reiterated the need for an integrative policy that looks at water, agriculture and forests together.

Shri S.S. Negi spoke more specifically on the issues related to mass migration of people from hilly regions of Uttarakhand to plains and stated it as one of the factors for land degradation. According to him migration has led to nearly 1 lakh hectares of good farmland in Uttarakhand being abandoned in last 15 years. This is leading to more and more land degradation and associated problems such as invasion of weeds and wild animals in and around the area.

Dr Alka Bhargav, highlighted various initiatives undertaken by the government in order to encourage farmers towards use of soil cards, micro irrigation and crop diversification. She emphasised that the shift towards organic farming will be a slow and gradual process but for which the government shall ensure that all mechanisms including direct benefit transfer are being considered to encourage farmers towards reducing their use of fertilizers and diversifying crops. Dr. Bhargav also mentioned that the government is promoting the use of 'millets' as it is more nutritious, input cost is less, it is the crop for the future. She also stated that there is a need for farmers to adopt integrated farming, risk management systems and rainfed management schemes for sustainable agriculture and achieve net – agri export for the country.

Baring his example, **Mr Rajat Bansal** included a case study presentation during the session on land restoration related efforts under the Suraji Gaon Yojana of the State government. Speaking about his administration's integrated efforts towards water conservation, livestock management, organic farming and backyard cultivation. Rajat Bansal highlighted the importance of leveraging the traditional knowledge of the people of Chhattisgarh including activities such as 'Narwa, Garwa, Ghurwa, Baadi' - water conservation, livestock management, vermin-composting and backyard cultivation Chhattisgarh to control land degradation and enhance ecosystem services.

Dr Julian Wright, emphasised on strengthening existing management structures such as MGNREGA, improving research capacities and enhancing the role of private finance can help to address the land degradation challenge in India. He also listed a couple of additional challenges that are needed to be addressed which include enhancing multilateral funding mechanism, increasing political to look for positive opportunity and also willingness to learn from south – south cooperation.

Dr. Indraneel Ghosh, talked about various network of investments for the achieving LDN and highlighted GiZ involvement in the global initiative 'One World- No Hunger'. He proposed various possible measures to reduce land degradation one of which is by recycling urban organic waste back to rural soil and enterprise promotion around biomass and biogas can help to restore our land. However, he also stated that diversity of the natural resources has to be kept in mind while scaling up projects and also local markets should be incentivized according to natural resources availability.

Dr J V Sharma, pointed that agro-forestry does not have adequate attention from policymakers despite the fact that it has nearly 2/3rd potential to meet India's forestry related NDC. He said that lack of good quality planting material, pricing, regulatory mechanism are hindering the growth of agroforestry in India. Calling for coordination between Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and Ministry of Agriculture, he advocated that a minimum support price for agroforestry will encourage farmers to grow tree outside forests. He highlighted that the benefit of CO₂ sequestered by trees must be passed on to the farmers

and also MSP for agroforestry scheme could be one of the solutions to resolve the issue of market failure.

Key findings of the discussion and recommendations:

In the light of the discussions, following points were taken into consideration:

- It is important to have policy interventions such as to grow more wood and use more wood to achieve carbon sequestration and eventually LDN.
- The policy of carbon neutrality has to be promoted at national level in order to strengthen the concept of carbon finance.
- Payment for Ecosystem services should be provided for those who are involved in the conservation activities.
- There is a need to look forward for an integrative policy that looks at water, agriculture and forests together.
- Need to develop Minimum support Price (MSP) mechanism for combating market failure in context of trees grown by farmers in agro-forestry and farm forestry.
- There is a need to develop an authority for combating land degradation in India considering forest, agriculture, soil and water conservation sector into consideration.
- There is a need to relax regulatory constraint for trees grown by farmers.
- The capacity building of frontline staff, particularly in the context of carbon stock assessment and monitoring of biodiversity conservation is also key step towards achieving land degradation neutrality.
- There is a need to shift towards the concept of organic farming and also encourage farmers towards reducing their use of fertilizers and diversifying their crops.
- There is a need to strengthen R & D activities to promote quality planting materials and also to share other technologies developed in through global cooperation.

Shri Siddhanta Das proposed the vote of thanks and concluded the event to be successful.

Annexure 1. Agenda of the Side Event

UNCCD COP 14 Side Event

Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation

at

India Expo Centre & Mart
Plot No. 23 -25 & 27- 29
Knowledge Park – II, Gautam Budh Nagar
Greater Noida – 201306
Tel.: 91-120-2328011

Date: 11 September, 2019 | **Time:** 18:00 -20:00

Venue: MET – 15

Time	Programme (Tentative)
18:00 -20:00	<p>Panel Discussion</p> <p>Chairperson : Shri Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forest & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India</p> <p>Theme setting: by Dr Pia Sethi, Senior Fellow, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI</p> <p>Panelists</p> <p>Shri S S Negi, Vice Chairman, Uttarkhand Rajya Gramin Evam Palayan Ayog</p> <p>Dr. Indraneel Ghosh, Senior Technical Advisor, ProSoil, GIZ, India</p> <p>Dr. Alka Bhargav, Additional Secretary, NRM & IC, Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare</p> <p>Mr Rajat Bansal, District Magistrate, Dhantari, Chattisgarh</p> <p>Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI</p> <p>Dr Julian Wright, Environment Adviser, DFID, Government of UK</p> <p>Q&A Session</p>

Annexure 2. Flyer of the Event



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



Side Event on: Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation



Join us for this side event to discuss specific measures and solutions for the country to reach land degradation neutrality targets by 2030 in a way that would ensure results, equity and appropriate land use planning.

**Wednesday 11th September 2019
18:00 – 20:00
Room MET-15**





United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



Side Event on: Achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 to ensure food security, land resilience and climate mitigation

Agenda

Wednesday 11th September 2019 in room MET-15	
18:00- 18:15	Opening of the side event by the Chair: Shri Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forest & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India
18:15-18:25	Theme setting: by Dr. Pia Sethi, Senior Fellow, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI
18:25-19:30	Sharing perspectives on Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 by the following panelists: Shri S S Negi, Vice Chairman, Uttarakhand Rajya Gramin Evam Palayan Ayog Dr Alka Bhargav, Additional Secretary, NRM & IC, Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare Mr Rajat Bansal, District Magistrate, Dhamtari, Chattisgarh Dr Julian Wright, Environment Adviser, DFID, Government of UK Dr Indraneel Ghosh, Senior Technical Advisor, ProSoil, GLZ, India Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI
19:30-19:40	Closing remarks by the Chair
19:40-20:00	Question & Answer Session





United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



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THE ENERGY AND RESOURCES INSTITUTE
Creating Innovative Solutions for a Sustainable Future

More than 29% of India's land area is undergoing land degradation (SAC, 2016). This has significant implications for ensuring India's food security, land resilience and climate mitigation. The costs imposed by this level of land degradation are large, conservatively estimated to account for at least 2.5% of India's GDP in 2014/15 and about 15.9% of the GVA from the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors (TERI, 2017). This is a serious concern since India aims to be land degradation-neutral by 2030. There is a need to address barriers to this vision of economically and environmentally beneficial land use and management to which India aspires. This session will bring together key stakeholders involved in the various facets of land governance and implementation to deliberate on appropriate solutions to these issues. The focus will be on a) means of implementation to ensure that India reaches the goal of land degradation neutrality by 2030 including finance, technical and policy options b) Gap analysis of current approaches and c) ways to dovetail national and global goals including climate action, biodiversity conservation, land degradation and food security and leverage these existing commitments to sustainably manage our landscapes. An envisaged outcome of this session will be the outlines of a roadmap for action that delineates specific measures and solutions for the country to reach land degradation neutrality targets by 2030 in a way that ensures results, equity and appropriate land use planning.





Mr Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forest & Special Secretary

He has worked on wide ranging environmental issues in planning, policy making, capacity building, forest and wildlife management, food and nutrition security.



Dr S S Negi, Vice Chairman, Uttarkhand Rajya Gramin Evam Palayan Ayog

Former Director General Forest and Special Secretary to Government of India. Dr Sharad Singh Negi has been appointed chairman of Uttarkhand Rajya Gramin Evam Palayan Ayog, the commission is meant to check continuous migration from hilly areas to plain areas. He was Director FRI Dehradun and Director Environment and Climate Change of HP govt. At present Dr Negi is Forestry Advisor of the World Bank for South Asia.



Dr Alka Bhargav, Additional Secretary, NRM & IC, Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare

Dr Alka Bhargav has worked extensively on medicinal plants, Indo-US cooperation on climate change and forest management certification.



Mr Rajat Bansal, District Magistrate, Dhamtari, Chattisgarh

Mr Rajat Bansal works extensively for better civic amenities in far flung villages of Dhamtari, Chattisgarh.



Dr. Julian Wright, Senior Advisor for Climate Change, DFID

His work profile includes adaptation policy developments.



Dr Indraneel Ghosh, Senior Technical Advisor, ProSoil, GIZ, India

He has worked on climate change adaptation and soil protection and rehabilitation.



Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI

Dr. Jitendra Vir Sharma is a retired officer of Indian Forest Service with 35 years of experience of forest management and policy making. Currently, he is the Director of Forestry & Biodiversity division at TERI.



Dr. Pia Sethi, Senior Fellow, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI.

She has more than 15 years of experience in ecological and policy-based research on biodiversity, natural resource management and forest governance.



Annexure 3. List of participants

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Annexure 4. Photographs



Photo 1. Shri Siddhanta Das, Chair with panellists in the event



Photo 2. Panelists addressing the participants



Photo 3. Dignitaries and Participants during the side event



Photo 4. Dignitaries and Participants during the side event