

18th India State of Forest Report 2023

Comprehensive Overview of the 18th India State of Forest Report 2023

The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change recently released the **18th India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023**, a biennial assessment by the Forest Survey of India (FSI). Published since 1987, the report provides insights into forest and tree resources, using satellite data interpretation and field-based National Forest Inventory (NFI). The 2023 report presents significant findings on forest and tree cover, carbon stock, mangroves, and biodiversity while highlighting India's progress towards climate goals.

Key Highlights of ISFR 2023 Forest and Tree Cover

- **Total Forest and Tree Cover:** 8,27,356.95 km², constituting **25.17%** of India's geographical area (GA).
 - **Forest Cover:** 7,15,342.61 km² (**21.76%**).
 - **Tree Cover:** 1,12,014.34 km² (**3.41%**).
- **Scrub Area:** 43,622.64 km² (**1.33%**).

Changes Since 2021

- **Increase in Forest and Tree Cover:** 1,445.81 km².
 - Forest cover rose by 156.41 km².
 - Top states showing the **maximum increase in forest and tree cover:**
 - Chhattisgarh (+684 km²), Uttar Pradesh (+559 km²), Odisha (+559 km²), and Rajasthan (+394 km²).
 - States with **largest increase in forest cover:**
 - Mizoram (+242 km²), Gujarat (+180 km²), and Odisha (+152 km²).
 - **Largest Decreases:**
 - Madhya Pradesh (−612.41 km²), Karnataka (−459.36 km²), Ladakh (−159.26 km²), and Nagaland (−125.22 km²).

Regional Performance

- **Top Three States by Area:**

- Madhya Pradesh (77,073 km²), Arunachal Pradesh (65,882 km²), and Chhattisgarh (55,812 km²).

- **Highest Forest Cover Percentage:**

- Lakshadweep (91.33%), Mizoram (85.34%), and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (81.62%).

- **States with >33% Forest Cover:** 19 states/UTs, including eight with over 75% coverage (e.g., Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Arunachal Pradesh).

- **Western Ghats Eco-Sensitive Areas (WGESA):** 44,043.99 km² (73%) under forest cover.

- **Northeastern Region:** 67% of the geographical area is forested (1,74,394.70 km²).

Mangrove Cover

- **Total Mangrove Area:** 4,991.68 km² (**0.15%** of GA).

- **Changes:**

- Decrease: Gujarat (−36.39 km²).
- Increase: Andhra Pradesh (+13.01 km²) and Maharashtra (+12.39 km²).

Carbon Stock

- **National Carbon Stock:** 7,285.5 million tonnes (Mt), a rise of 81.5 Mt since 2021.

- **Top States:** Arunachal Pradesh (1,021 Mt), Madhya Pradesh (608 Mt), Chhattisgarh (505 Mt), and Maharashtra (465 Mt).

- **CO₂ Equivalent:** 30.43 billion tonnes, surpassing the 2005 baseline by 2.29 billion tonnes and nearing India's **2030 target of 2.5-3.0 billion tonnes**.

Bamboo Bearing Area

- Expanded since 2021, reflecting enhanced agroforestry efforts.

Forest Fires

- **Top States for Incidents:** Uttarakhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh.

Trends in Forestry (2013-2023)

- **Greenery Increase:**
 - Forest cover: +16,630.25 km².
 - Tree cover: +20,747.34 km².
 - Mangrove cover: +296.33 km².
- **Soil Health:**
 - Improved organic carbon (55.85 tonnes/ha in 2013 to 56.08 tonnes/ha in 2023).
 - Reduced biotic influences (26.66%, down from 31.28% in 2013), indicating better biodiversity and ecological stability.

Global Commitments and Livelihood Impacts

- **Paris Agreement:** India aims to create an additional **carbon sink of 2.5-3.0 billion tonnes** CO₂ equivalent through forest/tree cover by 2030.
- **Bonn Challenge:** India's pledge to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- **Global Ranking:**
 - As per the **Global Forest Resource Assessment 2020** (FAO), India ranks among the **top 10 countries** in forest area and is 3rd in **annual net forest cover gain (2010-2020)**.
- **Livelihood:** Forests support **17% of the global human population** and **18% of the world's livestock**.

Forest Survey of India (FSI)

- **Established:** 1981, succeeding the Pre-Investment Survey of Forest Resources (PISFR) initiated in 1965.
- **Headquarters:** Dehradun, with regional offices in Shimla, Kolkata, Nagpur, and Bangalore.
- **Functions:** Regular assessment of forest resources, research, training, and extension services.

Conclusion

The 18th ISFR 2023 reflects India's progress in forest and tree cover, carbon stock, and soil health, while acknowledging challenges like mangrove loss and forest fires. These findings underscore India's commitment to sustainable forest management and global climate goals, including the Paris Agreement and Bonn Challenge. The positive trends reinforce India's dedication to biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration, and supporting livelihoods.

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