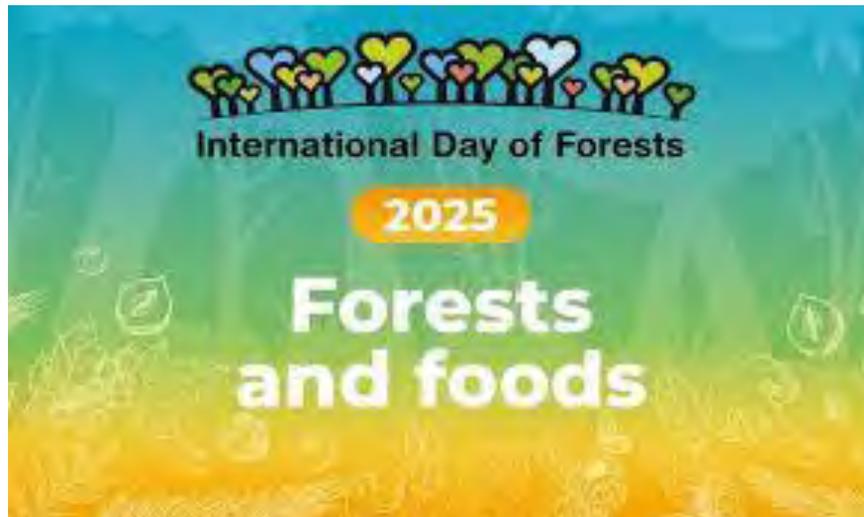




# Forest Fest 2025: Celebrating the International Day of Forests with an Awareness Walkathon & Exhibition for a Greener Future!



Organized by

**EIACP Programme Centre Resource Partner on  
Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement  
ICFRE - Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding  
(Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education)  
Coimbatore – 641 002**

## **FOREST FEST 2025 Celebrations by ICFRE-IFGTB EIACP PC RP**

FOREST FEST 2025, in connection with LiFE Mission was organized by EIACP (Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme) Programme Centre (erstwhile IFGTB ENVIS) RP at the ICFRE - Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore to commemorate the International Day of Forests 2025. As a part of this FOREST FEST 2025, a Mega Walkathon – An Awareness Walk Rally and an Exhibition were organized. The primary objective of this rally was to raise awareness about the importance of forests and inspire individuals to actively participate in LiFE Mission initiatives. It also focussed to foster a sense of responsibility toward environmental conservation and empower people to contribute to a sustainable future through eco-friendly actions and sustainable practices.

Dr Rekha R Warriar, Scientist G and EIACP Coordinator welcomed the gathering. During her introductory remarks, Dr Warriar gave an insight to the current years theme and emphasized the crucial role of forests in food security and sustainable livelihoods. She highlighted that forests provide a diverse range of edible resources, including fruits, nuts, seeds, mushrooms, and medicinal plants, supporting billions of people worldwide. The forest sector generates over 86 million green jobs, while more than 2.4 billion people rely on wood-based energy for cooking, she added. She highlighted the immense biodiversity within forests, home to over 10 million species, and noted that humans utilize at least 40,000 species daily for food, shelter, and medicine. However, she alerted that deforestation, habitat degradation, and invasive species threaten forest biodiversity, with 12 million hectares lost annually. She stressed that innovation and technology are transforming forest monitoring, enabling better conservation efforts to secure food resources, livelihoods, and ecological balance for future generations.

Dr. C. Kunhikannan, Director, ICFRE-IFGTB, inaugurated the WALKATHON and the Exhibition, highlighting the invaluable benefits forests provide, particularly in sustaining life through food, medicine, and ecological balance. He emphasized that trees are humanity's most precious heritage and that it is our collective duty to protect them. Dr. Kunhikannan elaborated on the essential role of trees in supporting biodiversity, serving as habitats and food sources for various species, including birds, insects, bats, and squirrels. He highlighted the deep interdependence between humans and trees, stressing that forests not only fulfill our basic needs but also regulate the environment. While highlighting the growing threats of deforestation and habitat loss due to human activities, he urged all participants to actively engage in afforestation efforts. He passionately called for widespread tree planting initiatives, emphasizing that restoring green cover is crucial for preserving biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and securing a sustainable future for generations to come. The Director shared his personal experience from his school days, where he planted a single sapling. Over time,

this small act of environmental stewardship inspired many others, including an NGO, to join the effort. Today, that single sapling has transformed into a thriving dense forest, serving as a testament to the power of collective action in conservation. He also urged everyone to embrace the mantra "Use Minimum, Utilize Maximum," while emphasizing the significance of the 3Rs – Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. The Director led the reading of the LiFE Mission Pledge, and all participants solemnly took the pledge, committing to uphold and integrate the principles of the LiFE Mission into their daily lives.

Dr. B. Nagarajan, Group Coordinator (Research), spoke on the significance of commemorating the International Day of Forests. He provided valuable insights into groundbreaking innovations in the forestry sector and underscored the pivotal role of tree planting in global reforestation efforts. He highlighted its importance in restoring degraded forests, rehabilitating ecosystems, and mitigating climate change. Dr. Nagarajan also shared insightful statistics on the country's current forest cover, outlining both the challenges and opportunities in forest conservation and management. He urged students to actively participate in innovative initiatives that contribute to a sustainable future. Furthermore, he emphasized the growing demand for skilled professionals in forestry-related fields, given the increasing focus on sustainable resource management and environmental conservation. An awareness poster highlighting the theme Forests and Food was released during the occasion and shared with all the stakeholders.

Mega Walkathon – An Awareness Walk Rally was officially flagged off by the Director, with an enthusiastic participation of 650 students from PSGR Krishnammal College for Women, Government Arts College, Coimbatore, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science & Higher Education for Women, and PSG Arts and Science College, along with 150 IFGTB staff. Participants carried awareness placards highlighting LiFE Mission themes and impactful slogans on nature conservation, which were displayed along the designated route. The walkathon commenced from the IFGTB campus, covering significant parts of the city to ensure wider outreach and public engagement. To enrich awareness, informative handouts were distributed to school children and the general public, encouraging them to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. The rally also included eco-awareness interactions, where participants engaged with general public, explaining the importance of environmental conservation and individual responsibility in protecting nature. Necessary permissions were obtained from government authorities and police, ensuring smooth conduct of the rally.

After the rally, participants explored the exhibition on the theme Forest and Foods, including variety of stalls showcasing products aligned with the LiFE mission, eco-friendly alternatives, and organic products. A key attraction was the Green Skill Development Program (GSDP) stall, where trainees-

turned-entrepreneurs empowered by ICFRE-IFGTB's GSDP training, displayed their innovative products, organic fertilizers, biodegradable packaging, and bamboo handicrafts. The Tribes India store also highlighted tribal handlooms, handicrafts, organic produce, and millet-based foods, emphasizing the significance of traditional knowledge and forest-based foods in sustainable living.

Dr. S. Vigneswaran, Senior Programme Officer, EIACP PC RP, delivered the Vote of Thanks, expressing heartfelt gratitude to the Director, Group Coordinator (Research), and the EIACP Coordinator for rendering their extended support. He also extended his appreciation to all participants, as well as the Police, Medical Team, and other authorities, for their invaluable support in making FOREST FEST 2025 a grand success. As a token of recognition, certificates were awarded to all participants. Additionally, he acknowledged the efforts of volunteers and organizing teams whose dedication contributed significantly to the seamless execution of the event.



















**EIACP Resource Partner on Forest Genetic Resources and Tree Improvement  
ICFRE-Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding**

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**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS-2025**  
**Theme : "Forests and Food"**

Forests play a crucial role in sustaining food security by providing a diverse range of edible resources, including fruits, nuts, tubers, mushrooms, honey, and medicinal plants. These forest foods serve as vital nutritional supplements, especially for indigenous communities and rural populations. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) like mahua flowers, tamarind, and wild berries contribute to local diets and livelihoods, supporting sustainable forest-based economies. Additionally, forests help maintain soil fertility, regulate water cycles, and support pollinators essential for agricultural productivity. Conservation efforts and sustainable harvesting practices are essential to protect these vital food sources while ensuring ecological balance

Forests sustain life, nourish communities and safeguard our future



Provides foods for billions of people



2 billion peoples rely on wood and other traditional fuel for cooking



Crucial for agriculture



Supports economy, boosting livelihoods and nutrition



Vital sources of medicine



Serve as food safety nets in times of crisis

**"Forests & Foods: Rooted in Nature, Feeding the Future"**

#ForestDay2025

Source: FAO