

# Restoration of Degraded Forest Lands and Combating Desertification

## Side event organized by Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education at UNCCD COP-14

India was host country to the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The event was held at India Expo Centre and Mart Greater Noida, New Delhi NCR, from 2-13<sup>th</sup> September, 2019. ICFRE participated in the UNCCD event and presented the research efforts of ICFRE in Restoration of Degraded Lands and Combating Desertification through exhibition and a side event. Recognising the research being undertaken at ICFRE, Prime Minister of India announced setting up of Centre of Excellence at ICFRE to promote south-south cooperation for addressing land degradation while addressing High-Level Segment of COP of UNCCD, on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019.



The side event on “Restoration of Degraded Forest Lands and Combating Desertification” was organised on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at MET 10, Hall 3, Ground Floor, India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR. Sh. Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, MoEF&CC, Govt of India, was the Chairman of the event. Dr. Suresh Gairola, Director General, ICFRE was also present on the dias. The event was attended by 110 national and international delegates. Sh. S. D. Sharma DDG (Research) welcomed the participants and briefed about the schedule of events.



In his opening remarks, Sh. Siddhanta Das, congratulated ICFRE for being recognised by Prime Minister of India as Centre of Excellence for Land Degradation Neutrality. He highlighted the significant, Scientific and Technical contribution made by ICFRE towards Land Degradation

Neutrality. He opined that the, best practices/models developed by ICFRE on restoration of degraded forest lands and to combat desertification will play an instrumental role in achieving the Land Degradation Neutrality targets by 2030. He emphasised upon the role of efficient land and water management for containing land degradation. He pointed out that water is a crucial resource which should be when managed efficiently increase productivity of forest, improve resilience to climate change and support livelihood.

Director General of ICFRE made a brief presentation on “Overview of Forest Land Restoration in India”. He discussed in detail about the status of land degradation in India in light of growing population and limited resource availability. He identified various drivers of forest degradation and paradigm shift in the forestry sector through time. He discussed in detail the National REDD+ strategy, prepared by ICFRE, and highlighted its salient features. Discussing the achievements of ICFRE, he informed the house that ICFRE has prepared Detailed Project Report on Forestry Interventions for Ganga, and on the similar lines the council is preparing the DPR on Forestry Interventions for Rejuvenations of 13 Major Rivers with the objective of Anant Van, Nirmal Dhara and Aviral Dhara”. He further briefed about the objectives, scopes and outlined the way-forward of the ICFRE for South-South Centre for Excellence on Sustainable Land Management.



Mr. N. Bala, Head, Forest Ecology and Climate Change Division of Forest Research Institute, made a presentation on ‘ICFRE initiatives in Restoring Degraded Forest Land’. He informed the house about the studies being undertaken by institutes of ICFRE, through out country for restoration of coal mine overburden, lime stone mines, sodic soils, degraded hills and waterlogged area. He highlighted the models developed by AFRI, Jodhpur for sand dune stabilization. He also presented the package of practices developed at different institutes of ICFRE for eco–rehabilitation of Mine areas.

Dr. Vaneet Jishtu, Scientist of HFRI, Shimla, made a presentation entitled ‘Cold deserts: Measures taken to combat desertification’. He informed the house about the drivers of degradation in the cold desert of India spreading from the state of Ladakh to Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. He highlighted the research initiatives of HFRI, to conserve and enumerate biological diversity, enhance the tree cover, livelihood security and curb land degradation in these cold deserts.



Dr. P.C. Moharana, Scientist from CAZRI, Jodhpur made a presentation on “Combating India’s Desertification: New challenges and Scope for alternate Strategies’. He presented his work on stabilisation of sand dunes. He informed the house about the various techniques devised by CAZRI for sand dune stabilization, he also informed that about 4 lakh ha area in western Rajasthan has been adopted by CAZRI for sand dune stabilization.

Dr. R. S. C. Jayaraj, Director RFRI, Jorhat made a presentation on “Restoration of land degraded due to shifting cultivation”. He highlighted the interventions being undertaken by RFRI to enhance productivity of shifting cultivation through introduction of PGPR strains of soil micro-organism, promotion of vermicompost for organic cultivation, promotion of alternative livelihood, high value agroforestry, bamboo cultivation in Jhum fallows and Promotion of high value agroforestry. He opined that instead of abolishing shifting cultivation, there is need to transform it.



Dr. Tarun Kant, Scientist AFRI, Jodhpur made a presentation on ‘Biotechnological interventions for securing land productivity and combating land degradation’. He presented his work of abiotic stress tolerance (salinity, drought and frost) mechanism in plants using functional genomics approach. He opined that the biotechnology tools like tissue culture, molecular markers, bioinformatics, functional genomics and genetic modification can fill the gaps of the current models for restoration of degraded land, that have been perfected and tested, but their implementation is slow paced due to shortage of genetically improved plant varieties and unavailability of planting material of endangered and poorly propagating species.

The sessions were followed by Discussion where in the panel took questions/queries from the participants, which were duly answered to satisfaction by the panel members.

Sh. S. D. Sharma presented the formal vote of thanks to the panel and the participants.