

# **MAHARASHTRA STATE FOREST POLICY- 2008**

As recommended by the National Forest Commission, for sustainable management of its forests and wildlife, each State should have its own forest policy statement within the broad parameters of the National Forest Policy.

**Keeping the above points in view, the government has decided in principle to accord sanction to Maharashtra Forest Policy 2008. (G.R. No. TRS-1098/C.R. 190/F-6, Mantralaya, Mumbai, dt. 22/09/2008)**

## **Maharashtra State Forest Policy -2008**

### **1. Primary Objectives**

- 1.1 Conservation and sustainable development of natural and man made forests through the application of appropriate scientific and management techniques for restoration of ecological balance and maintenance of environmental stability.
- 1.2 Reforestation on all degraded, denuded and unproductive wastelands for soil and water conservation on a watershed basis.
- 1.3 Increasing substantially the tree cover on all available public, community and private lands through social forestry and agro forestry with the involvement of people and especially those who are landless, from weaker sections and women.
- 1.4 Checking soil erosion in the catchment areas of rivers, lakes and reservoirs by undertaking water and soil conservation for mitigating floods and droughts and for reduction of siltation of reservoirs.
- 1.5 Increasing the productivity of forest lands and forest trees.
- 1.6 Meeting the basic domestic requirements of fuel wood, fodder, non-timber forest produce and small timber of the rural poor and tribal population and reducing gap between demand and supply of the forest produce.
- 1.7 Reducing biotic pressure on forests by maximizing substitution of wood and wood products and encouraging efficient utilization of forest produce.
- 1.8 Conservation and development of wildlife and biodiversity through formulation of long term strategic plans and action programmes.

## **2. Important Principles of Forest Management**

- 2.1 By fully protecting all existing forests and forest areas, their productivity shall be improved. The harvesting of forest produce shall be done by following the principle of its sustained yield. Forest and vegetal cover shall be increased on hill slopes and in the catchment areas of rivers, lakes and reservoirs, sea shores and on all denuded and degraded wastelands on watershed basis.
- 2.2 For the conservation of total biological diversity, the network of national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas shall be extended and the areas which are not adequately represented in terms of species and extent shall be strengthened. Rationalization of boundaries of some protected areas shall also be done so as to avoid conflicting issues arising out of local developmental priorities. However, this shall be done only after ensuring that purpose of biodiversity conservation is not lost. Management Plans of such areas shall be made to reduce man-animal conflict in the protected areas.
- 2.3 Special efforts shall be made to increase tree cover in those parts of the State, where area under forest cover is meagre, through massive Social Forestry and agro forestry initiatives with people's participation.
- 2.4 Biotic factors having adverse impact on forests shall be identified and efforts shall be made to control the same through involvement of people, which would comprise beneficiaries including women as stake-holders living in and around forests, in participatory forest management. At the same time elements with malafide intentions causing damage to forest wealth shall be dealt with strictly under the law.
- 2.5 To meet the daily domestic needs of the rural and tribal populations living in the vicinity of forests, afforestation programme with special emphasis on augmenting production of fuel, fodder, non-wood forest produce and small timber shall be taken up.
- 2.6 Through non-timber forest products (bamboo, medicinal plants and grass etc.) to meet daily needs of the tribal population and the other communities residing in and around forests. Such produce shall be protected and qualitatively improved. Similarly, their production shall be enhanced so as to increase generation of employment and income. For this purpose, issue of creation of appropriate quality institutions shall be seriously deliberated.

### **3. Working Strategies**

3.1 The state shall endeavor to bring 33% of the geographical area of the State under tree cover in accordance with the goal of the National Forest Policy, 1988. District wise plans shall be made to achieve the goal of 33% tree cover.

#### **3.2 Afforestation through Social / Community Forestry**

3.2.1 The forest and non-forest wastelands including unproductive agricultural lands in the State affected by salinity and water logging shall be brought under tree cover with emphasis on tree species providing fuel wood, fodder and non-wood forest produce.

3.2.2 Tree plantation shall be encouraged on strips of lands along National and State Highways, railway lines and canals and other unutilized lands of the State, corporations/municipal bodies or private ownership etc.

3.2.3 In Urban and Industrial areas green belts of suitable trees to act as carbon sinks shall be created to mitigate environmental pollution.

3.2.4 Village and community lands shall be brought under tree cover taking into account the growing need of fuel-wood, fodder and non-timber forest produce. Gram Panchayats shall be involved in this work with suitable technical guidance from the Social Forestry Department.

3.2.5 Land acquisition and related laws shall be suitably modified to facilitate and motivate individuals and institutions to undertake tree farming on their own land. Tree felling restrictions shall be relaxed for tree plantations on private lands, community lands and other non-forest lands. Improved planting stock and technical guidance shall be provided to such tree planters.

#### **3.3 Protection and Management of Natural / Man made Forests**

3.3.1 Natural forests and manmade plantations taken as per the availability of resources in catchment areas which included hill slopes forming catchments of water reservoirs, rivers and tanks shall be looked after for maintaining ecological and environmental balance.

3.3.2 All antisocial or antiforest activities that cause destruction or damage of forests shall be curbed by creating efficient system.

- 3.3.3 For effective protection of natural and manmade forests from organized criminals, forest staff shall be adequately equipped with latest telecommunication network.
- 3.3.4 Basic programmes of village eco development and participatory forest management shall be adopted for the development, management and protection of natural and manmade forests.
- 3.3.5 Management of all natural and manmade forests shall be done in accordance with the provisions of approved working plans by scientific management for sustainable use of forest resources.
- 3.3.6 Saw mills shall be regulated in such a manner that there is no adverse impact of this industry on the protection of the forests.
- 3.3.7 To protect the forest areas from encroachments, survey and demarcation of all forests areas shall be completed and more funds and facilities shall be made available to update maps and forest land records.
- 3.3.8 Productivity of all natural and manmade forests shall be enhanced through improved planting stock by application of appropriate scientific, technical and managerial inputs. Likewise, forest management shall be done by adopting advanced technological inputs for better plant growth and their better survival percentage. Use of quality seeds from known sources, root trainer for preparing cultivable seedlings, compost, vermi-compost, quality potting mixture, clonal seedlings etc. shall be emphasized.
- 3.3.9 Exotic species shall be introduced only after long term trials have established their suitability under the local environment and those have no adverse impact on native vegetation and environment. After establishing this, such species will be accepted and included in the plantation programme
- 3.3.10 All State owned mangrove forests shall be identified by satellite imagery and maps shall be prepared of those forests which are of minimum manageable size. Such mangrove forests of minimum manageable size shall be taken under the control of the Forest Department and those shall be scientifically managed with cooperation of the local people.
- 3.3.11 Eco-sensitive and ecologically fragile forest areas shall be given more attention for their protection.
- 3.3.12 The Forest Department shall provide necessary technical and professional help for development of private forests which have been restored to the original owners. Similarly, the private forests

which stand acquired by the State shall be managed as per the provisions of the working plans as approved by the State.

- 3.3.13 If any forest officer/official dies or gets disabled while performing forest protection duty, such persons or their relatives shall be given compensation and financial help as is admissible to Police department personnel.

### **3.4 Management of Catchment Areas and Soil Conservation**

- 3.4.1 All possible efforts shall be made to control soil erosion caused by water and to arrest maximum water through effective implementation of watershed development programme with special emphasis on hilly forest areas.
- 3.4.2 Soil and water conservation works shall be taken up in order to arrest rapid run offs so as to have maximum seepage in the ground to increase recharge of ground water.

### **3.5 Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation**

- 3.5.1 Special care shall be taken to protect and manage wildlife and to conserve biodiversity in the protected and non protected areas. Issues like eco-development, wildlife-related research, eco-awareness, training in wildlife, habitat management and environmental protection shall be included in the management plans for such areas. Initiative shall be taken to conserve ex-situ floral and faunal species by establishing Botanical gardens and Zoological parks.
- 3.5.2 Measures shall be taken to reduce man-animal conflict and create conducive environment for wildlife management.

### **3.6 Forest Research**

While preparing 'Forestry Research Action Plan' for the State, special attention shall be paid to increase the productivity of natural and manmade forests, selection of natural seed producing areas, selection of genetically superior clones, establish seed production areas, prepare orchards for quality seed production, collection of quality seeds and conservation of seed producing tree species.

### **3.7 Forest Publicity and Extension**

Success of forest conservation and forest protection programme is not possible without voluntary co-operation of the people. Network of "Van Vigyan Kendra" shall be established to enlighten people by highlighting importance of value of trees, forests, wildlife and farm forestry.

### **3.8 Human Resource Development and Training**

3.8.1 Forest Department, Social Forestry and Forest Development Corporation have been established in the State to deal with forest related work. "Human Resource Development (HRD) Plan" shall be implemented in all three organizations with a view to attract qualified and efficient personnels.

3.8.2 All State Forest Training Institutes shall be adequately strengthened through technological up- gradation and structural development. These institutes shall impart training initially to new recruits, especially field staff i.e. forest guards and foresters.

### **3.9 Tribals and Forests**

3.9.1 Tribals participation shall be involved in the protection, regeneration and development of forests; and management of non-timber forest produce in the forest areas. Industries will also be encouraged for increase in production and trade of non-timber forest produce.

3.9.2 Customary rights and concessions of tribals and other communities residing in forest areas shall be continued as per existing rules including 73rd amendment to the constitution. Supply of forest produce at concessional rates to Burads' and those others entitled for Nistar shall be continued as per existing provisions in the rules, subject to availability of the material in Government depots.

### **3.10 Joint Forest Management**

3.10.1 Success of any project or programme, related to conservation and protection of natural forests including protected areas or manmade plantations and regeneration of degraded wastelands, depends on the basic concept of Participatory Forest Management (PFM). Therefore, PFM has to be adopted and thoroughly implemented.

3.10.2 The villagers of the villages, which have been brought under PFM system, shall be entitled to get forest produce as per terms and conditions of Joint Forest Management which will have the legal status.

### **3.11 Eco-tourism**

The concept of eco-tourism has become popular and it is well conceived in several parts of India. Eco-tourism shall be promoted to extend benefits to the society in general and to local forest dwellers in particular.

### **3.12 Forest Based Industry**

Forest based industries shall be encouraged to raise the raw materials needed by them by establishing a link with farmers and tree planting co-operatives. They will also be encouraged to make available high quality seedlings to the farmers by giving them buy-back guarantee. Long term agreements for supply of any forest produce from natural forests at concessional rates shall be terminated over a period of time.

### **3.13 Management Information System**

Computer based Management Information System shall be developed to facilitate compilation of an easily retrievable database required for preparing drafts of different projects, attaining higher managerial co-ordination, monitoring of various issues and evaluation of work done, and by this e-governance, a more transparent system shall be developed.

### **3.14 Reduction of Use of Timber and Other Forest Produce**

To reduce pressure on existing forests, substitution of wood and fuel wood shall be promoted.

### **3.15 Building and Infrastructure Development**

Private organizations and industries shall be associated in constructing residential and office buildings on non-forest and other lands with the forest department, wherever necessary, on B.O.T. (Build, Operate and Transfer) basis after obtaining necessary clearances/permissions.

### **3.16 Financial Support for Forestry Sector**

There has been valuable contribution of forestry sector in increasing rural income and providing employment for poverty alleviation in rural areas, in enhancing agricultural productivity and in maintaining environmental balance. Keeping this in view, sufficient investment is considered justified for the development of forestry sector. "Green Fund" shall be created to support investments on wastelands development, eco-restoration and watershed development etc.

### **3.17 Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd.**

Forest Development Corporation has been established in Maharashtra State for development of manmade forests into higher economic value. FDCM is entrusted with the responsibility to develop modern nurseries for production of genetically superior planting stock. Under this facility cultivable seedlings are prepared with the help of root trainer, clonal plants are prepared for higher productivity by making use of quality seeds of different species collected from seed production areas, seed orchards etc. Such high quality stock shall be made available to all the three wings of forestry sector. Similarly, such plants shall be supplied on demand to farmers and tree growers. In the future action programme of FDCM provision shall be made for efficient harvesting and marketing of value added products by co-ordinating private projects with agricultural forestry projects. FDCM shall take up turn-key projects in the urban forestry sector in a professional manner, based on its experience, for well planned tree planting in urban and industrial estates. FDCM shall also be encouraged to take up commercial plantations on private lands. FDCM shall be strengthened to enable it to function as a professionally managed autonomous and corporate body with true spirit of an organized corporate culture. The activities of FDCM, besides its assigned responsibilities, shall be diversified to include eco-tourism, bamboo marketing on wholesale basis, production and marketing of high quality compost, vermi-compost, liquid organic sprays, processing and marketing of non-timber forest produce collected through forest department and forest protection committees. The diversification policy shall be reviewed from time to time and more activities shall be added to it.

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