

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF BAMBOO FORESTS ON GOVT. LAND:

- **Amend Indian Forests Act (1927):** IFA is the primary legislation on Forests and it wrongly classifies Bamboo as a tree. Bamboo is a scientifically recognized grass. Including it under the list of trees leads to the inaccurate classification of felled Bamboo as 'timber' whether it originates from government or private land. It is hence subject to not only the Central but also the State Forest Laws. The Forest Department enjoys a monopoly over harvest, transit and trade of Bamboo as forest produce. This regulatory framework has throttled a viable Bamboo economy and denied livelihood opportunities to 50 mn people<sup>1</sup>
- **Ministry of Environment and Forests should declare Bamboo a grass:** To back the legislative amendment and better implementation the MoEF should issue clear directives to its officials as well as for the benefit of the general public regarding the change of status of Bamboo. The onus of proof of a forest offence in case of bamboo originating from government forests should in all cases lie with the Forest Department
- **Bamboo to be clearly classified as Non-Timber Forest Produce and regulations in cutting, transport and use of bamboo should be made uniform:** Bamboo should be considered a NTFP when collected from govt. forest land. Bamboo from private lands whether forests or plantations should be out of the ambit of forest laws, both Central & State governments. Under a 'New Bamboo Policy' a common system should be devised for regulation of Bamboo from government land with goals of conservation and regeneration being central rather than revenue concerns of the government in accordance with the Forest Policy 1988
- **Orientation of People on Tribal Right Act in relation to NTFP harvesting and tenure rights & inclusion of Bamboo forests in Joint Forest Management Programme:** Once Bamboo is classified as a NTFP it will come under the Recognition of Forest Rights Act 2006<sup>2</sup>. This Act has to be amended to clearly state that Forest dependent communities can trade in Bamboo collected from government forests without any restriction to ensure that these communities use it not only for subsistence but participate fully in a market economy. With the aim of preventing overuse and unscientific felling the JFM programme should be strengthened with the legal backing of the 2006 Act and scientific input from the Forest Department/ NGOs
- **Creation of a Bamboo Board on the lines of Tea/ Coffee Board:** The National Mission on Bamboo Applications under the Department of Science & Technology should be converted into an independent Board. The administration will be solely responsible for the task of promoting Bamboo which will ensure better performance as it will be a justification for the existence of the Board itself.

<sup>1</sup>Estimated no. of people who can be employed when the Bamboo industry realises its expected potential size of Rs 26, 000 cr by 2015 (Planning Commission estimate, 2003)

2 Forest Dwellers including Scheduled Tribes have the right to 'collect, use and dispose of minor forest produce. The word dispose is not assumed to mean either trade or transit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE PRIVATE PLANTATION OF BAMBOO:**

- **Government to declare it a horticulture crop:** As a horticulture crop Bamboo will be promoted through the initiative of the government to promote allied sectors in Agriculture. It will also to a large extent remove the stigma of Bamboo being a poor man's timber or an inferior good. Bamboo has the potential to be a cash crop and only when the growers recognize this potential can these opportunities be leveraged.
- **Farm grown Bamboo trade & transit rules need to be abolished:** With Laws on Private forests in 10 important states where commercially important species are found, and 27 including these 10 where rules are framed in accordance with the Indian Forests Act 1927 merely changing the definition of Bamboo will not be enough. State Forests Laws should explicitly exclude Bamboo.
- **Include Bamboo as a plantation crop wherever separate laws exist:** While excluding Bamboo from the Forest Acts wherever specific rules with regard to plantation crops exist, Bamboo should be included in that list, in order that it may enjoy a wider commercial appeal. Since it has been shown in various studies that intensive management under plantation conditions greatly improves productivity and profitability and with existing land ceiling and usage restrictions<sup>1</sup> this will not be possible Bamboo should be exempt from them.
- **Public Investment in relevant areas:** Despite even existing opportunities captured by the Demand- Supply gap private players have not been any concerted efforts to take advantage of them. Decades of negligence means little has been done to bring about production patterns and practices which are sustainable and market friendly since state monopoly control has been the norm. The state has to play a facilitating role by roping in Design Institutes, Financial institutions and NGOs in order to fill in the informational deficiencies. This will go a long way in crowding in private investment not just from large companies capable of undertaking R&D activities but also small growers who are not able to do so. Existing depots for distributing Bamboo to poor people should be converted into hubs for disseminating information and training. This should be a continuous process and not a stop gap arrangement.
- **North-East converted into Special Bamboo Zone:** There is immense potential for Bamboo products in the NE region which has abundant bamboo resources which has long been recognized as an essential item for sustenance. If both the supply and demand can be augmented a vibrant bamboo economy can flourish here. There are already existing plywood factories and Paper mills which shut down due to the timber felling ban which represent existing capacity and a labour force which is familiar with the

use and usefulness of Bamboo. Additionally though the dominant species *Melocanna bacciefera* is harvester friendly<sup>2</sup> it is also afflicted by the problem of gregarious flowering on a mass scale not observed anywhere in India. This calls for special and much required attention being paid to this region.

<sup>1</sup>The policy of Food sufficiency restricts changes in land usage where food crops are concerned. While Bamboo shoots have nutritional properties for commercial plantation purposes this change is necessary

<sup>2</sup> This is a non-clump forming variety which is easier to harvest than clump forming which require a special method like the horse- shoe method used in Kerala to ensure young clumps are preserved