



Transforming agriculture

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Highlights

- India is signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- As four of the 35 biodiversity hotspots are located in India, it is biodiversity-rich.
- However, climate change and development without consideration for biodiversity are leading to loss of biodiversity.
- India's National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) recognises the importance of biodiversity for inclusive development.

Green Agriculture Project

- The Green Agriculture project implemented by the Indian government and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) takes a novel approach to support the NBAP and synergise biodiversity conservation, agriculture production and development.
- It is being implemented in five landscapes adjoining Protected Areas/Biosphere Reserves: **Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.**
- It envisages a transformation in Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits by addressing land degradation, climate change mitigation, sustainable forest management, and biodiversity conservation.
- Man-animal conflicts in the fringes of Protected Areas or animal corridors, and conflicts over unsustainable procurement of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) have been contentious, especially in Odisha and Uttarakhand.
- A participatory and landscape approach can ensure sustainability of conservation efforts.
- Keeping the focus on initiatives for sustainable NTFP harvest, eradication of invasive alien species, and mitigation of wildlife conflicts is essential.

Biodiversity-Traditional Wisdom

- Biodiversity conservation is a part of traditional wisdom.
- The landscape approach will aim to restore traditional knowledge systems, such as the conservation of common property resources.
- Examples include the Orans of Rajasthan and the village safety and supply reserves in Mizoram.
- Traditional farming systems such as jhum encouraged crop diversity.
- However, climate change and shortened fallow cycles are undermining jhum cultivation sustainability.
- Participatory learning tools will encourage farmers to adopt more sustainable indigenous soil conservation.
- India gave the world crops such as rice, chickpea, pigeon pea, mango and eggplant.
- However, with the focus on policies that cater to market demands, its reservoir of

indigenous traditional crops has dwindled.

- Most keepers of these crop genetic diversity are smallholder farmers, including women.
- The approach will be to strengthen their role as agrodiversity guardians by developing value chains for their indigenous crops such as traditional rice varieties in Odisha.
- Environmental concerns are inadequately reflected in the development rhetoric.
- Thus, projects such as Green Agriculture are essential in equipping decision-makers with the necessary instruments to design effective and informed policies to underpin environmental concerns.

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