

## **AGRO-FORESTRY REFORM IN TAMILNADU, 2018**

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### **SYNOPSIS**

In 2016 the farmers in the state of Tamil Nadu suffered economic hardships due to the failure of tropical monsoons. Poor yield reflected gaps in accountability in agricultural practices, disparities in policy planning, and inadequate coordination across the general public, especially at the micro-level. In 2017, the government of Tamil Nadu modified its agricultural program to be robust and flexible to accommodate the temporal variations of the monsoons. One such measure is to bring in more areas under tree cultivation and to strengthen the intercropping techniques through the horticulture department and the forestry department. In 2018 during the agroforestry meeting, a recommendation to integrate practices led to the formation of the Tamil Nadu Forestry Innovations (TNFI) unit. TNFI then set about planning the roadmap, building a service delivery chain that linked the farmers to the universities, centers of agriculture, forest-based industries. TNFI proposed a system that focused on four salient areas, involving measurable service delivery targets against which district forest officer (DFO) take appropriate measures.

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### **PROBLEM DESCRIPTION**

In 2016, there was a gradual decrease in the average annual rainfall of Tamil Nadu to 62 percent. 2016 had the worst rainfall level in the state's last 140 years and, the state's reservoirs were 82 percent short of normal levels. Inadequate rainfall led to distress among the agrarian community as it witnessed suicides of 144 farmers. It resulted in the government amending the agricultural policy with institutions accountable for administrative lapses.

## PROXIMAL SOLUTION

As 21 of the 32 districts in Tamil Nadu were severely affected, the state officially declared a drought in January 2017. The government amended the policy to make it mandatory for credit institutions to secure the crop loans under the prime minister's crop insurance scheme (PMFBY- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana - managed by a group of 10 insurance companies with the government). One of the long-term solutions to tackle climate change is to improve the rearing of trees over cultivated private agricultural lands and fallows.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Agroforestry is the answer to both the increase in the forestry cover and welfare of the livelihood of farmers where the perennials (trees) complements annuals (food crops). Range officers and their respective teams distribute the tree saplings to local farmers. Casuarina, Melia Dubia, Silver Oak are the commonly preferred saplings with Melia Dubia extensively cultivated due to its preference among different industrial units in various stages of the tree. Previously, the officer guides the farmers only on the operations/ rearings and distribute commensurate incentives while the middlemen exploit the lumber market. The team identified the following as the measures for the improvements.

1. A Pre-production price assurance mechanism between the farmers and the wood (pulp, lumber, and plywood) industries.
2. A Mechanism to ease the procedures in the Public-Private partnerships to facilitate the forest-based industries and their communities.
3. Exclusive insurance scheme for trees in agro-farming/ inclusion of perennials in the agricultural crop insurance.
4. A Mechanism to scale the coordination of the farmers and guide them on intercropping techniques.

## **PRE-PRODUCTION AGREEMENT**

Few large wood processing industries could form a cartel and fix prices. Inefficiencies can arise in the agrarian community due to vulnerable connections.

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Integrate farmers with bulk purchasers for better price realization through mitigation of market and price risks to the farmers. To utilize the wood remains after lumbering, integrate farmers with identified scrap wood industries to promote the circular economy.

The unit would facilitate the acknowledgment by the parties that they transact on the condition of required quality assurance of the raw material with specific remuneration at fixed frequency intervals which is set out in the agreement.

- State-owned paper limited agreed to advance the payment period to the third year.

## **PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

Economic opportunities are limited to forest dwellers and tribals. Their agricultural productivity is subject to climatic variations and, the national rural employment guarantee scheme could only employ a family member for 100 days in a year. Non-governmental organizations are eager to engage them in their afforestation program.

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Creating feasible and viable programs for non -governmental organizations to increase in tree cover, establish economic opportunities for indigents, improving the biodiversity of the habitat.

Leasing the forest lands identified by the forestry to the authorized organization upon retention of the land quality and biodiversity for the targeted period.

## INSURANCE

The premium calculation should account that the risk occurrence of huge losses is minimal.

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To recover full or partial of perennial crop's financial loss due to natural events, pest infestations, and uncontrollable diseases through group insurance. The unit would assist and inform the insurer and insurance company in identifying the vulnerable factors in their respective regions by utilizing its resources available under the Chief Conservator of Forest, GIS.

- Group Insurance is not feasible unless the government bore all the costs.

## INTERCROPPING

Canopies restrict the growth of the annuals and limit their production capacity.

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Collaboration with the horticulture will assist in identifying suitable crops for the canopy like pepper and the value addition of their produce.

- Few herbs and annuals could complement the perennials under the canopy.
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Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Forest College and Research Institute(FCRI) are the research partners apart from forestry officials. Tamil Nadu News Paper Limited(TNPL) and local plywood companies are industrial partners. We hope that the institutions with the adopters of agroforestry flourish and pursue acts of the greater good. :-)