

National Conference
on
“Forestry in India: Current Challenges and Future Prospects”

A National Conference on “Forestry in India: Current Challenges and Future Prospects” was organized by the Himalayan Forest Research Institute, Shimla during 15th -18th November 2016. More than hundred delegates (including scientists, academicians, research scholars, representatives of forest based industries and forest officers) from sixteen states of the country participated in the conference. In the beginning of the inaugural session of the conference on 15th November, Dr. V.P. Tewari, Director, HFRI welcomed the dignitaries and all the distinguished delegates participating in the conference. Prof. A.D.N. Bajpai, Hon’ble Vice-chancellor, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla inaugurated the conference. In his inaugural address Prof. Bajpai emphasized the role of Forests in India which is a major natural resource supporting livelihood of tribal and rural people. He drew the attention of the participants on climate change and its impact on vegetation. He further lamented that as the predictions regarding impact of climate change are still full of uncertainties, concepts on possible strategies for adaptations are said to be far from clear and the cost of adaptations is also indicated to be much more than mitigation.

Dr. D.N. Tewari, Former-Member, Planning Commission, Government of India, while presiding over the function, appreciated the efforts of HFRI and hoped that the recommendations of the conference will be useful in formulating future planning in the forestry sector. Dr. Ajay Kumar Lal, Director, Environment, Science & Technology, Himachal Pradesh delivered key note address. Dr. Rajesh Sharma, Organizing Secretary proposed vote of thanks.

Dr. D.N. Tewari, as a lead speaker in the Plenary Session talked about the role of forestry in achieving sustainable development goals (SDG) and emphasized on eco-tourism for promoting conservation and sustaining livelihood of villagers. Dr. K.D. Singh, Ex-Director, FAO Forestry Department stressed on integrated assessment of the contemporary forest sector and promotion of Agro-forestry and Non timber forest produce. Dr. Pramode Kant, Director, Institute of Green Economy, New Delhi focused on the potential of Himalayan forests *viz-a-viz* climate change, conservation and long term investments in forestry sector. Dr. Ajay Kumar Lal, Director, Environment, Science & Technology, Himachal Pradesh emphasized upon the biodiversity conservation, opportunities and challenges, especially in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

The presentation of research papers were categorized under the six themes namely, **Management of Forests and Tree stands, Conservation, Cultivation and Management practices for Medicinal plants, Tree outside Forests, Forests and Climate Change, Biodiversity conservation and Assessment and Improvement strategies with special emphasis on Tree genetics**. During the concurrent technical sessions, a total of 48 research papers were presented. This includes 17 papers under Management of Forests and Tree Stands; 6 in Conservation, Cultivation and Management practices for Medicinal plants; 10 under Tree Outside Forests; 3 in Forests & Climate Change; 9 under Biodiversity conservation and 3 under the theme Assessment and Improvement strategies with special emphasis on Tree genetics. Besides, a poster session was

organized in which 16 posters, focusing on various themes, were displayed by the delegates. The posters were evaluated by a scientific committee and the best three posters were awarded. Speaking in the valedictory session, Dr. V.P. Tewari, Director, HFRI, while highlighting the significance of forest ecosystem, stressed upon better understanding in light of changing climatic conditions, large-scale development and increased societal needs. He further emphasized on the increasing importance of forests in recent times as concerns have been shown with rise in temperature all over the globe due to which the planners are also giving emphasis on forests. He told that this is one of the main reasons behind organizing this Conference and it is a matter of pleasure that there has been a big response of researchers for this conference.

The main recommendations, drawn from this Conference, are:

- Agroforestry and non-timber forest products must be promoted and effective marketing strategies need to be developed.
- Eco-tourism should be linked with religious activities for its promotion in the potential areas on sustainable basis.
- Pressure on forests should be minimized by adopting appropriate and viable methodologies, models and practices through scientific interventions in forest management and peoples' participation.
- Special attention is required to be given to the alien invasive species.
- Climate change is a burning issue in these days; therefore, methodology may be reviewed in order to decipher the effects of climate change on the intensity and effect of infestation of *Pityogenus scitus* on Oaks and Pines in Himalayan region.
- Emphasis should be given on conservation, harvesting and post harvesting technologies of important medicinal plants.
- Development and validation of techniques for conservation of critically endangered species specific to each bio-geographical zone through participatory approach.
- The conservation and productivity related issues of tree outside forests (TOF) must be focused and suitably addressed.
- Effect of climate change in incidences of insect attack and diseases needs to be investigated.
- Strategies for improvement of indigenous species need to be developed and worked upon.
- Private entrepreneurs should work in tandem with the research organizations and must support funding to research and development activities.

In the end, Dr. K.S. Kapoor, Group Coordinator Research, HFRI, Shimla presented the vote of thanks to the resource persons, participants, sponsors and other officials, who were engaged in successful organization of this Conference. He hoped that the recommendations of this Conference will provide an insight for the formulation of schemes in the forestry sector.

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