

NATIONAL FOREST POLICY 2015



**GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
2015**

Preamble

Under the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973), the subject of Forestry falls in the provincial domain and respective provincial governments. Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir protect and manage forests in their jurisdiction. IN FATA, Federal Government is responsible for Forestry sector through the FATA Secretariat, whereas in Gilgit-Baltistan Forestry is dealt by Gilgit-Baltistan Council with a mandate given by Gilgit, Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009. The functions of Federal Government pertaining to Forestry as per Federal Legislative List (Part-II) are limited to National planning and economic coordination, Inter-provincial matters and coordination and matters incidental or ancillary thereof. The Part-I of Federal Legislative List also entitles Federal Government to regulate import and export of wood and forest products across custom frontiers, inter-provincial trade and commerce, trade and commerce with foreign countries. Additionally, Federal Government shall perform functions of implementing international conventions and agreements related to forests.

Forestry governance in the Indo Pak sub-continent has a long history since the late 19th century with the appointment of the first Inspector General Forests in 1896. Historically, Forestry remained a provincial subject even after independence of Pakistan. In the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Forestry is purely a provincial subject and not impacted by the eighteenth amendments in the Constitution (2010). The roles and responsibilities of Federal Government are embedded in the following provincial statutes:

- a) Section 41-A of the Provincial Forest Acts of Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan empowers Federal Government to define rules for movement of timber across custom Frontiers.
- b) NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002
- c) Gilgit Private Forests Regulations 1970 and Forest Rules under Gilgit Private Forests Regulations 1975
- d) Clause 3.15 of West Pakistan Forest Manual Volume-II
- e) Gilgit-Baltistan Judicial Council's decision dated 6 April 2011 also clearly provides Federal Government role in Forestry.

Carbon stored in forests has emerged as a new commodity under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to which Pakistan is also a Party. REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation) under the Convention has to be dealt at the national level.

Therefore, this Policy is also the need of the hour to attract the benefits related to forests under the UNFCCC and other financial mechanisms including Green Climate Fund.

Pakistan is one of the low forest cover countries with only 5% of land area under forests and tree cover. Provincial governments, within their jurisdiction make efforts for protection and development of forests. However the federal support to federating units for meeting international obligations and filling their financial gaps is widely acknowledged. Federal Government had taken steps in the past to supplement federating units in form of technical and financial support, however without a national forest policy.

In view of Pakistan's high vulnerability to adverse impacts of climate change, in particular to extreme events, mitigation and adaptation measures are the focus of this Policy. Tremendous role of Forestry in climate change mitigation has been overwhelmingly recognized at international level. In the 21st century, scope of Forestry has been expanded tremendously because it offers the most effective solution to the global issue of climate change, loss of biodiversity, desertification together with air and water pollution. Pakistan, as a party to international agreements and conventions, has various commitments and obligations related to forests which require national-level actions and the cooperation of all federating units. It is therefore imperative for the Federal Government to promulgate an umbrella forest policy which aims at bolstering provincial forest policies in view of the renewed mandate of Federal Government and Rules of Business of Ministry of Climate Change (as amended in 2012).

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1. Goal

Expansion of national coverage of forests, protected areas, natural habitats and green areas for restoration of ecological functions and maximizing economic benefits while meeting Pakistan's obligations to international agreements related to forests

2. Policy Objectives

1. Enhancing public awareness on economic, social, ecological and cultural values of forests
2. Implementing a national level mass afforestation programme to expand and maintain forest coverage to meet international standards
3. Controlling deforestation through regulating movement of timber and inter-provincial trade of timber
4. Establishing and managing protected areas and networking through ecological corridors
5. Reducing carbon footprints of energy and economic sector programmes
6. Facilitating implementation of international conventions and agreements related to forestry, biodiversity and climate change
7. Promoting standardized and harmonized scientific planning of forests, research and education

3. Status and issues of forests

Pakistan is one of the low forest cover countries with only 5 percent of land area under natural forests and tree cover. Major forest types include coastal mangroves, reverine forests, sub-tropical scrub forests, moist temperate conifer forests, dry temperate conifer forests and irrigated plantations including linear plantations. Pakistan is home to some of the world's most unique forests including juniper, deodar and chilghoza forests.

The climatic, water and soil conditions in most parts of the country are not conducive for afforestation on large scales. Existing forest resources are inadequate for meeting domestic demands for wood for the increasing population of the country. Actual demand for wood is 3 times higher than the annual increment of forests or potential sustainable supply. Moreover, the forest owners and local communities depend on forests as sole source of livelihood. Resultantly, forests in all provinces particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pahtunkhwa are under severe pressure. At the national level,

rate of deforestation is estimated at 27,000 hectares per year which mainly occurs in private and community-owned natural forests. Deforestation in watershed areas adversely impacts on the yield and quality of water at outlets besides triggering land degradation and loss of biodiversity. Whereas in riparian, low-lying and coastal areas, deforestation causes catastrophic floods and sea water intrusion inflicting huge economic losses.

Respective provinces and federating units frequently face a large number of management and finance related issues. Some of the key issues of Forestry sector at national level include (i) absence of national forest monitoring mechanism, (ii) un-regulated inter-provincial movement and trade of timber, and (iii) absence of an approved national forest policy.

4. Expand forest cover

a. Mass afforestation involving youth

All provinces, FATA, AJK and Gilgit-Balitistan routinely implement their respective tree planting programmes and projects through its annual budget. In addition, CDA, NHA, and Armed Forces participate in seasonal tree planting campaigns with limited targets. On an average, a target of 70-80 million saplings is fixed annually at national level which is absolutely insufficient to meet even domestic demands for wood. There is a dire need to undertake a comprehensive and long-term mass afforestation programme by Federal Government in collaboration with all the federating units and concerned national organizations.

Policy Measures

- a. Prepare, sponsor and implement a long-term mass afforestation programme on federal lands in jurisdiction of Pakistan, Railways, National Highways Authority, WAPDA, and Armed Forces
- b. Sponsor mass afforestation programmes in FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan to be implemented by concerned Forest Departments
- c. Provinces shall allocate a significant portion of National Finance Commission Award for the achievement of objectives of this Policy, particularly protection and expansion of forests
- d. The Federal Government shall provide need-based support to all federating units for implementation of their respective provincial afforestation programmes

- e. The Federal and Provincial Governments shall support local government in implementation of their respective afforestation and forest protection programmes and projects
- f. Federally-sponsored programmes shall be regularly monitored and forest cover shall be assessed periodically by independent Third Party monitors

b. Integrating forests with economic sectors

The scope of Forestry has expanded tremendously in the past few decades in the wake of provincial and national environmental problems as well as global issues of climate change, loss of biodiversity and land desertification. The conventional treatment of Forestry as a stand-alone wood-producing sub-sector has been transformed into a cross-cutting subject impacting a number of economic sectors including water, energy, agriculture, tourism and communication. It is therefore inevitable to integrate Forestry with development policies and programmes of these economic sectors at the levels of planning, programming, and implementation.

Policy Measures

- a. No project or programme of the sectors enlisted in Schedule-I of the Constitution shall be approved unless the mandatory EIA requirements are fulfilled and an Environmental Management Plan is integral part of the project or programme
- b. All projects and programmes having significant carbon footprints shall allocate a portion of the total cost, depending upon level of emissions, towards establishment of forest carbon sinks, either onsite or off-site
- c. The Large Dams projects shall allocate at least 1% of the total cost for watershed management including afforestation, regeneration, biodiversity conservation, wetlands, restoration and bio-engineering. These works shall be completed before the Large Dam projects become operational
- d. The projects of construction and/or repairing of main and link canals shall have integral component of linear plantations with pre-allocated costs
- e. The projects of construction, expansion and/or repairing inter-provincial highways shall have integral component of linear plantations with pre-allocated costs
- f. All national organizations, including armed forces, shall implement long-term afforestation programmes on the available lands in their possession

- g. All Federating Units shall promote, with economic incentives, forestry on farmlands to increase tree cover on arable lands presently not under cultivation due to any constraint

c. Ecological corridors

Ecological corridors help maintain or recover a certain degree of cohesion in otherwise fragmented ecosystems. Through the connection of fragmented habitats, the viability of animal and plant species is improved by enlarging habitats, for example to improve the search for food. Large scale changes in land use fortified by climate change are continuously changing the borders of suitable habitats resulting in decline or extinction of many species. The policy of the Government to establish trans-boundary economic corridors with China and Central Asia is bringing excellent opportunity for Pakistan for establishment of ecological corridors. The activities shall include protection, restoration, and regeneration of native species of vegetation including trees and protecting wildlife species. Sustaining wetlands shall be protected and their wise use shall be promoted. Depending upon the legal status of the land, management of ecological corridors will be done by government departments, local communities, armed forces and civil society organizations. The costs of ecological corridors in Pakistan part shall be included in the component projects of highways, industrial estates,

Policy Measures

- a. Government of Pakistan , with the collaboration of all federating units, shall manage sustainably existing protected areas and shall establish new protected areas
- b. Ecological corridor, shall be promoted established to minimize fragmentation of ecosystems
- c. A system of inter linking Protected Areas in all federating units through biological corridors shall be established.
- d. Trans-boundary ecological corridors shall be established preferably along Pakistan-China Economic Corridor in 5-10 km wide strip
- e. Wise use of wetlands including Ramsar sites shall be undertaken by appointing and designating a full time dedicated agencies in the provinces and the Federal Government.
- f. Wise use of floods for ecosystem Restoration including riverine and coastal forestry shall be undertaken.

5. Curb deforestation and promote conservation

a. Regulating inter-provincial timber movement & trade

The provincial governments and Gilgit-Baltistan Council have the legal mandate of managing forests, controlling illegal cutting of trees, regulating movement of timber and trade within respective jurisdiction. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and in pursuance of Section 41-A of Provincial Forest Acts, Federal Government is responsible for inter-provincial coordination on matters related to forests, import and export of timber across custom frontiers and inter-provincial trade of timber.

Policy Measures

- a. Government of Pakistan shall define routes for movement of timber across custom frontiers as required under Section 41_A of provincial forest laws
- b. A Timber Regulatory Authority shall be established legally empowered to check inter-provincial movement and trade of timber to apprehend illegal consignments, and plead in the courts of law
- c. A Timber Regulatory Authority shall be established legally empowered to check inter-provincial movement and trade of timber to apprehend illegal consignments, and plead in the courts of law.
- d. The Timber Regulatory Authority shall adopt a system of timber certification to regulate inter-provincial trade, international imports & exports of timber and related forest products
- e. Wherever needed, Government may place strengthen Timber Regulatory Authority with the assistance of armed forces and law enforcement agencies to control forest crimes

b. Reduced Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation (REDD+)

Pakistan has high rate of deforestation and forest degradation, particularly in Diamer District of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan District of KPK. Most of the conifer forests in these areas are either privately owned or communal. Local communities solely depend upon these forests for livelihood through commercial sale of wood. Government has no mechanism to pay compensation to legal owners and right holders of these forests in lieu of cutting trees. Under the Cancun agreement of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), any action that reduces emission of carbon dioxide from forests is eligible for cash compensation from international sources.

Reduced Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation (REDD+) shall ensure payment to forest communities for quantified reduction in emission through controlling deforestation and forest degradation, conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Government has taken a number of preparatory actions as required under the Convention including training of all federating units and membership of related international and UN bodies. In Phase-I of REDD+, World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and United Nations REDD Programme shall assist Pakistan in preparation of REDD+ national strategy, national forest monitoring system, national forest reference emission level and a national system of safeguard.

Policy Measures

- a. The Government of Pakistan shall ensure implementations of REDD+ in accordance with the international agreements.
- b. The benefits arising from REDD+ shall be fully transferred to the owners and right holders.

c. Forest ownership and rights

In order to reverse the trend of deforestation in particular from private and communal forests, all options shall be undertaken including payment for ecosystem services (PES); retiring the rights to forests and purchase of privately owned forests and converting the same protected forests. This shall be done with the prior informed consent of the forest owners and right holders.

Policy Measures

- a. Government of Pakistan, with an aim to protect privately-owned and communal forests, and whenever needed, may purchase forests lands particularly in Gilgit-Balitistan and federally administered areas. This shall be done by adequately compensating the rightful owners and right holders and with their consent.
- b. Purchase of privately-owned and communal forestlands in provinces may be done in consultation with respective provincial government
- d. In case purchase of forestland is not possible, rights of forest use shall be traded-off on terms and conditions decided jointly by respective Forest Department, Land Revenue Department, Forest Associations and Federal Government

- e. During the period of agreement with private owners and communities, the benefits including forest carbon stock, shall accrue to the Government of Pakistan
- f. In case of purchase of forestlands and purchase of rights for specified period, non-owners and non-right holding forest dependent communities shall be compensated by Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with respective federating units, under a mechanism to be devised for this purpose

6. Promote integrated approach of forests, wildlife and biodiversity management

Natural and man-made forests are harbingers of wildlife and biodiversity and provide ecosystem services not only to human but also all form of life. Forest ecosystems are spread over in mountains, deserts, terrestrial and marine wetlands in Pakistan. In addition, wetlands are home to fauna other than fishes and unique aquatic flora. These forests and ecosystems are managed by governmental manpower of one or more provincial departments such as Forest Department, Wildlife Department and/or Fisheries Department. Unfortunately each department has a system of management in isolation from other closely related departments / disciplines. The contemporary scientific knowledge calls for taking a holistic approach or ecosystem approach to better achieve the objective of conservation and sustainable use.

Policy Measures

- a. Synchronizing the effectiveness of forestry and wildlife departments at field level.
- b. Provinces shall consider making provincial wildlife and forestry postings at district level inter-chargeable, by revisiting the service structure.
- c. Provinces shall consider devising mechanism for better coordination between forests, wildlife and fisheries departments.

7. International obligations and opportunities

Forests provide cost effective and durable solution to the global issues of climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification. Hence, Forestry is treated as a cross-cutting subject under the three Rio Conventions viz: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Under the UNFCCC, the Cancun Agreement on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is bringing

enormous funding opportunities to forest-dependent communities to control deforestation and enhance forest carbon stock. The REDD+ is a market-based mechanism of quantified emission reduction from forests with certain safeguards. The Cancun Agreement also has a separate mechanism of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) intending to compensate country-specific mitigation actions in all sectors including Forestry. Pakistan is committed to meet all international obligations pertaining to forests by securing maximum financial and technological support from multilateral and bilateral sources.

Policy Measures

- a. Effective participation of national focal points and forestry experts in conventions' meetings safeguarding national interest
- b. Inter-provincial and inter-ministerial bodies constituted for respective conventions and REDD+ shall oversee and monitor implementation of conventions
- c. National Focal Points of these conventions and agreements shall frequently coordinate with and facilitate all federating units in implementing forestry-related obligations
- d. Government shall mobilize funds for forest protection and development from bilateral and multilateral sources including Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- e. Government and respective federating units shall allocate sufficient funds as a requirement of co-financing GEF and GCF supported projects
- f. Government shall enhance capacity of all federating units on preparing and negotiating forest proposals for funding under NAMA and GCF

8. Scientific planning, policy & legal reforms

The Federating Units have been following outdated forest management planning that is inconsistent and incapable of meeting requirements of changing world. Imposition of ban on commercial harvesting in 1993 virtually brought management planning to standstill in parts of the country. Similarly, existing provincial forest policies and laws seldom address challenges and solutions of sustainable management of forests. Government of Pakistan, as per its constitutional mandate, shall perform its functions of inter-provincial coordination and assistance in reforming forest management planning, policies and laws meeting national priorities and international standards.

Policy Measures

- a. Government shall promote scientific management of national forests and a consistent system of such management

- b. On the request of federating units, Government shall arrange technical, human and financial support for policy and legal reforms, with the prime aim of achieving objectives of this umbrella policy
- c. Government, shall provide a national platform to all federating units, for exchange of knowledge and experience relevant to forest policies and laws
- d. Government of Pakistan shall provide necessary advice to federating units to make their relevant policies and laws harmonized and conforming to international agreements

9. National institution for research, education, training and monitoring

National planning and programming necessitates availability of updated, accurate and authentic statistics related to large number of Forestry indicators. National objectives of Forestry sector and international agreements frequently require advanced and applied research on various aspects of Forestry. All Federating Units have high demands for education, training and capacity development that meets the world standards and national needs. International agreements including UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Cancun Agreement and Warsaw Framework), Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Forum on Forests and regional agreements at the level of SAARC and ECO require regular monitoring and reporting on the status of national forests. The National Focal Points of these agreements and all Federating Units demand establishment of a national institution in Islamabad to perform all the above functions.

Policy Measures

- a. Government of Pakistan shall establish a national institution in Islamabad to promote advanced research in forestry, biodiversity and allied disciplines
- b. National institution shall pool-up technical and human resources available in Federating Units to impart formal and informal education, in-service training to forest stakeholders
- c. National intuition shall promote high-quality research & education by building linkages with regional and international forestry intuitions
- d. National institution shall develop and maintain updated databases related to all aspects of forestry, biodiversity and allied disciplines
- e. National institution shall conduct periodic national forest surveys and publish state of forest report every 2 years

10. Financing

The implementation framework of National Forest Policy (2015) shall include component-wise financial requirements, annual phasing and sources of financing. On part of Federal Government, following sequential measures and actions will be taken:

- I. Reflect in Five Year Plan / Mid Term Development Framework / Perspective Plans
- II. Allocate PSDP funds for Provincial afforestation programmes and projects
- III. Mobilize international funds from multilateral and bilateral sources
- IV. Facilitate Results-based payments under REDD+

11. Implementation mechanism

Following logical steps shall be followed for effective implementation of National Forest Policy 2015:

- Ministry of Climate Change shall develop, in consultation with all stakeholders, an action plan for implementation of NFP. The action plan will assign specific responsibilities to stakeholders with quantifiable targets to be achieved within given timeframe
- Federal Forestry Board shall be reactivated under the chairmanship of Minister for Climate Change with a renewed mandate, composition, and functions
- Federal Forestry Board shall report to the Government on the progress of NFP on six-monthly basis
- All Federating Units shall constitute inter-departmental NFP implementation committees and report their decisions to FFB
- Federal Government shall undertake preparation of necessary legislation for implementing Federal components of this Policy including for creation of new national institution and authority
- The Policy shall be reviewed after 5 years of its implementation and strategic decisions shall be taken accordingly