

The Forestry Sector in India's State Action Plans on Climate Change: A Forward-looking Analysis

With ever more manifest climate change impacts, India plays a key role in achieving the temperature goal. Within India, the forestry sector is particularly important for the achievement of domestic mitigation pledges such as the NDC forestry targets and necessary reductions in the climate vulnerabilities of rural livelihoods. Owing to India's federal structure, sub-national action is the main determinant of success of climate action in the forestry sector. In a systematic literature review, we therefore here compare the forestry components of all 33 State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC). In conjunction with insights from the plan implementation period, this comparison holds important lessons for the ongoing revision of the plans. These pertain inter alia to the need for scientifically rigorous methods of assessment of vulnerabilities of forest ecosystems and dependent communities, the need for specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets and strategies informed by these assessments, the need to concentrate efforts and resources on synergistic approaches with adaptation and mitigation benefits, and the opportunity to develop rigorous M&E approaches for both these fields in the forestry sector. With the imminent second round of SAPCCs, state forest departments and other stakeholders should adhere to established best practices.

Key words: State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC), Forestry, Mitigation, Adaptation, Targets

Introduction

Climate change, forests and land use: The centrality of forests to the mitigation of climate change and the adaptation to its consequences is well-recognised. While total net GHG emissions from agriculture, forests and other land use (AFOLU) amounted to 23% of total anthropogenic emissions over 2007-16 (IPCC, 2019), forests' stabilising force is known to regulate ecosystems, protect biodiversity, support livelihoods, and play a significant role in carbon cycle via sequestration. At the global level, increased levels of attention to the role forests can play in mitigating climate change and adapting to its consequences have led to repeated calls for action by both scientists and policy makers (e.g. Ministerial Katowice Declaration on Forest for the Climate, COP24 (2018), Poland).

Forestry and Climate Policy in India

In India, too, climate mitigation and adaptation aspects have increasingly influenced forest policy, and forestry is increasingly central to climate policy (Table 1). In 1988, the Indian National Forest Policy (NFP) first set a target of increasing forest cover to 33% of India's geographical area with special focus on hills to prevent soil erosion and land degradation. The dimensions of climate mitigation and adaptation gained prominence in the Indian forestry policy debate with the advent of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which provided direction on climate change mitigation and adaptation, keeping in mind the overriding prerogative of maintaining high

By offering a timely opportunity to incorporate learning and best practices, the ongoing revision of State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) allows for better integration of and progress towards India's ambitious forestry targets under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

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