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To
The Editor,

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Sir,

I request that the following matter may kindly be published in your esteemed daily:

A Consortium to improve Green Cover of Tamil Nadu

Launching of Consortium of Industrial Agroforestry (CIAF) in Forest College and Research institute, Mettupalayam

The demand for wood as a raw material for industries like paper, plywood, matchwood and bio fuel has increased astoundingly. There are about 700 paper mills in India. The supply of raw material for pulp and paper production is only 2.76 MT against the demand of 5.04 MT. Similarly the raw material demand for 6000 matchwood industries of Tamil Nadu which houses 75 per cent of country's units has been steadily increasing due to increase in per capita consumption from 2.45 kg of 1970s to the current level of about 6.0 kg. The shortfall of veneer quality wood for match box production alone is estimated to over 44 percent. The demand for plywood industries and particle board for the state alone is estimated to be around 1.2 million tonnes per annum. Under such circumstances, the Government of India promulgated the National Forest Policy, 1988 which banned the sourcing of raw material from forests of India and directed the industries to procure the wood from plantations raised in farm lands, by entering into contract with farmers. However, many bottle necks were faced by the industries in sourcing the raw material from the agroforestry plantations. Some of them are i) Lack of knowledge about high yielding tree varieties and clones ii) Non availability of quality clones and planting materials iii) lack of co-ordination among researchers, nurserymen, farmers and wood based industries and iv) non availability of skilled labour and mechanized systems for managing plantations. At this juncture, Forest College and Research Institute operated a ICAR sponsored NAIP Project on "A Value Chain on Industrial Agroforestry in Tamil Nadu" between 2008 and 2014, for seven years. The value chain model has successfully brought all the stakeholders like

scientists, wood based industries, farmers and financial institutions on a common platform. The coordination and cooperation among the stake holders has brought about all round improvement in agro forestry plantations by popularizing high yielding improved clones of Casuarina, Melia, Ailanthus, Subbabul, Dalbergia, Kumizh and Kadham. Today the area under contract wood farming in Tamil Nadu has crossed 70000 acres involving over 25000 farmers. The wood productivity has increased from 80-100 t/ha to 150 t/ha. The rotation period has decreased from 4-5 years to just 3 years. Farmers have also benefitted by the adoption of minimum procurement prize. The industry has appreciated the assured supply of quality raw materials. The credit link and Insurance cover facilities have also boosted the sentiments of the farmers. Many new rural industries and tree nurseries have been started. The achievements made have been appreciated by the 12th Implementation Support Mission (ISM) of the World Bank Team.

Now, since the ICAR funded project has been completed, there is a need to consolidate the achievements and continue the activities in order to achieve sustainability of the value chain developed through the seven years of hard work accomplished during the project period. Therefore, a Consortium has been conceptualized at Forest College and Research Institute, with the membership of all the stakeholders who made active participation during the project period. All the stakeholders have been enthusiastic about the development of the new Consortium of Industrial Agroforestry. About 100 members from farming community, research organizations, wood based industries, nursery growers, plantation developers, tree felling groups, producer organizations, Tree grower societies, Forest Department, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, NGOs, Banks, and Insurance companies have enrolled as members of this Consortium. All the members are conscious of carrying forward the momentum generated during the implementation of the NAIP Value Chain project. The consortium mode efforts to increase the agro forestry tree plantations will be a turning point in increasing the green cover of the state, which will in fact improve the environmental conditions of the state.

The new Consortium of Industrial Agro forestry (CIAF) will be launched on 21-3-2015 at Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam. The Vice Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will preside over the function.

Dr. N. Krishna Kumar, I.F.S, Additional PCCF (Admin), Tamil Nadu Forest Department is the Chief Guest. Mr. S. Natarajan, General Manager, NABARD, Chennai, Dr. R. Ezekiel, National coordinator (NAIP), Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi, Dr. M. Maheswaran, Director of Research and Dr. M. Chinnadurai, Director (CARDS) from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will also attend the inaugural function as special guests.

Public Relations Officer