



INDIA STATE OF FOREST REPORT (ISFR) 2023 – REPORT

NEWS: India's green cover has increased by 1,445.81 sq km since 2021, covering a geographical area of 25.17 per cent, as per the 2023 India State of Forest Report.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

1. Net Increase in Forest Cover (2021–2023):

- The total forest cover in India increased by **156.41 sq km** between 2021 and 2023, as per the ISFR 2023.
- The total geographical area under forest cover now stands at **7,15,342.61 sq km**, which constitutes **21.76%** of the country's total geographical area.
- This reflects a marginal rise of **0.05%** in forest cover compared to the 2021 assessment.

2. Green Cover (Forest and Tree Cover Combined):

- Tree cover increased by **1,285.4 sq km**, contributing to an overall rise in green cover of **1,445.81 sq km**.
- The combined forest and tree cover now extends over **25.17%** of India's total geographical area.

Changes in Forest Cover by Density

1. Very Dense Forests (VDF):

- Forest areas with a canopy density of 70% or more saw an increase of **2,431.50 sq km**, marking the largest gain among the three density categories.

2. Moderately Dense Forests (MDF):

- Forest areas with a canopy density of 40% to 70% experienced a decline of **1,234.95 sq km**, indicating a reduction in these medium-density forests.

3. Open Forests (OF):

- Forest areas with a canopy density of 10% to 40% decreased by **1,189.27 sq km**, showing a notable loss in sparsely forested regions.

4. Western Ghats Forests:

- The eco-sensitive areas of the Western Ghats lost **58.22 sq km** of forest cover since 2013.
- While **VDF** in the region increased by **3,455.12 sq km**, there were significant reductions in **MDF** (**1,043.23 sq km**) and **OF** (**2,480.11 sq km**).



Forest Cover Outside Recorded Forest Areas (RFAs)

1. Net Increase in Non-RFA Areas:

- A significant portion of the forest cover increase, totaling **149.13 sq km**, occurred outside RFAs.
- These areas include lands that are not classified as reserved or protected forests.

2. Minimal Increase in RFAs:

- Only **7.28 sq km** of the net forest cover increase was recorded within RFAs, highlighting limited growth in protected areas.

3. States with Maximum Increase in RFAs:

- **Mizoram** recorded the highest increase in RFA forest cover with **192.92 sq km**, followed by **Odisha (118.17 sq km)**, **Karnataka (93.14 sq km)**, **West Bengal (64.79 sq km)**, and **Jharkhand (52.72 sq km)**.

Mangrove Cover

1. Total Mangrove Area:

- India's mangrove cover now spans **4,991.68 sq km**, constituting **0.15%** of the country's total geographical area.

2. Net Decline in Mangrove Cover:

- There was a reduction of **7.43 sq km** in mangrove cover compared to 2021.
- The largest decrease was recorded in **Gujarat (36 sq km)**, followed by the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (4.65 sq km)**.

Regional Analysis of Forest Cover

1. Northeastern States:

- The northeastern region recorded a collective decline of **327.30 sq km** in forest cover.
- **Mizoram** was the only northeastern state to report an increase in forest cover, gaining **178 sq km**.
- The highest declines were observed in **Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Assam**.

2. Top States with an Increase in Green Cover:

- **Chhattisgarh** witnessed the largest rise in forest and tree cover, adding **683.62 sq km**.
- Other major contributors include **Uttar Pradesh (559.19 sq km)**, **Odisha (558.57 sq km)**, and **Rajasthan (394.46 sq km)**.



3. States with the Largest Decline:

- **Madhya Pradesh** reported the highest loss in forest and tree cover, with a decrease of **612.41 sq km**.
- Significant losses were also observed in **Karnataka (459.36 sq km)**, **Ladakh (159.26 sq km)**, and **Nagaland (125.22 sq km)**.

4. States with the Largest Forest and Tree Cover (Area-Wise):

- **Madhya Pradesh** leads with **85,724 sq km**, followed by **Arunachal Pradesh (67,083 sq km)** and **Maharashtra (65,383 sq km)**.

Carbon Stock

1. Increase in Carbon Stock:

- India's carbon stock increased by **81.5 million tonnes** compared to the 2021 assessment, reflecting the role of forests in carbon sequestration.

Classification of Forest Cover

1. Definitions by Canopy Density:

- **Very Dense Forests (VDF)**: Areas with canopy density $\geq 70\%$.
- **Moderately Dense Forests (MDF)**: Areas with canopy density $\geq 40\%$ but $< 70\%$.
- **Open Forests (OF)**: Areas with canopy density $\geq 10\%$ but $< 40\%$.

Mapping Methodology

1. Forest Cover Mapping Process:

- Forest cover mapping is conducted using satellite data to identify all lands with a tree canopy density $\geq 10\%$ over areas larger than 1 hectare.
- These areas include orchards, bamboo, and palm plantations, regardless of ownership or legal status.

2. Expanded District Coverage:

- The 2023 ISFR mapped forest cover across **751 districts**, an increase from the **636 districts** mapped in the 2021 report.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-forest-tree-cover-govt-report-9737617/>