# Concerns with Increasing Plantation Forest Cover

## Why in news?

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Forest Survey of India (FSI) has released the 2017 State of Forest Report.

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## What is FSI?

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- Forest Survey of India (FSI) is an organisation under the Ministry of Environment & Forests.
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- Its principal mandate is to conduct survey and assessment of forest resources in the country.
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- The Forest Survey of India organize the training programmes to state sponsored forest personnel.
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- FSI releases State of Forest Report biennially based on satellite imageries.
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- According to the State of Forest Report, the definition of forest cover includes all lands more than 1 hectare in area with a tree canopy of more than 10 per cent, irrespective of land use, ownership, and legal status.
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## What are the recent findings of report?

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- This report has found that the forest cover is by and large stable, between 2015 and 2017, a mere 0.21 per cent change is noted.
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- Forests cover is around 21.54 per cent of the land area of the country, this area includes trees growing in the government’s forestland and in private lands.
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- Out of 21.54 per cent of the land that is under forest cover, only 3 per cent can be classified as very dense, the tree canopy density of 70 per cent or more.
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- The report also finds that between 2015 and 2017, the category of forests classified as “very dense” has increased by some 9,000 square km.
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- While moderately dense forests have decreased and there is some increase in open forests.
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## What are the insights from the report?

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- According to government estimate, the annual production of timber from recorded forestlands is 4 million cubic metres.
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- Timber-growing potential in the country in lands outside recorded forests, comes to some 74.5 million cubic metres.
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- Which makes it clear Private players are growing forests for monetization.
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- In fact, almost 30 per cent of the growing stock an indicator of forest health and productivity is outside the “recorded” forests and this is increasing, faster than the growing stock in the lands controlled by forest department.
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- The difference is the “nature” of tree species, while the growing stock in forests is mainly Sal, teak, or pine, timber species, outside it is mango, coconut, Neem, and bamboo horticulture and plantation species.
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## What are the concerns with classifying forests?

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- It is not possible to say how much the area under forests in the “recorded”

forests is, because not all state governments have completed digitising the boundaries of these lands.
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- In fact states have “lost” substantial areas previously recorded as forests and are not “found” when the records are digitised.
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- Though it would seem that the quality of forest cover has improved and “moderately dense” has been converted into “very dense”, the increase in coverage is not of natural forest cover.
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- Almost 70,000 square km of forestland, roughly 12 per cent of the recorded forest area, has been wiped out in India for plantation.
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**Source: Business Standard**

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