Forest Landscape Restoration

Why in news?

In the **United Nations Biodiversity Summit** held on October 1 Environment Minister reiterated India's commitment to restore 26 million hectares of land by 2030.

What are the pledges w.r.t Forest Landscape Restoration?

- Forest landscape restoration is a process of restoring the ecological integrity , improving the productivity and economic value of degraded forest landscapes.
- Article 5 in the 2015 **Paris Agreement** urges countries to act on deforestation and forest degradation for enhancing sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases.
- The Government of Germany and IUCN launched voluntary **Bonn Challenge** in 2011 with the target of restore 150 mha of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2020 and 350 mha by 2030.
- India joined the Bonn Challenge in 2015 with a pledge to restore 21 mha of degraded and deforested land & raised it to 26 mha by 2030.
- India's **NDC** targets to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent from additional forest and tree cover until 2030.

What are the ambiguities in implementing FLR?

- There are no proper standard documents to arrive at common definitions, figures and methods on FLR in India.
- **The Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas** (2016) by Space Applications Centre (SAC), ISRO, says almost 96.4 m ha of India's geographical area are undergoing the process of desertification/land degradation.
- Whereas **Forest Survey of India's** reports identifies 63 m ha of potential areas for restoration.
- However, remote sensing-based area delineation can only point towards potential areas for FLR.
- Another concern is around establishing a baseline for FLR.
- Whether 2011, the year when the Bonn Challenge was launched or 2015 when India made the Bonn Challenge pledge should be considered.

- **Bonn Challenge Consultative Committee** is constituted to guide the progress and achievements in respect of commitments under the Bonn Challenge.

How to effectively implement FLR initiatives?

- There is a need for monitoring and reporting with correct data by utilising existing national monitoring frameworks(Green India Mission) to benefit from restoration.
- The Existing Institutions- Joint Forest Management, the Forest Protection Committee, Van Panchayats and Gram Sabhas- should bring stakeholders together .
- To ensure permanent restoration ,stakeholders participation and sharing of responsibilities are required.
- Forest management needs to involve 3 objectives.
- One managing forest for water which includes enhancing groundwater recharge as well as maintaining surface flows and sub-surface flow in rivers and springs.
- Second is carbon sink & third is managing forests to ensure livelihood and sustenance of millions of people dependent on forest.
- These are necessary for India to achieve forest related national and international commitments.

Source: Business Line

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