Model Rules for Felling of Trees in Agricultural lands

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Why in news?

Recently, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has issued the 'Model Rules for Felling of Trees in Agricultural Lands'.

- **Objectives** – To establish a *streamlined regulatory framework* by providing simplified procedures for registering agroforestry lands and managing tree harvesting and transit.
- To *encourage greater participation* and open up opportunities for farmers and other stakeholders to ***adopt agroforestry practices***.
- To *support ease of doing business* for those involved in tree-based farming systems.

> ***Agroforestry*** *is the interaction of agriculture and trees, including the agricultural use of trees. It offers multiple benefits including, enhancing rural livelihoods, improving soil health, conserving biodiversity, increasing tree cover, water conservation, contributing to climate resilience, while reducing pressure on natural forests.*

- **Rules for applicants** – They are required to register their plantations on the ***National Timber Management System (NTMS) portal***, which is being developed.
- They can periodically update the plantation information and upload geotagged photos of the plantation to ensure traceability.
- Applicants wishing to harvest trees from registered plantations can apply online through the NTMS.

> ***Applicant*** *refers to any individual, institution, organization owning agricultural lands seeking to register under this rule. "Tree" includes palms, stumps, brushwood and canes.*

- **Implementing agency** - ***State Level Committee***, was established under the Wood-Based Industries (Establishment and Regulation) Guidelines, 2016
- It will empanel agencies for verifying applications for felling of trees from agricultural lands.
- **Role of verifying agencies** – They will *carry out site inspections* and based on their verification reports, tree felling permits will be issued for agricultural lands.
- **Role of the Divisional Forest Officers** – They will *oversee the performance* of these agencies through periodic supervision and monitoring.
- **Significance** – By promoting domestic timber production through agroforestry, the approach seeks to
    - Close the demand-supply gap
    - Support wood-based industries with locally sourced raw materials and to boost exports.

Reference

PIB| Issuance of Model Rules for Felling Trees in Agricultural Land

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