Nature Restoration Law for India

Why in news

Recently The European union approved its Nature Restoration Law which aims to make continent-wide efforts to restore degraded ecosystems.

What is European Union's Nature restoration law?

- **Nature Restoration Law** – NRL was adopted by the EU's Environmental Council in 2024 to restore the health of Europe's ecosystems.
- **Aim** – Recover at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 and all ecosystems by 2050.
- The NRL is part of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the European Green Deal.
- **Components of NRL**
    - **Land restoration** - Restoring drained peatlands under agricultural use.
    - **Coastal restoration** - Restoring the habitats of iconic marine species such as dolphins and porpoises, sharks and seabirds.
    - **Agricultural ecosystems** – Reversing the decline of pollinator population by 2030.
    - **River restoration** – Restoring at least 25,000 km of rivers to a free-flowing state by 2030.
    - **Greening urban space** – No net loss of green urban space and tree cover by 2030, and an increase in their area thereafter.

European Green Deal
• The European Green Deal is a package of policy initiatives, which aims to set the EU on the path to a ***green transition***, with the ultimate goal of reaching ***climate neutrality by 2050***. • **Features** - **Fit for 55** - Target of 55% less emissions by 2030, in comparison to 1990. - **EU Emissions Trading System** - To generate revenues that will be reinvested in innovation, climate action, and social support. - Improving energy efficiency, energy security and reducing dependence from Russia by REPowerEU. - Enhancing the competitiveness of Europe's net-zero industry - Restoring the wealth of our environment**.**

What are the socio-economic benefits of nature restoration?

- **Economic growth** – According to the World Economic Forum, nature restoration could globally generate economic returns of up to $10 trillion annually by 2030.
- **Enhancing agricultural productivity** – Restoring nature improves soil fertility,

water retention, enhanced pollination.

- **Reduce water scarcity** – Restoring forests and wetlands improve water supply and quality.
- **Meeting SDG targets** – Goal 15 calls for the sustainable management of forests and combating desertification.
- **Job creation** – Increased employment in rural areas, especially in sectors like reforestation and agriculture thus improve the livelihood.
- **Tourism promotion** – Eco-tourism development in rural areas leads to sustainable growth.
- **Mitigate climate change** – By restoring its ecosystems, India can enhance its carbon sinks and meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- **Disaster resilience** – Developing infrastructure that are disaster resilient to floods, droughts, and extreme weather events, making communities more resilient to climate-related disasters.

Why India needs a natural land restoration law?

- **Increasing land degradation** - According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, nearly 30% of India's total geographical area is under land degradation.

Land degradation is prevalent in key States such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, which together form 23.79% of India's desertified land area.

- India's land degradation increased to 97.85 million hectares in 2018-19, a sharp increase from 94.53 million hectares in 2003-05.
- **Desertification** - It is a growing concern in India, with 83.69 million hectares affected in 2018-19.
- **No legally binding targets –** It needs a more comprehensive approach and a law that mandates the restoration of its degraded landscapes, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its ecosystems.
- **River pollution –** India's major rivers are degraded due to the rapid urbanization.
- **Water scarcity** – 820 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and 200,000 Indians die every year due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene.
- **Maintain ecological balance** - India is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, is pushing several species towards extinction.
- Deforestation and poor land management accelerate erosion, depleting arable land and impacting food security.

What are the recommendations for India's NRL?

- **Restoration targets** – India should aim to restore 20% of its degraded land by 2030, with a goal of restoring all ecosystems by 2050.
    - This includes forests, wetlands, rivers, agricultural lands, and urban green spaces.

- **Wetland restoration** – Restore 30% of degraded wetlands by 2030 as critical wetlands such as the Sundarbans and Chilika Lake support biodiversity and carbon sequestration.
- **Biodiversity in agriculture** – Agriculture dominates India's landscape so promoting agroforestry and sustainable practices could restore farmlands.
- **River restoration** – Focus on restoring free-flowing rivers, such as the Ganga and Yamuna, addressing pollution and obstructions.
- **Urban green spaces** – Promoting urban forests in cities which face heat islands and declining air quality.
- Ensure that no net loss of green spaces in urban areas.

Reference

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