

(12) Restoring grasslands in Saurashtra is the key to make big cats thrive in their natural habitat. Analyse it in the context of land degradation neutrality.

Apart from climate change Land degradation is a one issue threatening existence of living beings.

In order to "combat desertification" UN led conference committed active land degradation neutrality by 2030.

India can contribute to these commitments by restoring large patches of country's grassland in Saurashtra region currently facing the problems like

- converting grassland into agriculture purpose
- change in land use pattern due to mining & other purpose
- Invasive tree species thriving in the grassland

Degradation of grassland affect local population i.e. pastoralists, community

because of its ecosystem values, but major victim of grassland degradation is Asiatic Lion as they require prey which depend on grassland

→ Restoring grassland will help to increase Lion population in big number in following ways

- * more than $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of Lion population as per 2015 census living outside protected area, thus restoring degraded grassland outside the forest is important
- * Grassland helps to create healthy prey base for Lions
- * Big cats coexist with local population, productive grassland will minimise competition for natural resources between them
- * Rather than living in confined small patches of Land, dispersal of lion population in vast area of grassland helps to protect them from disease & natural disaster

As India committed to restore 26 million hectare of degraded Land, It can begin with restoration of grassland in Savannas