

PRODUCTIVE AND PROTECTIVE POTENTIAL OF FORESTS : A GROWING ROLE IN THE WELFARE OF SOCIETY

ALTAMASH BASHIR¹, MUMTAZ MAJEED, M. A. KHAN, K. N. QAISAR AND HILLAL AHMAD

*Faculty of Forestry, Sher-E-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir -
(Skuast- K) Shalimar, Srinagar , J&K, 191121, India*

¹*Corresponding author : altamashwani@gmail.com, altamashwani@rediffmail.com*

²*forestsaphire@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT: Forests are the world's most important and most valuable renewable natural resource and also repositories of terrestrial biological diversity. Forests are called the "lungs of the earth", and protect against climate change. Forestry as a sector plays a vital role in the socio-economic and rural development of the country apart from its role in maintaining ecological stability. Forests are a traditional source of a multitude of products particularly fuelwood, fodder, small and constructional timber and sustain a very large human population. Forests also provide year round supply of other minor forest products, e.g. fibres and flosses, lac, beedi leaves, a large variety of animal products, myrabolans, medicinal plants, resins, tannins, gums, non edible and essentials oils etc. The Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) besides playing a very important role in the country's economy also form the basic raw material for phyto-pharmaceuticals and various other industries. In the developing countries, more than 80% of the population depends on traditional plant-based medicines. Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) offer an excellent potential for international trade. The vast potential of forests to generate employment especially in rural areas, thereby contributing to rural incomes and poverty alleviation has remained unutilized. Forestry has potential to remediate many environmental problems such as erosion, salinity, desertification, land degradation and loss of biodiversity. Forests also have a vital role to play in soil and moisture conservation, amelioration of climate, control of floods and pestilence, harbouring a rich multitude of wildlife, macro-fauna and micro-organism. Forests help counteract the greenhouse effect and global climate change by taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it as carbon in biomass i.e. trunks, branches, foliage, and roots (carbon sequestration).

Key words : *Carbon sequestration, Ecological stability, Forests, Environmental problems, NTFPS*