

May 22, 2025 - International Day for Biodiversity



Abundant Green Wealth Reflecting the Vitality of the Western Ghats

The Northern Western Ghats, a UNESCO-recognized biodiversity hotspot is a land shaped by both ancient rhythms and modern disruptions. But if you listen carefully, the chorus has lowered in the area where dense forests once existed. Commercial fields and manicured plantations are now patching the hills, changing the tune of the song of the land!

However, slowly and quietly, something promising is happening. In the valleys and plains of Western Ghats, farmers are adopting Agroforestry again, a traditional practice re-emerging as a modern solution. This traditionally proven practice of Agroforestry is a great hope for a sustainable society as it brings forests back to farms to restore balance, secure livelihoods, and ensure a future where the wild can thrive alongside human prosperity.



Restore. Reconnect. Rewild — Link Fragmented Habitats Today

The Northern Western Ghats: A Region on the Edge

Western Ghats, famous for their diverse forest types and countless endemic life contains rain-fed forests, savannas, dry plateaus, and monsoon rivers which provide niches for diverse lifeforms, from Bioluminescent Fungi to Hornbills. However, nature's bounty that spans across the Western Ghats is also incredibly fragile.

Time has carved its impact and aggressive agriculture and ecologically unprofessional plantations have slowly eroded many wild patches, and Indian Bisons and Tigers are replaced by Mango Orchards and Sugarcane farms.

Conservation is not about fencing off land but about sharing natural spaces wisely. Agroforestry is one of the promising approaches allowing farms and forests to coexist. Local farmers who own private farmlands and community forests are at the centre of this effort.



Careful Planting Builds Climax Forests

Agroforestry: Reuniting Farming and Forests

Agroforestry is profound and straightforward. It includes growing economically important trees alongside crops and livestock. Intercropping creates a a layered, productive, and interactive landscape where fruit trees, vegetables, medicinal shrubs, and timber grow in harmony. This gives a slight echo of the original forest.

Instead of barren monocultures, Agroforestry system mimics nature's principles. These farms hum with life from birds nesting in canopies, bees pollinating blossoms, to rodents helping create natural groundwater recharge channels to allow water to seep into the soil. Such farms become vital green stepping stones, allowing wildlife to move between fragmented forests.

Every tree left standing is a bridge for life. Even today, over 200 bird species thrive in shade-grown coffee plantations and Areca nut gardens. Stunning creatures like the Great Pied Hornbill find sanctuary in the tall trees farmers preserve.



Planting Prosperity: Advancing Communities Through Agroforestry

Why Agroforestry Matters: Beyond the Farm

Agroforestry offers several sustainable benefits. Some are immediately experienced, while others develop over time.

- Biodiversity Revival: Trees bring back Birds, Butterflies, Bees, Insects, and with them, the resilience of the land. Several micro-habitats are created for pollinators like Bats. Several insect-eating animals act as natural pest controllers and find their homes here.
- Livelihood Stability: Multi-layered farming with Mangoes, Jackfruit, Kokum, Timber, and fodder offer farmers year-round, diversified income.
- Healing the Land: Roots help stabilize slopes, reduce runoff and prevent soil erosion allowing effective water seepage. Further, mineralization of leaf litter on the farm floor rejuvenates the degraded soil.
- Climate Resilience: Tree cover effectively stops extreme heat, fierce winds, and erratic rains. This green barrier also acts as a carbon sink, accumulating carbon in the trunk, roots, and soil.

Farmers previously used to treat trees as hindrances but now see them as natural partners. Traditional wisdom of planting natives has revived a sense of connection back to nature.

Seeds of Change: Stories from the Field

Raah Foundation promotes Agroforestry in the northern Western Ghats in collaboration with local communities. Multi layered food forests on degraded land patches are helping to restore ecosystems, enhance local biodiversity, stabilize soils, and effectively capture carbon. These sustainable green corridors are providing marketable products to farmers. This approach not only encourages biodiversity conservation but also integrates community livelihood and ecological restoration.



A Multi-Layered Agro-Ecosystem Supporting Indigenous Life Forms

A Greener Tomorrow: How You Can Help

The story of Agroforestry in the Western Ghats is still young, but its promise is clear: restoring forests to farms heals not just the land, but also the bond between people and nature.

You can be part of this change. Supporting agroforestry initiatives, advocating for tree-rich farming policies, or simply backing a farmer's efforts to regenerate their land can make an outsized difference.

These days, the Western Ghats are singing a softer tune. However, if we pay attention — and act — we might be able to amplify it once more.

Let's plant these seeds of change today for a greener, more biodiverse tomorrow!



Tomorrow's Forest Begin Today

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