

NATIONAL FOREST POLICY 2015



**GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
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Preamble

Under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973), the subject of Forestry falls in the provincial domain and under the respective provincial governments. The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir protect and manage forests in their jurisdiction. In FATA, the Federal Government is responsible for the Forestry sector through the FATA Secretariat, whereas in Gilgit-Baltistan GB Forestry is dealt by the Gilgit-Baltistan Council with a mandate given by Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009. The functions of the Federal Government pertaining to Forestry as per Federal Legislative List (Part-II) are limited to national planning and economic coordination, Inter-provincial matters and coordination and matters incidental or ancillary thereof. The Article 151 of the Constitution and Federal Legislative List (part-I) entitles the Federal Government to regulate import and export of wood and forest products, inter-provincial trade and commerce, and trade and commerce with foreign countries. Constitutionally, implementation of international conventions and agreements related to forests is the sole mandate of the Federal Government.

Forestry governance in the Indo Pak sub-continent has a long history since the late 19th century with the appointment of the first Inspector General Forests in 1896. Historically, Forestry remained a provincial subject even after independence of Pakistan. In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Forestry is purely a provincial subject and not impacted by the eighteenth amendment in the Constitution (2010). Roles and responsibilities of the Federal Government are embedded in provincial statutes such as NWFP Forest Ordinance (2002), Gilgit Private Forests Regulations (1970) and Forest Rules (1975) as well as in the West Pakistan Forest Manual (Volume-II).

The role of Forestry in climate change mitigation has been overwhelmingly recognized at the international level. Pakistan, as a party to international agreements and conventions, has various commitments and obligations related to forests which require national-level actions and the cooperation of all Provinces and Territories hereinafter referred to as Provinces and Territories. Specifically, the sections under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation REDD+ have to be dealt with at the national level to realize the benefits from this international financial mechanism. Similarly other multilateral financing mechanisms including Green Climate Fund (GCF) and bilateral funding require national level commitments and actions.

Forest Policy formulation at the national level has a long history with the announcement of the first Forest Policy of Pakistan in 1955, followed by the Forest Policies of 1962, 1975, 1980, and 1988 as part of the draft National Agricultural Policy, 1991, and the latest in 2010. The last policies of 2001 and 2010 were framed after extensive consultation with all Provinces and Federating units as well as leading experts and NGOs. Though these policies were not approved by the federal Cabinet yet these were implemented by all provinces and provided the basis for the promulgation of provincial Forest policies, namely the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KP Forest policy 1999. Other provinces are at various stages of promulgating their respective policy while they continue to follow the draft National Forest policies of 2001 and 2010. This Policy document is also the result of iterative consultation with Provinces and Federating units, and was amended repeatedly in the light of the comments of the provinces to make it a consensus document. The last inter-provincial workshop was held at Nathiagali during October 2015 in which representatives of KP, GB and FATA also participated (Annex I).

Although the National Climate Change Policy (2012) contains a number of Forestry related mitigation and adaptation measures, however forestry is much more than a source of carbon emission and sequestration as envisaged in the UNFCCC. Therefore it is imperative for the Government of Pakistan to promulgate a full-fledged umbrella Forest Policy which bolsters provincial forest policies. This Policy does not seek to intervene in provincial domains but is designed to be supportive to provincial forest policies and programmes. Most of the guidelines and measures contained in this Policy shall be applicable to the Federal Government within its constitutional mandate. Before eighteenth amendment in the Constitution (2010), the Federal Government had been supplementing Provinces and Territories in the form of technical and financial support in Forestry sector without a national forest policy. This Policy shall provide a legal basis for the Federal Government to arrange and extend support to all Provinces and Territories towards achieving their respective targets and meeting international obligations by filling their capacity and financial gaps.

Respective Provinces and Territories frequently face a large number of management and finance related issues that lead to the need for having an over arching National Forest Policy. Some of the key issues of Forestry sector at national level include (i) absence of national forest monitoring mechanism, (ii) unregulated inter-provincial movement and trade of timber, and (iii) absence of uniform standards for forest monitoring and assessment of growing stock in particular carbon stored in forests. Provincial Forest Departments frequently confront issues of transfer of forestlands for non-forestry uses, encroachments on forest lands, shortage of irrigation water, inter-sectoral conflicts, natural calamities and weak law enforcement and governance which generally do not fall in the federal domain. Moreover with the progress made in the Paris Agreement at COP 21 of the UNFCCC, forest carbon accounting has to be done at the national level while following the same standards otherwise forest carbon trading from Pakistan may not be permissible under international law.

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1. Goal

Expansion, protection and sustainable use of national forests, protected areas, natural habitats and watersheds for restoring ecological functions, improving livelihoods and human health in line with the national priorities and international agreements.

2. Policy Objectives

In line with the Federal functions of national policy, planning and implementation of international agreements, specific objectives of the National Forest Policy include:

- a) Promoting ecological, social and cultural functions of forests through sustainable management and use of forest produce including wood and non-wood forest products
- b) Implementing a national level mass afforestation programme to expand and maintain optimum forest cover
- c) Maximizing forest areas by investing in available communal lands/ shamlat, and Guzara forests and urban forestry
- d) Facilitating and harmonizing inter-provincial movement, trade and commerce of wood and non-wood forest products through the Federal Forestry Board
- e) Inter-linking natural forests, protected areas, wetlands and wildlife habitats to reduce fragmentation
- f) Enhancing role and contribution of forests in reducing carbon emissions and enhancing forest carbon pools
- g) Facilitating implementation of international conventions and agreements related to Forestry, Wetlands, Biodiversity and Climate Change
- h) Promoting standardized and harmonized scientific forest planning, research and education including for community-based management

3. Status and Issues

Pakistan is one of the low forest cover countries with only five percent of land area under forests and tree cover according to the last national assessment conducted in 2004. Major forest types include coastal mangroves, riverine forests, sub-tropical scrub forests, moist temperate conifer forests, dry temperate conifer forests and irrigated plantations including linear plantations. Pakistan is home to some of the world's most unique forests including Juniper, Deodar, Oak and Chilghoza forests. Ecosystem services of forests significantly impact physical and mental health of human beings for multiple benefits like medicinal plants, regulating water, controlling soil erosion, climate resilient safety nets and controlling infectious diseases. Forests also provide tremendous job opportunities for the forest dwelling communities thereby helping in alleviating poverty.

This policy also addresses the Sustainable Development Goals agenda by the United Nations General Assembly in the resolution adopted in September 2015, in particular goal 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Existing forest resources of Pakistan are inadequate for meeting domestic demands of wood for the increasing population of the country. Actual demand for wood is much higher than the annual increment of forests or potential sustainable supply. Moreover, forest owners and local communities depend on forests as the sole source of livelihood. Over the years, focus of investment in the Forestry sector has been on state owned forests and farm/community forestry, whereas communal lands, shamlats and in particular Guzara and privately owned forests have remained a low priority. Resultantly, forests in all provinces particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are under severe pressure. At the national level, rate of deforestation is estimated at 27,000 hectares per year which mainly occurs in private and community-owned natural forests. Deforestation in watershed areas has adversely impacted the yield and quality of water at outlets besides triggering land degradation and loss of biodiversity. In riparian, low-lying and coastal areas, deforestation amplify floods and facilitate sea water intrusion inflicting huge economic losses. Natural calamities and anthropogenic factors cumulatively result in loss of forest biodiversity in terms of diminishing number of species of fauna and flora.

Keeping in view the above this policy has a three pronged approach as below:

- a) Conserving the existing forests by curbing deforestation and promoting conservation.
- b) Bringing more trees in and outside forests by mass afforestation, involving all sections of the society. Particular focus will be on communal lands, shamlats and guzara forests.
- c) Meet International Obligations and Opportunities through scientific planning, Legal reforms and capacity building .

These approaches shall be met through the strategic actions as narrated in the foregoing sections.

4. Expand Forest Cover

a. Mass afforestation Programme

All provinces, FATA, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan routinely implement their respective tree planting programmes and projects from an annual budget. In addition, Capital Development Authority, National Highway Authority, and Armed Forces participate in seasonal tree planting campaigns with limited targets. On an average, a target of 70-80 million tree saplings is fixed annually at the national level which is absolutely insufficient to meet even domestic demands for wood. There is a dire need to undertake a long-term mass afforestation programme by Federal Government in collaboration with all Provinces and Territories through concerned national organizations. This includes investing in private, communal and Guzara forests by government, donor and private funding.

Policy Measures

- i. National organizations including Pakistan Railway, National Highway Authority, WAPDA, and Armed Forces shall prepare, sponsor and implement a long-term mass afforestation programme on federal lands in their jurisdiction
- ii. Federal Government shall sponsor mass afforestation programmes in FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan that may be implemented by concerned Forest Departments, concerned line departments and community based organizations
- iii. Provinces shall allocate a significant portion of National Finance Commission Award to achieve the objectives of this Policy, particularly protection and expansion of forests
- iv. Federal Government shall provide need-based support to all Provinces and Territories for implementation of their respective afforestation programmes
- v. Federal and Provincial Governments shall support local government in implementation of their respective afforestation and forest protection programmes and projects including urban forestry initiatives
- vi. Federally-sponsored programmes shall be regularly monitored and forest cover shall be assessed periodically by independent Third Party monitors
- vii. Special focus shall be on investing in privately owned, communal/ shamlat and Guzara forests.

b. Integrating Forests with Economic Sectors

The scope of Forestry has expanded tremendously in the past few decades in the wake of provincial and national environmental problems as well as global issues of climate change, loss of biodiversity and land degradation. The conventional treatment of Forestry as a stand-alone wood-producing sub-sector has been transformed into a cross-cutting subject impacting a number of economic sectors including water, energy, agriculture, non-timber forest products, health, housing, tourism and communication. It is, therefore, inevitable to integrate forestry with the development policies and programmes of these economic sectors at the level of planning, programming, and implementation.

Policy Measures

- i. Government of Pakistan shall not approve any project or programme of the sectors enlisted in Schedule-I of the Constitution without mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan
- ii. Proponents of all projects and programmes having significant carbon footprints shall allocate a portion of the total cost, depending upon level of emissions, towards establishment of forest carbon sinks, either onsite or off-site
- iii. Proponents of Large Dams projects shall allocate at least 1% of the total cost for watershed management including afforestation, regeneration, biodiversity conservation, wetlands restoration and bio-engineering to be completed before the Large Dam projects become operational

- iv. Proponents of the projects of construction and/or repairing of main and link canals shall include integral component of linear plantations with pre-allocated costs
- v. All national organizations, including the Armed Forces shall implement long-term afforestation programmes on the available lands in their possession
- vi. All Provincial and Territorial governments shall provide incentives for promoting farm forestry, urban forestry, commercial and industrial forestry by promoting private investments for increasing forests.
 - vii. Attention shall be paid to invest in privately owned, communal/ shamlat and Guzara forests.
- viii. Government shall promote inter-provincial, inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral cooperation for assessing impacts of forests on human health and for reducing associated costs by cooperative policies and actions

c. Ecological Corridors

Ecological corridor or Biological corridor is a continuous geographic extent that links [ecosystems](#), both spatially as well as functionally, to restore or conserve the connection between habitats that are otherwise fragmented by natural causes or human activities. Through the connection of fragmented habitats, the viability of animal and plant species is ensured. Ecological corridors or networks consist of core areas, buffer zone and interconnecting corridors. The core areas include existing or new protected areas which are surrounded by buffer zones which need to be interconnected.

The Government of Pakistan is establishing trans-boundary economic corridors that could be an excellent opportunity for interconnecting protected areas including wetlands alongside the length of economic corridors. These activities include protection, restoration, and regeneration of native species of plants and animals along both sides of the economic corridors. Depending upon the legal status of the land, management of ecological corridors will be done by government departments, local communities, armed forces and civil society organizations. The costs of ecological corridors shall be included as a component of infrastructure and power generation projects to ensure sustainability and balance the ecological footprints of heavy construction and minimize impacts of emissions from fossil fuels. Wetlands, and in particular, Ramsar sites are subject to tremendous pressure from ever increasing urbanization and lack of coordinated management. Effluents from infrastructure projects shall finally be landing in wetlands and therefore a dedicated agency to holistically deal with wetlands is needed to address and implement the policy.

Policy Measures

- i. All Provinces and Territories with the support of the Government of Pakistan shall manage sustainably existing protected areas and establish new protected areas where possible along the economic corridors.

- ii. The Federal Government and all Provinces and Territories shall promote concepts and practices of ecological corridors with an objective to minimize fragmentation of ecosystems.
- iii. The Government of Pakistan shall support interconnection and networking of natural forests, protected areas and wildlife habitats within provinces/territories and across inter-provincial boundaries.
- iv. The Government of Pakistan shall establish a trans-boundary ecological corridor on priority basis along Pakistan-China economic corridor which may be extended to Afghanistan, and Central Asia.
- v. The Government of Pakistan with the collaboration of Provinces and Territories shall ensure wise use of wetlands including Ramsar sites by designating dedicated agencies.
- vi. All Provinces and Territories/ Regions with the support of the Government of Pakistan shall ensure wise management of flood plains for restoration of riverine forests and coastal ecosystems.

5. Curb Deforestation and Promote Conservation

a. Regulating Inter-provincial Timber Movement, Commerce & Trade

The Provincial governments, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan Council have the legal mandate of managing forests, controlling illegal cutting of trees, regulating movement of timber and trade within their respective jurisdictions. However, in accordance with Article 151 of the Constitution and Federal Legislative List, the Federal Government is responsible for inter-provincial coordination on matters related to forests, import and export of wood across custom frontiers and inter-provincial trade of wood and non-wood products. These matters will be taken up by the Provinces and Territories with a facilitative role of the Ministry of Climate Change and all implementation shall remain the mandate of the Provinces and Territories.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government of Pakistan, in consultation with Provinces and Territories , shall define routes for movement of timber across custom frontiers
- ii. The Government of Pakistan shall establish a Federal Forestry Board with the mandate to coordinate and facilitate inter-provincial matters with the mutual consent of the Provinces and Territories.
- iii. The Federal Forestry Board shall adopt a system of timber certification, acceptable to all Provinces and Territories, to regulate inter-provincial trade, import and export of wood and other forest products
- iv. Wherever needed, the Government shall strengthen the Federal Forestry Board by providing physical assistance as accepted by the Provinces and Territories.

b. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation REDD+

Pakistan has a high rate of deforestation and forest degradation, particularly in Diamer District of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most of the conifer forests in these areas are either privately owned or communal. Local communities depend solely upon these forests for livelihood through commercial sale of wood. The Government has no mechanism to provide positive incentives to legal owners and right holders of these forests for not cutting trees, thereby providing global service of capturing carbon from the atmosphere. Under the agreement of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation & Forest Degradation REDD+, any action that reduces emission of carbon from forests is eligible for incentives. The Convention requires REDD+ to be implemented in three phases that is readiness, piloting and results-based payments. In phase three, which is likely to start in 2020, forest communities can get results-based payments under REDD+ for quantified and verified emission reduction from forests. A financial mechanism to ensure predictable financing as agreed in UNFCCC Conference of the Parties CoP-21 Decisions called the Paris Agreement for REDD+ shall be adopted when the same is ratified by the Government of Pakistan

The Government has taken a number of preparatory actions as required under the Convention including training of all Provinces and Territories and membership of related international and UN bodies. In Phase-I of REDD+, World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility FCPF and United Nations REDD Programme shall assist Pakistan in preparation of REDD+ national strategy, national forest monitoring system, national forest reference emission level and a national system of safeguard.

Policy Measures

- i. Government of Pakistan, with the support of Provinces and Territories, shall ensure implementation of REDD+ in accordance with the UNFCCC decisions and agreements as ratified by the Government of Pakistan and shall actively pursue funding from World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and UN-REDD. The benefits to be accruing from result-oriented REDD+ actions shall be transferred to legal owners and right holders of forests in accordance with the benefit distribution mechanism as prescribed in Pakistan's National REDD+ strategy.

c. Forest Ownership and Rights

In order to reverse the trend of deforestation, in particular from private and communal forests, all options shall be undertaken, including Payment for Ecosystem Services PES; retiring the rights to forests and purchase of privately owned forests and designating the same for sustainable use by present and future generations while protecting the rights of the right-holders. This shall be done with the prior informed consent of the forest owners and right holders.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government, with an aim to protect privately-owned and communal forests, and whenever needed, may purchase forests lands in Federally Administered Tribal Areas FATA or provide resources to the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK for purchase of forestlands in their jurisdiction under legal agreements. This shall be done by adequately compensating the rightful owners and right holders and with their consent.

- ii. The Government where applicable, may purchase privately-owned and communal forest lands in provinces or Territories/ Regions in consultation with respective Provinces and Territories.
- iii. The Government of Pakistan, where necessary, may purchase or trade-off rights of forest use on terms and conditions decided jointly by respective forest and revenue departments, forest associations and the Federal Government
- iv. The Government of Pakistan and all provinces shall secure traditional and customary rights of forest resource users

6. Promote Integrated Approach of Forests, Wildlife and Biodiversity Management

Natural and man-made forests are harbingers of wildlife and biodiversity and provide ecosystem services not only to human but also all other forms of life. Forest ecosystems are spread in mountains, deserts, terrestrial and marine wetlands in Pakistan. In addition, wetlands are home to fauna other than fishes and unique aquatic flora. These forests and ecosystems are managed by governmental manpower of one or more provincial departments such as Forest, Wildlife and/or Fisheries Department. Unfortunately each department has a system of management in isolation from other closely related departments/ disciplines. The contemporary scientific knowledge calls for taking a holistic approach or ecosystem approach to better achieve the objective of conservation and sustainable use.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government of Pakistan shall support all Provinces and Territories in synchronizing the effectiveness of forestry and wildlife departments at field level.
- ii. Provinces shall build the capacity of forest officers and staff on wildlife issues to ensure joint planning and management of forests and wildlife resources, and vice versa.
- iii. Provinces shall improve coordination among forests, wildlife, tourism, irrigation and fisheries departments.
- iv. Provinces shall consider making provincial wildlife and forestry postings interchangeable as appropriate, by revisiting the service structure of forest and wildlife departments in order to have a uniform or comparable service structure in all Provinces and Territories/ Regions.
- v. The Government of Pakistan shall support provinces in remedial actions including legislation for control of invasive alien species.
- vi. Provinces and Territories/ Regions, as well as the federation, shall consider establishment of Wetlands Management Authority/Authorities to reap the ecological benefits of wetlands and floods in particular for ground water recharge.

7. International Obligations and Opportunities

Forests provide the most cost effective and durable solution to the global issues of climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification. Hence, Forestry is treated as a cross-cutting subject under the three Rio Conventions viz: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification UNCCD, and the Convention on Biological Diversity CBD. The UNFCCC Agreements on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) shall provide opportunities to forest-dependent communities to get non-market incentives for controlling deforestation as well as market-based cash receipts for quantified and verified emission reductions from forests. Goal 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shall be pursued vigorously for compliance by Pakistan by tapping local resources as well as international funding.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government of Pakistan shall ensure effective engagement of Provinces and Territories and forestry professionals in the implementation of global obligations of Pakistan related to forests.
- ii. The Federal Government, Provinces and Territories/ Regions shall endeavor to mobilize international financing from GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources.

8. Scientific Planning, Policy & Legal Reforms

The Provinces and Territories have been following forest management planning that needs to be re-invigorated and updated regularly to meet the requirements of a fast changing world. Latest afforestation techniques and forest survey innovations shall be utilized. All Provinces and Territories shall update their forest monitoring system in line with globally accepted standards reforming forest management planning, policies and laws meeting national priorities and international standards.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government of Pakistan through the concerned provincial organizations shall promote scientific management of national forests and a consistent system of such management.
- ii. The Government of Pakistan, on the request of Provinces and Territories, shall arrange technical, human and financial support for policy and legal reforms, with the prime aim of achieving objectives of this umbrella National Forest policy.
- iii. The Government of Pakistan shall provide a national platform to all federating units, for exchange of knowledge and experience relevant to forest policies and laws.
- iv. The Government of Pakistan may provide necessary advice to Provinces and Territories to make their relevant policies and laws harmonized and conforming to international agreements.
- v. Establishment of an independent Forest Survey entity to ensure transparent and bias free reporting on forest areas and success of afforestation efforts shall be a priority.

9. **National Institution for Research, Education, Training and Monitoring**

National planning and programming necessitates availability of updated, accurate and authentic statistics related to large number of Forestry indicators. National objectives and international agreements frequently require advanced and applied research on various aspects of the Forestry sector and its nexus with water, agriculture, tourism and health sectors. All Provinces and Territories have a high demand for quality education, training and capacity development which meets world standards and satisfies national needs. International agreements, including UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Forum on Forests and regional agreements require regular monitoring and reporting on the status of national forests. There is an urgent need to establish a national institution as demanded by the Provinces and Territories. Pakistan Forest Institute PFI was discussed as an option, including the viable option of restoring the status of PFI to the era of its past glory.

Policy Measures

- i. The Government shall strengthen and re-invigorate the Pakistan Forest Institute as a national institution to promote advanced research in forestry, biodiversity and allied disciplines.
- ii. The research at PFI will be planned wisely to fulfill the needs of forestry and wildlife practitioners to meet the global standards. To this end, the Annual National Research Review Committee meeting of all Provinces and Territories to be held once a year at PFI or equivalent entity, shall be restored.
 - iii. Provinces and Territories shall meet and decide on designating a national entity for forestry research and in-service training or establishment of a new entity.
- iv. The National institution shall promote high-quality research & education by building linkages with regional and international forestry institutions.
- v. The National institution shall develop and maintain updated databases related to all aspects of forestry, biodiversity and allied disciplines, conduct periodic national forest assessment and publish state-of-the-art forest report after every 2 years.

10. **Economic Coordination and Sustainable Financial Support**

The implementation framework of the National Forest Policy shall include component wise financial requirements, annual phasing and sources of financing. On part of the Federal Government, following sequential measures and actions will be taken:

- a. Reflect in Five Year Plan / Mid Term Development Framework / Perspective Plans
- b. Allocate PSDP funds for Provincial afforestation programmes and projects
- c. Mobilize international funds from multilateral and bilateral sources

- d. Facilitate Results-based payments under REDD+

11. Implementation Mechanism

Following logical steps shall be followed for effective implementation of National Forest Policy:

- i. Ministry of Climate Change shall develop, in consultation with all stakeholders, an action plan for implementation of the National Forest Policy. The action plan will assign specific responsibilities to stakeholders with quantifiable targets to be achieved within a given timeframe.
- ii. The Federal Forestry Board shall be reactivated under the chairmanship of the Minister for Climate Change with a renewed mandate, composition, and functions.
- iii. The Federal Forestry Board shall report to the Government on the progress of National Forest Policy NFP on a six-monthly basis.
- iv. Provinces shall constitute inter-departmental NFP implementation committees and report their decisions to the Federal Forestry Board.
- v. The Federal Government shall undertake preparation of necessary legislation for implementing Federal components of this Policy, including for creation of new national institution and authority.
- vi. The Policy shall be reviewed after 5 years of its implementation and strategic decisions shall be taken accordingly.