

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP FOR DISCUSSING WAY FORWARD FOR EARLY START OF BAMBOO INDUSTRIES IN MEGHALAYA

Venue: MegARISE Conference Hall, Lumsohphoh, Nongthymmai, Shillong

Date: 20th September 2024

Time: 10:30 am onwards

BACKGROUND

Meghalaya is blessed with rich forest resources with 76% of its geographical area under forest cover (ISFR, 2021). The favourable soil, climate, varied topography and high rainfall have resulted in rich biodiversity and lush green landscapes in the State. The forest cover harbours a rich diversity of bamboo species. Some of the bamboo species found in the State are endemic to Meghalaya. Bamboo has been a significant part of India's socio-economic and cultural life, particularly in rural India. In India, bamboos account for around 12.8% of the total forest cover and are one of the largest bamboo resources in the world. India is home to 125 indigenous and 11 exotic species of bamboo belonging to 23 genera with more than 50% of them growing in Eastern and North-Eastern India. *Arundinaria*, *Bambusa*, *Chimonobambusa*, *Dendrocalamus*, *Dinorchloa*, *Gigantochloa*, and *Indocalamus* are a few of the major genera found in India (FSI, 2021). *Bambusa bambos*, *Bambusa balcooa*, *Bambusa cacharensis*, *Bambusa polymorpha*, *Bambusa nutans*, *Dendrocalamus asper*, *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii*, *Thyrostachys oliveri*, and *Melocanna baccifera* are a few of the significant commercial bamboo species grown in India (National Bamboo Mission). More than 50% of the bamboo species of the country are found in North Eastern part of India.

Since time immemorial people have been using bamboo in multiple ways like building material, crafts, furniture, fencing, etc as well as a delicacy in the form of vegetables and pickles. Besides that, bamboos are used in large-scale industries for the production of many new generation products. The socioeconomic life of the rural people in Meghalaya intricately depends on bamboo and its products to a great extent. Bamboo as a raw material and hand-made products has enhanced the livelihood of the people in the State. The bamboo, moreover offers a large potential for creating significant income generating opportunities for the people of the State by utilizing bamboo resources for various new products by setting up small, medium and large enterprises. Besides having high economic and market value, it also helps in mitigating various environmental problems like protecting soil from erosion, carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation. Although abundant quantity of bamboo is available as a resource for the livelihoods of the rural and tribal population of the State, the availability of the bamboo processing units and product manufacturing segment is significantly less. Recently, a detailed bamboo

resource inventory of the State was carried out by the Centre of Excellence for NRM and Sustainable Livelihoods, MBDA, which was based on sample plot data of more than 7200 plots. This study has provided details of almost all species in Meghalaya which included the availability (in metric tonnes), the district-wise bamboo stock for each important species and the Sustainably Harvestable Yield of commercially important species. Bamboo is truly a 'green gold' as its inherent traits include pest resistance, drought resistance, environmental benefits (carbon sequestration), soil protection, fast growth and immense economic potential. Since there is a good choice of species suitable for wide range of bamboo-based products, there is immense potential for creating a sizable bamboo based bioeconomy in the State.

OBJECTIVES

The broad objectives of the consultative workshop are as follows:

- To inform the potential entrepreneurs/ industrialists about the bamboo resource availability and the policy environment in the State and encourage them to plan establishing bamboo-based industry in the State.
- To discuss way forward for early start of bamboo industries in Meghalaya.
- To explore the emerging bamboo-based industrial products and their market linkages suitable for Meghalaya.
- To receive inputs/ feedback from the industries for further facilitation in terms of policies, infrastructure and raw material availability from the State Government.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Bamboo-based enterprises can yield a range of positive outcomes across economic, environmental, and social dimensions. Some key outcomes associated with these enterprises include:

Economic

1. **Business Growth and Profitability:** Bamboo products can offer competitive advantages due to their sustainability and uniqueness, potentially leading to strong market demand and profitability.
2. **Job Creation:** Bamboo-based enterprises can create employment opportunities in various sectors, including farming, manufacturing, design, and retail.
3. **Diversification:** They can diversify economic activities in the State, help local economies by providing new revenue streams.
4. **Innovation and Market Expansion:** Businesses in this sector often drive innovation, developing new products and applications for bamboo, which can open up new markets and consumer segments.

Environmental Outcomes

1. **Sustainability:** Bamboo is a fast-growing, renewable resource that requires less water and grows in almost all kinds of soils in the State.
2. **Carbon Sequestration:** Bamboo absorbs carbon dioxide more efficiently than many other plants, helping to mitigate climate change.
3. **Soil Health and Erosion Control:** Bamboo's extensive root system helps in preventing soil erosion and improving soil fertility, which can be beneficial for land restoration and sustainable agriculture.
4. **Reduction of Plastic Waste:** By providing alternatives to plastic through bamboo-based products like cutlery and packaging, plastic pollution can be reduced.

Social Outcomes

1. **Community Development:** Bamboo-based enterprises can contribute to community development by providing stable income sources, supporting local artisans, and fostering economic growth in rural areas.
2. **Cultural Preservation:** Many traditional crafts and practices involving bamboo help in maintaining cultural heritage.
3. **Improved Living Standards:** Employment opportunities and the economic benefits generated by bamboo-based enterprises can lead to improved living standards and better quality of life for the local communities.
4. **Educational Opportunities:** Training and education related to bamboo cultivation and product development can empower individuals with valuable skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability and entrepreneurship potential.

Considering the multi-faceted benefits offered by the bamboo-based enterprises, the Government of Meghalaya has identified bamboo sector as a priority. The new Industrial Policy adopted by the State along with other enabling activities such as strengthening of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and bamboo-craftsmen SHGs network, State-wide bamboo resource assessment may herald a significant bamboo industry development in the State. The workshop aims to provide a trigger for the same.