

NATIONAL FOREST POLICY 2001

Preamble

This policy covers the renewable natural resources (RNR) of Pakistan i.e. Forests, Watersheds, Rangelands, Wildlife, Biodiversity and their habitats. The policy seeks to launch the active participation of all the concerned agencies and stakeholders, to realize the sustainable development of the resources. It is an umbrella policy providing guidelines to the Federal Government, Provincial Governments and territories for the management of their RNR. In consonance with it the Provincial and District Governments may devise their own policies in accordance with their circumstances.

Goal

The goal of this policy is to foster the sustainable development of RNR of Pakistan, for the maintenance and rehabilitation of its environment and the enhancement of the sustainable livelihoods of its rural masses especially women, children and other deprived groups.

Elements

The elements of the policy shall be as follows:

1. Reducing the impact of socio-economic causes

1.1 Population planning in critical eco-system

The population planning agencies in Federal, Provincial, and Local Governments and NGOs shall formulate and implement culturally appropriate strategies and action plans of invigorating population planning programmes in critical ecosystems such as the wooded mountains, arid coastal and estuarine environments.

1.2 Providing substitutes of firewood in the wooded mountains

- As their contribution to the rehabilitation of environment, all the concerned government agencies and international and national firms shall extend the supply of piped natural gas, LPG, solar energy and micro-hydel power to the wooded mountains.

- All agencies conducting research on domestic energy shall be assisted to focus high priority research on reducing the cost and increasing the acceptability of substitutes to firewood such as solar energy, biogas, local coal etc.

1.3 Reducing poverty, poverty of opportunity, and powerlessness

- In the poverty alleviation and other development programmes, high priority shall be given to integrated land use projects for the sustainable rehabilitation of RNR with the participation of organized local communities. Such projects not only provide employment to the rural poor but also improve the environment and increase the supply of firewood and fodder.
- Federal, Provincial and District Governments shall target the poverty of opportunity in the wooded mountains and other critical environments through effective and efficient programmes for health and education improvement, particularly of women and children. Such programmes, beside reducing poverty of opportunity, will also keep women and children away from practices deleterious to forests and biodiversity.
- Forests should not only be valued for revenue generation through timber harvesting; and fuel wood collection; but also for the sustainable utilization of non-wood forest products such as medicinal plants, mushrooms, wild honey, gums, wild fruits and nuts through participatory involvement of local communities as income generating activities for the rural masses.

2: Reducing political interference in the Forestry and Wildlife Departments

2.1 Safeguards against interference

Government shall maintain and improve the status of professionals relating to RNR to ensure the realization of the goals of this policy. Interference of non-professionals in the affairs of RNR management shall be eliminated.

Government shall express their commitment to this policy by institutionalizing mechanisms for ensuring safeguards for professionals in the discharge of their responsibilities, transparency and accountability at different levels.

3. Renovating and invigorating the institutions of RNR

3.1 Restoring the effectiveness of the Forestry Wing at the Federal level

The Forestry Wing of the Ministry of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development headed by the Inspector General of Forests shall be strengthened by enhancing its status; and capacity for the implementation of this policy and effectiveness, inter provincial coordination and meeting national and international obligations.

3.2 Improving other institutions and departments for the sustainable development of forests, wildlife and biodiversity resources

It shall be the policy of Government of improve the institutions responsible for education, research, management and extension in RNR where they exist, and to create them where they do not exist. Critical needs in the context are: upgrading the Pakistan Forest Institute and other institutions to impart quality education and relevant research in the conservation and management of forests, biodiversity, as well as grazing-lands; to carry out institutional transformation in the Forestry and Biodiversity sub-sectors; and to assign responsibilities to existing agencies or devise new institutions for conducting effective extension and management of grazing lands.

4. Supporting Local Governments in the sustainable development of their RNR

Since the District Government System offers a unique opportunity for adopting the sustainable development RNR through participatory village land-use planning, it shall be the policy of Governments to launch and vigorously pursue this endeavour. Such support shall comprise inclusion of RNR in the training visualized under the System for its elected members, government functionaries, and office-bearers and village activists of organized rural communities; and special grants for the sustainable development of RNR from District, Provincial, Federal and donor sources; especially from the poverty alleviation programmes.

5. Policies for fragile eco-systems

The ecologists have divided Pakistan into several eco-systems. Many of these have become fragile under human pressure and other physio-climatic processes. The government shall encourage conservation and restoration of

these fragile eco-systems with specific emphasis on the following:

5.1 Mountain forests

Mountain forests are critically important to Pakistan. They provide a carbon sink to mitigate global warming, are repositories of invaluable biodiversity, safeguard water supplies, retard loss of soil and water from watersheds thereby reducing the siltation of waterways and water storage reservoirs, and afford sustenance to large human communities and their livestock. Government shall therefore formulate and implement the following policies to significantly improve the conservation and sustainable management of RNR in the mountain forests to enable them to perform their functions more effectively.

– Establishing Protected Area

The role of Protected Areas in conserving the ecological character of representative samples of various eco-systems is well recognized. This policy shall encourage the Provincial Governments to create, effectively managed protected areas networks in areas under their control seeking the needed financial and technical assistance from the Federal Government.

It shall also be the policy of Federal Government to provide grants out of poverty alleviation programmes to rural communities depending on such forests for firewood and fodder; for growing these commodities on their village land through the participatory approach.

Appropriate institutional mechanisms shall be devised for the collaborative management of such protected areas with the local communities in order to give them an economic and environmental stake in the endeavor.

– Commercial timber harvesting and sustainable management in Reserved, Protected, Guzara, Demarcated and Private forests

Provincial Governments may resume sustainable commercial timber harvesting in the Reserved, Protected, Guzara and Private Forests with the following conditions:

Commercial timber harvesting shall only be resume in those areas whose right-holders and owners undertake to fully participate in the management and regeneration of their forests in

association with the Forest Department, with due regard to meeting the minimum sustainable needs of the non-right-holders to the extent of the productive capacity of each forest.

- II. The essential criteria for classifying forests into commercial and non-commercial categories shall not only be stocking but terrain and need for regeneration also; and a creditable guarantee from the owners, right-holders and users that they will ensure the regeneration of the forests by affording them protection from grazing, fires and other sources of injury.
- III. The principal objective of commercial timber harvesting in the above forests shall be poverty alleviation through providing income to the owners and right holders and to prime economic activity through generating local employment. To further the attainment of the latter objective it shall be the policy of Provincial Government to train the local people in all timber harvesting operations and encourage and enable them to take on small timber harvesting contracts on the pattern successfully demonstrated in the Kalam and the Kaghan projects.
- IV. Since effective regeneration and not the protection of old trees is the sine qua non of sustainable commercial forestry, the utmost emphasis shall be on the establishment of adequate regeneration. This shall be ensured by devising and implementing an appropriate system of incentives and disincentives for the owners, right-holders, and users of forests, and the Forest Department functionaries.
- V. Provincial Governments and forest owners shall provide the necessary resources to rehabilitate the degraded sites in these forests.

5.2 Mangroves

Riverain forests are pitiable remnants of the extensive woodlands that once fringed the rivers of Pakistan. It shall therefore be the policy of Government to manage these forests in a sustainable manner primarily for the maintenance of their environment and biodiversity, and secondarily for meeting the needs of wood using industry, with consideration of revenue subordinated to both.

The existence and development of riverain forests are dependent on the receipt of inundation water from Indus on sustainable basis. This fact must be considered while planning any future up-stream storages on the River Indus.

Highlying areas in riverain forests be irrigated by using lift irrigation techniques through the involvement of the local communities. Harvesting in such areas may only be undertaken in those locations which are likely get inundated the following year.

7. Irrigated Plantations

The most important functions of irrigated forest plantations in the desert eco-system are as carbon sinks to mitigate global warming and as repositories of biodiversity. These plantations alongwith canal and road side plantations provide habitat for a variety of biodiversity and must be managed primarily for biodiversity conservation and eco-tourism development.

Provincial Governments may ensure the adequate funds for their scientific management and the improvement of their irrigation systems.

8. Preservation of relict and unique forests

Relict forests and their biodiversity are an invaluable cultural heritage of Pakistan, indicative of the mighty forests and their biodiversity, which once covered the mountains of Balochistan and Northern Areas. It shall therefore be the policy of Government to preserve these forests and their biodiversity primarily for research, education, maintenance of local environment, and controlled eco-tourism; in partnership with organized rural communities where advisable, providing them their minimum sustainable subsistence needs from the forests, along with appropriate incentives in return for their active participation in the regeneration and protection of the forests. Such forests include the juniper, chilghoza and blue pine forests of Balochistan, the spruce forests of Naltar in Northern Areas, and other such forests.

8.1 Juniper forests of Balochistan

The juniper forests of Balochistan are unique in having survived as remanants of once extensive forests covering its high mountains, in spite of overwhelming odds such as heavy uncontrolled grazing and removal of wood by the local communities for use as fuel and timber. Besides their scientific

significance they also harbor a unique biodiversity, protect the watersheds of the apple growing tracts, and enhance the scenic beauty of the tract for tourism.

The Provincial Government, with financial assistance from the Federal Government, shall enable the conservation and sustainable management of these forests in participation with the local communities by providing them such incentives as access to substitute fuels, effective extension in fodder production, livestock health and nutrition and herd management, beside imparting them appropriate skills, which will enhance their livelihoods and thus reduce their dependence on the forests for consumptive uses.

8.2 Chilghoza forests of Balochistan

The chilghoza forests of Balochistan comprise the largest pure stands of chilghoza pine in the country. Their survival is being threatened by the unsustainable demands of the residents of about a hundred remote villages for timber, fuel wood, grazing, and edible pine nuts.

To save these forests from extinction, the Provincial Government, with financial assistance of the Federal Government, shall launch appropriate development schemes, on the same lines as for the juniper forests.

8.3 Spruce forests

Nalter forest, about 45 km away from Gilgit town, comprises of spruce, blue pine and juniper species is already declared as Wildlife Sanctuary. The forest is famous for having good number of wild animals and birds including Ibex, Chakore and Ram Chakore. The people living around have rights and concessions for collection of timber and fuel wood for domestic purpose. The dry and dead fallen trees are being allotted to the concessionist on demand subject to the verification by the department. The Nas Government may ensure the protection of these forest against unsustainable use by providing alternate living sources to the owners and developing all possible substitutes for fuel wood, fodder, developing integrated resource mangement and linking the area with market etc.

9. Wildlife

The Federal Government may provide financial, technical and operating support to the provincial wildlife departments for implementation of international treaties and convention i.e. CITES, CBD, CMS, Ramsar convention in provincial

territories, and for the protection, preservation and conservation of the threatened species of wildlife and their habitats.

Since training institutions for advance professional training/studies in wildlife are non-existent in Pakistan, the Federal Government may ensure adequate financial assistance for training of officers and staff of provincial wildlife departments for advanced professional studies in over seas institutions to build up the professional capacity of the department. Simultaneously the Government may enhance the capacity of Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar to enable to offer education in wildlife management at the master level.

10. Rangelands and desert eco-systems

10.1 Sub alpine and alpine rangelands and meadows

Sub alpine and alpine rangelands and meadows constitute one of the most productive and fragile ecosystems of the country. Millions of livestock graze this area seasonally for 3 to 4 months continually. Over grazing is not only depleting the productivity of the ecosystem but is also setting in heavy erosion causing their permanent degradation. Wildlife in this area is in direct competition with livestock and is consequently a loser. Many species in this eco-system particularly snow leopard and must deer have become endangered.

The Federal Government may provide financial and technical assistance to Provincial Governments for conservation and rehabilitation of this eco-system. This may include inventories on range management, habitat restoration and wildlife conservation.

10.2 Semi-arid and arid rangelands

Semi-arid and arid rangelands in Pakistan cover about 30% of its total land area. Un-controlled over-grazing and up rooting the shrubs for fuel wood is converting the area into deserts. Government of Pakistan shall provide financial assistance to the District Governments for undertaking the rehabilitation and sustainable management of such lands. It shall also provide facilities for education in Range Management as for Wildlife Management (para-9).

10.3 Desertification control

Deserts in the country are expanding at a rate of 1-5 km per year. The menace of encroaching deserts in engulfing productive agricultural land,

blocking the roads and railway tracks and human settlements.

Provincial Governments may develop programmes and strategies to tackle the menace. Federal Government may also provide technical and financial assistance to combat desertification. The most critical areas may be declared as protected areas meant for biodiversity conservation with minimum utilization as rangelands. Necessary incentives may be designed to enlist the participation of the local communities.

11. Planting of trees and fodders on farmlands

Since the over – exploitation of natural regeneration as fuel and fodder is the main cause of the ecological retrogression of Pakistan, the Federal and Provincial Governments shall encourage and assist the District Governments in their programmes of growing forest trees and fodders on farmlands with the participation of their owners.

12. General

12.1 Monitoring and evaluation system

In order to monitor the changes in forest cover both on public and private lands with the involvement of all the stakeholders especially local communities and NGOs, an effective monitoring and evaluation system is badly needed for future policy, planning and implementation purposes. Government of Pakistan may encourage and provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to establish a monitoring system based on the state of the art techniques e.g. like GIS and remote sensing at Federal, Provincial, and District Government levels.

ACTION PLAN

After this policy is approved, the full policy process shall be initiated to ensure its implementation and review, including the passing of any legislation that may be required, the issue of the requisite notifications and the provisions of fund etc. The implementation of this policy shall be initiated in the following manner.

1. Responsibilities

1.1 Federal level

At the Federal level the Inspector General of Forests shall be responsible for initiating actions indicated below. He shall be responsible for monitoring the progress of their implementation and submitting a report on its state at the end of each calendar year to the Federal Forestry Board (FFB). He shall initiate necessary action for areas under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

1.2 Provincial levels

At the Provincial level this responsibilities shall rest with respective Provincial Forest and Wildlife Departments including the incharge departments of AJK and NAs.

2. Priming the action

Government shall implement this policy through the following stages.

2.1 Inclusion in the policy agenda and initiation of action on it

The Minister of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development shall steer this draft policy through prescribed channels to secure its final approval and inclusion in the policy agenda of Federal Government.

Following the approval of the Federal umbrella policy, the Provincial/AJK/NA governments shall formulate their policies in consonance with it and in accordance with their specific circumstances and needs and secure its final approval from the respective governments.