





























































































Trees and plant species selected for social forestry should conform to the following criteria; trees should be fast growing, early maturing and yielding; they should have multiple usages (for food, fodder, fuel, manures); the tree trunk should be strong and stout; the species should be suited to climate and soil of the place; they should have dense foliage; they should possess the capacity to tolerate adverse climate and soil conditions; they should be in early spring and not in summer; they should not have prominent thorns; and their planting and care should be easy and economical.

Trees can be grouped according to people's requirements. For the selection of trees, people should identify locally available species first and only then go for exotic species. This principle should always be kept in mind before a species is selected for social forestry.

## **Agroforestry**

Agroforestry is a modified, expanded version of social forestry. "Agroforestry is a system of land use where woody perennials are deliberately used on the same land management units as annual agricultural crops and/or animals, rather sequentially or simultaneously, with the aim of obtaining greater outputs on a sustained basis," Agroforestry, as the definition suggests, refers to an old land practice where land is used for agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry purposes at the same time.

The planting of trees may aid farmers since tree roots can bind soil and limit soil erosion, deep-rooted trees can tap new nutrient sources, leguminous trees can fix atmospheric nitrogen and improve soil fertility, leaf litter can add organic matter, and tree cover can moderate temperatures. In addition, trees may provide food, fodder, firewood and timber.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has listed agri-silvicultural, agri-pastoral and agri-silvi-pastoral systems as components of the agroforestry system. The social/farm/agroforestry programmes cover massive afforestation

programmes. Every village/town/city is supposed to meet firewood, fodder and small timber requirements by growing trees/shrubs in the land available in a cooperative system.

Agroforestry can be of benefit to farmers by providing them with firewood, timber and bamboo for building purposes, fodder, green manure and mulching material, and additional income if they choose to sell any of the surplus products. By making fuel and fodder available, it also saves women from having to go long distances to collect them otherwise. It is environmentally beneficial as the trees act as wind-breaks, help in controlling soil erosion, increasing moisture conservation and organic matter content of the soil.

Trees may be planted in uncultivable portions of the land, on the boundaries (where their branches should be chopped so they grow straight upward), on bunds, on the lower side of a catchment area, in water logging areas, in saline and alkali soils, along with shade-loving plants such as cardamom, turmeric, coffee, tea, black-pepper etc., and, of course, along roads, surroundings of farm houses, and at appropriate gaps, on fodder fields.

Care must be taken to prune the trees so that excessive shade is avoided. Hence, in agroforestry, fruit trees are best avoided. Timber trees, firewood and fodder trees, bamboo and fibre trees are most suitable. Fruit trees, too, may be grown if shade does not matter. Coconut and other palms are useful trees in agroforestry as they provide several useful products all at once even as their structure is suitable for the purpose.