

Celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought-2023

Venue: Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management, ICFRE Dehradun, India

Date: 17th June 2023

The Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Land Management (CoE-SLM), Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun organised a workshop on June 17th, 2023, to commemorate World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The workshop aimed to advance gender equality and land restoration goals under the theme "Her Land. Her Rights." The Centre was inaugurated by Shri Bhupender Yadav, Hon'ble Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India on 20th May 2023. The centre aims to facilitate the restoration of degraded lands, achieving land degradation neutrality and promoting South-South cooperation.

Esteemed environmentalists Padma Shri Smt. Jamuna Tudu from Jharkhand and Padma Shri Smt. Basanti Devi from Uttarakhand were key participants at the workshop, sharing their invaluable experiences in conserving forests in Jharkhand and reviving the Kosi River in Uttarakhand, respectively. Their insights and achievements highlighted the critical role of individuals in driving positive change for the environment. The workshop was inaugurated by Shri C.P. Goyal Director General of Forest and Special Secretary Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India. Shri Goyal in his Inaugural address stressed on achieving land degradation neutrality and sustainable land management through strong community involvement and cooperation at regional, national and international levels.

In his address, Shri. Arun Singh Rawat, Director General, ICFRE, emphasized the importance of gender equality and concerted global efforts to protect, restore, and sustainably use terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and address biodiversity loss. He also thanked UNCCD for the support it has extended to the CoE-SLM and showed his interest in strengthening the collaboration through an MoU.

Prominent speakers at the workshop included Sudha S. (IFS), Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, who delivered a talk on land use planning and assessment of ecosystem services for landscape restoration. Smt. Shruti Sharma, Former PCCF&HoFF, Government of Rajasthan, shared her experiences on eco-restoration and drought resilience. Dr. R.S. Rawat, Scientist, ICFRE, shared experiences on empowering women for scaling up sustainable land management practices in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Dr Ishwar Narayanan delivered a talk on global insights into women's land rights.

On this occasion, the Director General of Forest and Special Secretary released the "National Working Plan Code-2023." This code will serve as a guiding principle for State Forest Departments in preparing working plans for different forest divisions across the country. The National Working Plan Code-2023 provides comprehensive guidance on the essentials of forest management planning, incorporating the principles of sustainable forest management.

The workshop was attended by officers from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, representatives of UNCCD and IUCN, directors of ICFRE institutes, and other esteemed scientists. Their collective presence underscored the importance of gender equality, land restoration, and sustainable forest management in addressing the challenges of desertification, drought, and land degradation.