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## Bamboo forest regeneration efforts planned in Chhattisgarh

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For the past 14 years, artisan [Deepak Dewangan](#) has been weaving magic out of bamboo. Based in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh which falls under the Bastar division, Dewangan has been making bamboo lamps, wind chimes and planters. But lately, it is becoming difficult to procure the quantity of bamboo needed to manufacture his handicraft items, the artisan said. “When it comes to crafts, the idea of using [old bamboo](#) is great. But bamboo takes time to give yields as harvesting starts from the fifth year. Moreover, it is not available in every village in the district. These days, it is becoming difficult to procure bamboo through the forest department as well. Besides, the department has mostly thin bamboo and I need thicker ones for my work; at times bamboo is simply not available at all, and even if available, it finishes fast,” Dewangan rued.

The artisan informed Mongabay-India that he had always made it a point to collect bamboo in the villages where it is mostly found in backyards. “I cut the bamboo myself and the time spent on it depends on the variety. To get the one with [kanta or thorns](#) is difficult and time consuming but my work needs this variety only. It is tougher than other varieties.”



Bamboo is a major species on which local people depend for livelihood. Photo by Chhattisgarh Forest Department.

Chhattisgarh's total forest cover stands at 44 percent, out of which bamboo forest amounts to 17 percent, according to the forest department's bamboo revival plan.



As of [2018](#), Chhattisgarh had more than 59 lakh (59,72,200) hectares of recorded forest area. Of this, 11 lakh (11,06,000) hectares is bamboo-bearing area within the state's forest area.

However, the production capacity of bamboo forests has declined due to factors like illegal harvesting, absence of forest management, reduction in soil moisture, forest fires, lack of proper protection, and illegal grazing. In many places, bamboo forests are now vanishing.



The Chhattisgarh forest department has identified three types of bamboo forests to increase productivity and regenerate degraded forests throughout the state. Photo by Chhattisgarh Forest Department.

### **Chhattisgarh's bamboo revival plan**

As bamboo is a major species on which local people depend on for livelihood, the Chhattisgarh forest department has identified three types of bamboo forests to increase productivity and regenerate degraded forests throughout the state. Besides handicrafts, bamboo is used to make various useful kitchen items and baskets. It is also used by villagers to construct fences around their homes.

Dewangan added that the forest department's idea to regenerate bamboo is a good step. "Prices of bamboo logs have increased. This means artisans like me are at risk. Increased rates will also affect villagers who use bamboo for other purposes," he informed.

According to the state forest department, altogether one lakh hectares (100,000 ha) have been identified for restoration and rehabilitation across the state for a period of five years (2021-22 to 2025-26). Year-wise, 20,000 ha will be taken up depending on the suitability of lands. A natural resource, bamboo forest has been depleted in many areas of the state due to continuous harvesting.

The areas identified are of various kinds — there are regions where bamboo was available 40 years ago, but not found anymore; then there are degraded bamboo forests where planting can take place only after selecting suitable open areas based on field visits. In degraded bamboo forests spread

over 3.14 lakh ha (314,000 ha) of the state, the clumps are often found damaged, cut, broken and burnt, thus being unfit for commercial exploitation. In such areas, soil moisture conservation can be carried out to boost the productivity of bamboo clumps. Another 3.71 lakh ha (371,000 ha) of the state is productive bamboo area.



Altogether, one lakh hectares have been identified for restoration and rehabilitation across Chhattisgarh for a period of five years. 20,000 ha will be taken up yearly, depending on the suitability of lands. Photo by Chhattisgarh Forest Department.

To help the forest department, former Indian forest service officer B.P. Nanhore has prepared a detailed project report. In this, he has been assisted by field officers and divisional forest officers in each circle. “We collected data from the field and concluded how much bamboo has been degraded in the past 40 years (1982 to 2020) based on working plans. Bamboo has a life span of 40 years. After that, the plants die and new ones regenerate in the forest,” Nanhore added.

Bamboo is cut in the extensive natural forests available in Chhattisgarh and then brought to depots from where it is sold at subsidised rates. Industrially, bamboo is used for [making paper](#). When new shoots come out during June-July, villagers use them as vegetables or prepare pickles out of them. Nanhore added that bamboo is important in the forest. “When bamboo is damaged, other species occupy its place.”

Entrepreneur [Dave Mukherjee](#) based in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh is popularising the *Bambusa bambos* species through his company Artison Agrotech. According to him, this Indian species of bamboo has the highest density in the world.

“Though bamboo is a grass, it is propagated from seeds. After the creation of bamboo seedlings, farmers are given these for use in agro forestry model where other crops like wheat, cotton and soybean are also grown along with bamboo. I enter into an agreement with farmers for 40 years and buy back the produce from them. There are about 10,500 farmers across Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat,



Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan,” he said. His company manufactures particle boards and processed engineered [bamboo boards](#).



Bamboo is used to make a number of useful things like kitchen items and baskets. Photo by Chhattisgarh Forest Department.

### **Why bamboo?**

Bharathi Nambi of plant biotechnology company [Growmore Biotech](#) based in Hosur, Tamil Nadu, said that bamboo forests are cooler, bamboo stands arrest soil erosion and aid in raising the water table.

“Also, as bamboo sheds four tonnes of leaves per acre per year, it improves soil fertility and people can use it to make compost,” he said.

In Chhattisgarh, a five-year project plan for the revival of bamboo forests was approved in the 2021-22 annual plan of operations (APO). Divisional forest officers have been issued funds for the same and nursery preparations have also started. Most field work is planned after Diwali in October/November 2021.

Divisional forest officer of Dantewada forest division Sundeep Balaga said revival will be done through bamboo rhizomes. For his division, 15,000 rhizomes have been ordered and will be doubled to 30,000. The funding received is Rs. 10 lakh (Rs. one million). A total budget of Rs. 11.68 crore (Rs. 116.8 million) has been allotted for 23 forest divisions of the state for the current APO.



In Durg, there is a target of two lakh rhizomes covering 200 ha, said DFO Dhammshil Ganvir. It is at the nursery level and from July onwards, work will pick up. Photo by Chhattisgarh Forest Department.

Chhattisgarh principal chief conservator of forests Rakesh Chaturvedi said the state used to have natural bamboo forests, but they have vanished in districts such as Kawardha, Durg, Gariaband and Raigarh. "We will also grow herbal and medicinal plants as intermediate ones along with bamboo. Bamboo should be reintroduced where it used to be present."

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Source:<https://india.mongabay.com/2021/06/bamboo-forest-regeneration-efforts-planned-in-chhattisgarh/>