

Source: Saurav Kumar, 'Mangrove Conservation Project Proves a Win Win Situation for Kutchis', Indian Express, March 2008

Himachal Pradesh

Pine Monocultures Make Way for Biodiversity

Fifteen years ago the hillside of Karsog Tehsil in Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh was covered with pine mono cultures. The officials of the Forest Department (FD) preferred pine as it is not eaten by cattle, grows quickly after a fire, is hardy, requires minimum effort and has a good survival rate. Another thing in favour of the pine monoculture was and still is the fact that the pine resin industry employs 40,000 people in the state.

The local people however preferred a variety of broad leaved species in the forest which provided them with fodder for their cattle and organic fertilizer for their fields. The pine monoculture provided neither; moreover the highly inflammable pine needles increased the chance of forest fires manifold. In 1992-93, fed up with their lack of access to their forests and its changing nature, the local women decided what trees they wanted in their forests and worked towards replacing the monoculture with a more biodiverse mix of trees. The initiative has now spread to 80 forest committees all over Karsog. And today the pine monoculture in the area has been replaced by a more biodiverse forest consisting of amla (*Indian gooseberry*), pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) as well as oak (*Quercus incana*) and other fodder providing trees.

Today the villagers say, that where the community forest committees are strong, the FD cannot ignore the community any longer and the local community is consulted and a variety of trees are planted along with the pine trees.

Source: Archita Bhatta, 'Banking on Variety', Down to Earth, November 2007