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# 'Involve farmers in fight against climate change'

Gargi Parasi

**NEW DELHI:** A regional consultation on agro forestry on Thursday underscored the need for enabling policies to ensure that farmers get technology and financial incentives to integrate trees and shrubs on farmland for developing resilience to climate change.

"India has the most progressive agro forestry policy in the world," Director-General of Kenya-headquartered CRAF (World Agro forestry Centre) Tony Simons told *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the conference here. "This needs to be followed up with investments and better coordination between States."

"There is a lot of degraded and farm land without trees in India. The key is to add trees to the landscape," he said. Agro forestry is defined as a land use system which integrates trees and shrubs on farmlands and rural landscapes to enhance productivity, profitability, di-

versity and ecosystem sustainability. It is practised in both irrigated and rain-fed conditions and is an important component for bringing about resilience in agriculture to face up to climatic changes.

Mr. Simons does not believe Indian farmers need to earn carbon credits especially the ones with small holdings so long as the country moves in the direction of increasing its green cover. "The important thing is to align the needs of small farmers with that of the village, the State, the country and the world," he said. And for this, he feels, small private sector entrepreneurs as well as big multi-national companies will have to be incorporated in public-private partnership mode.

Former Director-General of Indian Council of Agriculture Research and the Chief of the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) R.S. Paroda pointed out that the agro for-



People should be encouraged to plant trees on degraded farmland, says ICRAF Director-General Tony Simons. - FILE PHOTO: M. PERIASAMY

estry policy was targeted at increasing the tree cover to 33 per cent from the present level of less than 25 per cent. "This will require an aggressive approach and in a mission mode."

According to him, of the 140 million hectares under cultivation, 100 million hec-

tares was facing one or the other kind of degradation. India's Green House Gas emission levels were not as high as several other countries but it has to take action on several counts for which policy decisions were required. Cow dung, for instance, remains a source of

fuel in large parts of rural India. The need is to provide alternative source of fuel or for gobar gas plants that allow the slurry to go back into the fields.

### Integrated approach

"Agro forestry requires an integrated approach—a convergence programmes that integrates trees, crops, water use, livestock, fodder and other livelihood initiatives -- which is missing in the present system. Availability of investment, appropriate planting material for tree species in different agro-climatic zones, insurance, de-regulation, market linkages, extension services and above all capacity building for farmers to undertake an integrated approach are all the requirements that need urgent attention."

For the programme to take off and succeed, it will be appropriate to have a proper pricing policy and to incentivise farmers with funds.

SD/- *[Signature]* 9/10/2015  
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