



Project For Improvement of Himachal Pradesh
Forest Ecosystems Management
and Livelihoods (JICA Funded)



Newsletter

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“Green Revolution” Initiatives Advancing Steps of the JICA Forestry Project



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Livelihood Improvement and Environmental Conservation: A Milestone Achievement by The Project

The JICA Forestry Project has proven to be a milestone in improving the livelihoods of rural communities in Himachal Pradesh. Since its inception in 2018, the project has been performing outstanding work in this direction, which continues to progress steadily. The main objective of the project is to manage and enhance forest ecosystems in selected areas of Himachal Pradesh, thereby contributing to environmental protection and sustainable socio-economic development. It is a matter of great pride that the project is being implemented across seven districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e Bilaspur, Kangra, Kinnaur, Mandi, Lahaul-Spiti, Shimla, and Kullu, covering 9 divisions, 22 forest circles, and 72 forest ranges. The project is being implemented by an autonomous society registered under the Himachal Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 2006, through Village Forest Development Committees (VFDCs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) formed with the support of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. The society has been named Society for Improvement of FEM&L in HP. The total project cost is ₹800 crore, with a duration of 10 years (2018–2028).

Salient Achievements:

460 Village Forest Development Committees (VFDCs) and Biodiversity Management Sub-Committees have been identified and formed so far. 459 Micro Plans have been prepared for these committees. A total

of 908 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been formed, of which more than 700 are entirely women-led. Each SHG has been provided with a grant of ₹1 lakh to strengthen their livelihood enhancement activities. The project has facilitated the preparation of 885 business plans to help SHGs run their enterprises in an organized manner. Regular awareness workshops and skill-based training programs are conducted for VFDCs, BMCs, and SHGs. Over 800 SHGs have been trained in various skill-based livelihood activities. Through Participatory Forest Management, 8,100 hectares of area have been covered under plantation so far. Under the Mukhyamantri Van Vistar Yojna, 100 hectares of plantation area has been developed across the state. Under the Nursery Development Plan, 72 departmental nurseries have been strengthened. In Chopal Forest Division, a state-of-the-art nursery equipped with modern technology has been established, enabling scientific and mechanized plantation and conservation work. The Jadi Buti Cell of the project is promoting commercial cultivation of medicinal herbs in project areas across the state. In the remote Demul village of Spiti, two diesel-operated threshing machines were provided on a pilot basis for barley threshing. Recently, in the Governing Body meeting, a decision was taken to establish 140 additional Village Forest Development Committees subject to the approval of MoEF and the process is currently underway.

Mr. Shreshtha Nand (HPFS)
Project Director

A Step Towards Greenery...

Himachal is accelerating its green revolution initiatives Advancing Steps of the JICA Forestry Project



RP Negi

Media Specialist

The JICA Forestry Project continues to make steady progress each year toward enhancing the green cover in Himachal Pradesh. During this monsoon season, the project successfully carried out extensive plantation drives across the state. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, inaugurated the state-level Van Mahotsav (Forest Festival) on 14 August 2025 by planting saplings at the Central Potato Research Institute campus in Kanlog, Shimla. On this occasion, he also formally launched the Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana. The JICA Forestry Project is playing a significant role in expanding green cover across 22 Forest Divisions in the state. Since the financial year 2020–21 up to 2024–25, successful plantation activities have been



carried out on 8,100 hectares of land, yielding encouraging results. In the current financial year too, plantations were conducted during the monsoon season through both departmental initiatives and public participation across various forest divisions of the state. A total of 140 hac. Of plantations were established in Dharamshala, with 70 ha. Covered under Deptt mode and the remaining 70 hac through Public Participation. In Kinnaur Forest Division, 1,500 saplings of the rare Betula (Bhojpatra) species were planted in Taranda, Nigulsari, and Jani areas. In Shimla Forest Division, plantations were carried out over 5 hectares, with active participation from elders and school children, making the campaign a great success. In Anni Forest Division, 10 hectares each were planted through departmental and community efforts. In Nurpur Division, plantations were carried out on 20 hectares



with a variety of species. Similarly, 4 hectares were covered in Theog Division, 20 hectares in Chopal Division, and 10 hectares in Parvati Division. During the state-level Van Mahotsav held in Shimla on 14 August 2025, Chief Minister

Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu presented cheques of ₹50,000 each as capital cost assistance to four Self-Help Groups under the JICA Forestry Project.

"Vrikshabandhan" on Raksha Bandhan in Forest Division Nurpur



On 9 August 2025, the Vrikshabandhan (Tree Tying) program was organized in the Nurpur Forest Division on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. During the event, 2,500 saplings were distributed across various forest ranges. In addition, 20 hectares of land were planted during the Van Mahotsav in Nurpur. In Shimla Division, 5 hectares of backlog area were covered. Plantations were also conducted on 4 hectares in Theog, 20 hectares in Chopal, 20 hectares in Ani, and 10 hectares in Parvati Forest Division. On 23 August 2025, a plantation drive was organized at VFDS Panesh under Tara Devi Range of DMU Shimla. Members of the VFDS, students, and staff of Government Primary School Panesh enthusiastically participated. An awareness program on environmental conservation was also held on the school premises, where participants were sensitized about the importance of nature protection and tree plantation. Saplings of Deodar, Ban, Dadu, and Reetha were also planted.

Afforestation campaign on Independence Day

On 15 August Independence Day, the JICA Forestry Project took another step towards enhancing the green cover of Himachal Pradesh by organizing plantation drives. In Peej area under Kullu Forest Division, Deodar saplings were planted over 5 hectares of land under the leadership of Program Manager Dr. Kaushalya Kapoor. Members of Gram Van Vikas Samiti Peej and Self-Help Groups Jagjanani and Vaishno Peej actively participated in the drive. Women associated with the Rajiv Gandhi Van Sanvardhan



Yojana also contributed by planting saplings, moving "one step closer to greenery." On this occasion, FTU Coordinators of Kullu and Bhutti, Ms. Premlata Thakur and Mr. Shashi Bhushan, along with members of women's groups and SHGs, pledged to sustain and strengthen the spirit of the green revolution in their region.



74th Wildlife Week begins with a pledge to conserve wild species



RP Negi

Media Specialist

The 74th Wildlife Week was inaugurated in Himachal Pradesh on October 2, 2025, by PCCF (Wildlife) Mr. Amitabh Gautam. The theme of this year's celebration was Human-Animal Coexistence. While addressing the program through a video conference, Mr. Gautam interacted with officials from all wildlife divisions across the state and discussed the seven-day-long program scheduled from October 2 to 8. On this occasion, a pledge was taken to protect and conserve wildlife in the state. Gautam emphasized that many wild species are on the verge of extinction, and both the Forest Department and the Wildlife Wing are taking significant measures for their conservation. He urged the general public to participate actively in these efforts, stating that the protection of wildlife requires community involvement along with departmental initiatives. Gautam further informed that the Wildlife Wing of Himachal Pradesh, in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Foundation, Bengaluru, conducted a study titled Status of Snow Leopard in Himachal Pradesh-2025. The report covers an area of 26,112 square kilometers and estimates the presence of approximately 83 snow leopards in the state—an increase compared to the 2021

report. The study also recorded two new wildlife species in Himachal for the first time: the Woolly Flying Squirrel and the Pallas's Cat. Mr. Amitabh Gautam called upon local communities and officials to work together for wildlife protection and urged everyone to spread awareness about conservation during Wildlife Week. Deepashikha, Program Manager at the Nature Conservation Foundation, Bengaluru, provided detailed insights into the conservation status and protection strategies of snow leopards in Himachal.

The event was also attended by CF Wildlife Preeti Bhandari, DFO Wildlife Shimla Dr. Shah Nawaz Bhatt, DFO Headquarters Anita Bhardwaj, Project Director of JICA Forestry Project Mr. Shreshta Nand Sharma, ACF Wildlife Vinod Ranta, along with officers and staff of the JICA Forestry Project. It is noteworthy that Wildlife Week is celebrated every year from October 2 to 8, commencing on Gandhi Jayanti, to raise awareness about wildlife conservation.

Release of Status of Snow Leopard in Himachal-2025



During the inaugural ceremony, PCCF Wildlife Amitabh Gautam released the publication Status of Snow Leopard in Himachal Pradesh-2025. He stated that snow leopards are facing a threat of extinction and the Wildlife Wing is playing a vital role in their protection and conservation. He also shared that the cold desert region of Spiti in Himachal Pradesh has recently been included in UNESCO's "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) Reserve, which is a matter of great pride for the state.

JICA Forestry Project Promotes the core message of "Clean Himachal, Safe Himachal"



On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, on 2nd October 2025, the JICA Forestry Project organized a special cleanliness drive. On Thursday, the project team carried out a cleaning campaign in and around the project premises at Totu, contributing to the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission. Chief Project Director (CPD) and PCCF (Wildlife) Mr. Amitabh Gautam led the drive by sweeping the premises himself and conveyed the message of Clean Himachal, Safe Himachal. Officers and staff of the project actively participated in the cleanliness campaign and pledged to keep the surroundings clean and beautiful. It is noteworthy that every year, on the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, cleanliness drives are

conducted across the country. CF Wildlife Preeti Bhandari, Project Director Mr. Shreshtha Nand Sharma, DFO Wildlife Shimla Shah Nawaz, ACF Wildlife Shimla Vinod Kumar, Program Managers, Subject Matter Specialists, and all staff members played a vital role in making the campaign a success. CPD Mr. Amitabh Gautam also appreciated and encouraged all officers and staff members for their enthusiastic participation in the drive.





Fragrance of Chemical-Free Products Spreads at Shimla Flying Festival - 2025



At the four-day Shimla Flying Festival and Hospitality Expo-2025, held near the state capital at Junga, the fragrance of chemical-free products filled the air. The festival, organized from October 25 to 28, featured an exhibition and sale of natural products made by self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project. Visitors highly appreciated the products prepared by these self-help groups. Project Director of the JICA Forestry Project, Mr. Shreshtha Nand Sharma, said that efforts are being made to promote the use of millets to maintain good health.

Although the use of chemicals increases production, it also brings several harmful effects. Therefore, there is a growing need to produce more natural and organic products. He further added that along with promoting natural production, this initiative will help improve people's livelihoods and strengthen their local economy. The JICA Forestry Project, he noted, has been working effectively since 2018 to enhance the livelihoods of rural communities across Himachal Pradesh, and these efforts continue successfully.

Contribution of Jadi Buzi Cell in Conservation & Management of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants



Dr. SK Kapta

Director (JBC)



Himachal Pradesh is a rich repository of medicinal plant wealth and occupies an important place in the Vedic treatises. In ancient times, it has been the abode of saints and sages, who pursued their meditational and scholarly endeavours here. A rough estimate and secondary sources suggest availability of about 1,000 to 1,200 medicinal plant species in Himachal Himalayas. As per habit type, these share 18% trees, 21% shrubs, 55% herbs in composition which coincides more or less with that of Indian Himalayan Region, having 23%, 22% and 58% species as trees, shrubs and herbs, respectively. There is already an assessment of 133 medicinal plants of Himachal Himalayas

referred to as rare, sensitive, threatened and/or endangered for the State and/or other parts of the Himalayas. Conservation prioritization exercises carried out in Kullu during a Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) Workshop using IUCN criteria considered 45 threatened medicinal plants in total.

HIMACHAL PRADESH FOREST SECTOR POLICY AND STRATEGY, 2005



has suggested that “Non Wood Forest Products (NWFP) are important source of supplementary incomes for rural households. Its sustainability and management are thus crucial to rural livelihoods. Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) constitute an important aspect of NWFP management. Earlier regulation of collection and trade of certain medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) species were entrusted to the panchayats. The Forest and Ayurveda Departments will build capacity and provide other support to effectively manage this activity in a sustainable and equitable manner.



The state will conserve, regulate, harvest, regenerate, use and export MAPs with emphasis on livelihood security in both public and private lands vis promoting the conservation and research and development activities of high value medicinal plants in the North Western Himalayan region. To achieve this objective through a concerted effort, Jadi Buti Cell (JBC) has been established at PMU level under JICA funded “Project for Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystem Management and Livelihoods”. In the Project 11 clusters have been identified for NTFP Enterprise Development and each of these clusters has been further reviewed to find out the exact geography and villages to be covered. The size of cluster is based on the availability of NTFP including medicinal plants in the wild, availability of non-forest area for NTFP plantation/cultivation, availability of forest area for NTFP plantation and willingness of the local

communities and Village Forest Development Societies in Territorial Forest divisions and Bio-diversity Management Committees (Sub-committees) in Wildlife divisions to work on NTFP resource development, cultivation, value addition and marketing. To initiate and consolidate its activities, JBC has planned to focus, develop ,adopt and try propagation/ business models of 14 plant species for Commercial Propagation of Medicinal Plants consisting of *Aloe barbadensis* (Gharit Kumar), *Asparagus racemosus* (Shatavari), *Aconitum heterophyllum* (Patish), *Swertia cordata*, *Picrorhiza kurrooa* (Kutki), *Terminalia chebula* (Harad), *Terminala belirica* (Bahera), *Phyllanthus emblica* (Amla), *Sapindus mukorossi* (Reetha), *Moringa oleifera* (Drumstick tree), *Cinnamomum tamala* (Tej patta), *Cymbopogon martinii* (Palmarosa grass), *Paris polyphylla* (Satua), *Cordia myxa* (Lasuda). The farmers are provided with free planting material and technical inputs by PMU for their cultivation. According to the mandate of JBC efforts are being made to bring more and more areas will under cultivation of high value low volume medicinal plants like Kutki and Chirayata in high altitude areas in near future and trainings are also being imparted in post planting and harvest management and other quality issues to be faced during processing and marketing of medicinal plants.

JICA Project can share its learning drawn from various business models being implemented and developed in 11 clusters so far with the stakeholders to make a robust strategy in the field of conservation and sustainable management of medicinal and aromatic plants in Himachal Pradesh, as, the interventions made by the Project grows in future and so does the learning from the Project.

Organic Products of the Project to Be Sold in Reckong Peo

- Revenue and Horticulture Minister Mr. Jagat Singh Negi inaugurates the multipurpose outlet
- Minister appreciates the efforts of the project

The JICA Forestry Project has opened a marketing outlet at Reckong Peo, the headquarters of Kinnaur district. On the occasion of the State-level Kinnaur Festival



on November 1, 2025, the outlet was inaugurated by the State Revenue, Horticulture, and Tribal Development Minister, Mr. Jagat Singh Negi. He praised the initiatives undertaken by the forestry project in improving the livelihoods of rural communities across the state. The minister also interacted with women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and discussed ways to strengthen their economic condition. With this, all kinds of natural products made by SHGs associated with the JICA Forestry Project will now be available for sale in Reckong Peo as well. It is worth mentioning that under the HimTradition brand, this outlet will offer Kinnauri rajma (kidney beans), traditional handwoven garments, apricot oil, walnuts, black peas, black cumin, finger millet flour, barley flour, and buckwheat flour, among other organic products — all at prices lower than those in the open market. Amid the ongoing State-level Kinnaur Festival, the JICA Forestry Project dedicated this outlet to the public to promote the sale of



chemical-free and eco-friendly products. Speaking to the media, Project Director Mr. Shreshta Nand said that the products made by SHGs associated with JICA are of high quality and available at competitive prices compared to the open market. He further informed that the project management aims to establish marketing outlets at 22 Forest Divisions levels across the state, most of which are already operational.

FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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