



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



Newsletter

Issue : 18th | February 2026

People Enchanted by “Him Tradition” Products



INSIDE

- ☛ People Enchanted by Him Tradition Products at the International Lavi Fair
- ☛ JICA Products Gain New Identity and Witness Strong Sales at Himotsav
- ☛ Probationary IFS (2024 Batch) Officers Gain Insights into the JICA Forestry Project
- ☛ Self-Help Groups Linked with Forestry Project Trained on Food Safety Act
- ☛ A New Initiative in Medicinal Farming, 16.20 Lakh Kadu Saplings Planted
- ☛ Towards Livelihood Improvement 10,006 People Moving Ahead
- ☛ Learning Opportunities Through Exposure Visits to Meghalaya, Odisha and Tamil Nadu



JICA FORESTRY PROJECT SHOWING THE PATH TO INCOME THROUGH SELF-RELIANCE



The JICA Forestry Project is showing the people of rural areas of Himachal Pradesh a sustainable path towards self-reliance and livelihood improvement. The project has been doing commendable work in this direction since 2018, and this effort is continuing steadily. The main objective of the project is to manage and enhance forest ecosystems in selected areas of Himachal Pradesh, thereby contributing to environmental conservation and sustainable socio-economic development. I am pleased to share that this project is being implemented in 7 districts of Himachal Pradesh Bilaspur, Kangra, Kinnaur, Mandi, Lahaul-Spiti, Shimla and Kullu covering 9 Circles, 22 Forest Divisions, and 72 Forest Ranges. The Project is being implemented through 400 VFDS and 60 BMC Sub-Committees constituted under JICA Forestry Project of Himachal Pradesh Forest Department. It is being executed by an autonomous society registered under the Himachal Pradesh Societies Act, 2006, namely the Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystem Management and Livelihood Improvement Project. Across 22 forest divisions of Himachal Pradesh, 912 Self-Help Groups are doing excellent work in the field of livelihood enhancement. The total cost of the project is ₹800 crore, with a duration of 10 years, from 2018 to 2028. Under the Forest Department and community participation framework, plantation activities are being carried out every year in Himachal Pradesh. So far, plantation has been undertaken on approximately 8,300 hectares of land across the state. The JICA Forestry Project is playing a significant role in increasing the green

cover of Himachal Pradesh to 30 percent by the year 2030. Under the state government's ambitious schemes the *Mukhya Mantri Van Vistar Yojana* and the *Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana* the JICA Forestry Project is doing remarkable work through plantation drives to bring greenery to barren lands in the state along with environmental conservation, livelihoods are also being generated through the Tor leaf-plate (pattal) business.

The demand for leaf plates manufactured using modern techniques has increased significantly in the state. Leaf plates made from Tor leaves are completely biodegradable and cause no harm to the environment. The project is also performing exceptionally well in the handloom sector. Handloom and weaving products prepared through various Self-Help Groups are gaining a new identity. To market the products prepared by SHGs associated with the project, marketing outlets are being established at Forest Division level. The JICA Forestry Project has taken positive steps towards the cultivation of medicinal plants in Himachal Pradesh. Under the project's Jadi-Buti Cell, cultivation of medicinal plants is being carried out in Kinnaur, Rohru, Chopal, Ani and Suket. During the financial years 2024–25 and 2025–26, the project planted 1.62 million (16 lakh 20 thousand) seedlings of Kadu (Kutki). This project has proved to be a milestone in improving the livelihoods of the rural population of Himachal Pradesh.

Heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all of you for the New Year 2026.

Dr. Sanjay Sood, IFS
Head of Forest Force and
Chief Project Director

People Enchanted by "Him Tradition" Products at the International Lavi Fair



RP Negi

Media Specialist

Visitors showed great enthusiasm for purchasing Him Tradition brand products prepared by Self-Help Groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project during the four-day International Rampur Lavi Fair held from 11th to 14th November 2025. As in previous years, products made by various Self-Help Groups linked with the JICA Forestry Project were put on sale at the Rampur Lavi Fair. A large crowd was seen purchasing chemical-free products prepared by 14 Self-Help Groups from the forest divisions of Kinnaur, Rampur, and Anni. Products such as chulli oil, rajmah (kidney beans), koda flour, ghee, and traditional Kinnauri textiles of the JICA Forestry Project have emerged as top choices among visitors. It is noteworthy that by associating with this project, Self-Help Groups are significantly improving their livelihoods, which has also led to an increase in their income. Although similar products are available at the Lavi Fair, items at the JICA Forestry Project stall were offered at comparatively lower prices.



CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Minister Vikramaditya Singh Visited the Stall



The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and the Minister for Public Works and Urban Development, Shri Vikramaditya Singh, visited the JICA Forestry Project stall. On the closing day of the fair, 14th November 2025, they inspected the exhibition and sales centers. Retired HPFS officer C. M. Sharma welcomed the Chief Minister by presenting a bouquet. Both the Chief Minister and the Minister appreciated the products prepared by the Self-Help Groups.

JICA Products Gain New Identity and Witness Strong Sales at Himotsav

The JICA Forestry Project showcased hilly products prepared by Self-Help Groups at Himotsav, a 15 day event held at Dilli Haat in the national capital. During Himotsav, organized from 16 to 30 November 2025, JICA Forestry Project products from Himachal Pradesh witnessed excellent sales. The festival was inaugurated on 16th November 2025 by the Chief Secretary of Himachal Pradesh, Sanjay Gupta, who inaugurated the JICA Forestry Project stall. He also visited all the stalls set up by the project and appreciated the products of the Self-Help Groups. Himotsav provides a valuable platform to present Himachal Pradesh's traditions, art, cuisine, attire and other products to residents of Delhi as well as tourists from other states and abroad. Keeping this in view, the JICA Forestry Project set up five stalls to sell products from 12 Self-Help Groups, including Himachali garments and chemical-free products. This information was shared by Vinod Sharma, Program Manager (Marketing and Rural Financing), JICA Forestry Project. He said that Dilli Haat offers



an excellent opportunity for the exhibition and sale of Self-Help Group products and helps them gain a new identity. On this occasion, SMS Rachna Chandel (PMU Shimla), SMS Theog Dr. Abhay Mahajan, SMS Palampur Kritika Sharma, SMS Rohru Paras Jhagta, FTU Manali Shubham and Vikesh, FTU Theog Lokendra, FTU Palampur Anu Sood, along with other representatives of the project, were present.

CPD Dr. Sanjay Sood Reviews Progress of Project Activities



The Head of Forest Force and Chief Project Director (CPD) of the JICA Forestry Project, Dr. Sanjay Sood, reviewed the progress of ongoing project activities on 16th December 2025. He held a meeting with officers and staff at the Project Headquarters, Totu and assessed the work carried out so far. It is noteworthy that Dr. Sanjay Sood, Head of Forest Force, is also holding the additional charge of CPD of the JICA Forestry Project. In this capacity, he sought detailed feedback on works being implemented under all components of the project. In-depth discussions were held on key issues such as livelihood enhancement, plantation



activities, biodiversity conservation, and other important aspects. Project Director Shri Shreshtha Nand Sharma briefed Dr. Sanjay Sood on the ongoing works being carried out across 22 Forest Divisions in the state under the project. The Chief Project Director also issued directions to ensure that all pipeline activities are completed within the stipulated timeframe. On this occasion, Biodiversity Expert Dr. S. K. Kapta, Finance Officer Shri Gauri Shankar, Program Managers, SMS and other officials and staff members were present.

Probationary IFS (2024 Batch) Officers Gain Insights into the JICA Forestry Project



Probationary IFS officers of the 2024 batch gained in-depth knowledge about the JICA Forestry Project. Abhishek Parihar and Ajay Singh Meena visited the Project Management Unit (PMU) in Shimla on 8 January 2026. On this occasion, Project Director Shreshtha Nand Sharma provided the officers with detailed information about the project and the key activities being undertaken by the Forest Department. He briefed them on plantation activities, livelihood enhancement, and income-generation initiatives. Director, Jadi-Buti Cell, Dr. S. K. Kapta, shared valuable information on biodiversity and its conservation. It is noteworthy that the probationary IFS officers, Abhishek Parihar and Ajay Singh Meena, belong to the state of Rajasthan.

Project Director Shreshtha Nand Sharma stated that the main objective of the JICA Forestry Project is to enhance ecosystem services provided by forest areas in Himachal Pradesh to support sustainable socio-economic development. He informed that the project is being implemented across 7 districts Kinnaur, Shimla, Bilaspur, Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti, and Kangra—covering 9 forest circles, 22 forest divisions, and 72 forest ranges. He further explained that under the Himachal Pradesh JICA Forestry Project, plans have been prepared to enhance livelihoods through 460 VFDS and 920 Self-Help Groups. To increase green cover in forest areas, plantation activities are being carried out under the project. So far, plantation has been completed over 8,300 hectares of land. Saplings are also being planted across the state under the Mukhya Mantri Van Vistar Yojana and Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana. During the visit, Program Managers Vinod Sharma, Reena Sharma, Dr. Kaushalya Kapoor, and Disha Gautam, along with Jadi-Buti Cell Marketing Manager Dr. Rajesh Chauhan gave detailed presentations on their respective project components.



RP Negi

Media Specialist

Self-Help Groups Linked with Forestry Project Trained on Food Safety Act

Self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project were imparted training on the Food Safety Act. Training programmes focusing on product quality and safety were organized on 18th December 2025 at Nigulsari (Kinnaur), 8th January 2026 at Mandi, 9th January 2026 at Rampur and 21st January 2026 at Rohru for representatives of self-help groups.

During these programmes, FoSTaC (Food Safety Training and Certification) sessions were conducted. Representatives from the IEST Federation, Delhi provided important training as per the guidelines issued by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The Federation's Director Anil Sharma and Area Coordinator Mohar Singh

Thakur trained women members of self-help groups on all key aspects of food safety. Food Safety Officer, Kinnaur, Rohru and Mandi gave a detailed presentation on the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. They emphasized that products must be prepared in accordance with FSSAI standards to ensure and maintain their quality and safety. Programme Manager Vinod Sharma said that it is extremely important to provide such training to all self-help groups associated with the project. He informed that in the coming days, self-help groups in the remaining forest divisions of the state will also be given training on the Food Security Act.

Project Director Extends New Year Gretings by Presenting Diaries to Dignitaries



Project Director Mr. Shreshtha Nand Sharma extended New Year greetings to dignitaries of the state government by presenting them JICA Project Dairy of Year 2026. He presented the project Diary 2026 to the Chief Minister's Principal Media Advisor, Mr. Naresh Chauhan and the Chairman of the Milk Federation, Mr. Buddhi Singh Thakur. Both Naresh Chauhan and Buddhi Singh Thakur appreciated the ongoing works and initiatives being carried out under the project.



A New Initiative in Medicinal Farming

16.20 Lakh Kadu Saplings Planted



Dr. Rajesh Chauhan

Manager Marketing (JBC)



To revive endangered medicinal plants and promote their cultivation in Himachal Pradesh, the JICA Forestry Project has launched a new initiative.

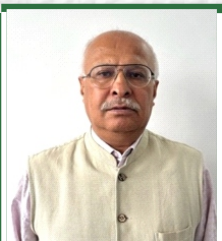
Under this initiative, people in rural areas are being encouraged to cultivate Kadu (Kutki). With the support of Village Forest Development Societies and Self-Help Groups formed under the project in various forest divisions, a total of 16.20 lakh saplings of Kadu (Kutki) have been planted so far, up to the financial year 2025–26. This is being considered a highly commendable effort. Notably, the project planted 1 lakh saplings in Taranda and Nigani of Kinnaur Forest Division; 2.20 lakh in Baga Sarahan and Sarga, and 3 lakh in Sharsha of Anni Forest Division; 1.75 lakh in Mati Kochar of Kullu Forest Division; 4 lakh in Dodra-Kwar and 3 lakh in Khashdhar of Rohru Forest Division; 1.70 lakh in Bamta and 3.60 lakh in Sarahan of Chopal Forest Division; and 90,000 saplings in Sainj of Banjar Forest Division. It has been stated that the cultivation of these medicinal plants is completely chemical-free and does not cause any harm to water sources.

Kadu Price Ranging From Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 per kg

At present, Kadu is fetching a price of Rs 2,000 to Rs 5,000 per kilogram in local markets. In addition, the project is also promoting the cultivation of Chirayata, another medicinal plant rich in therapeutic properties. Currently, Chirayata is being sold at Rs 300 to Rs 500 per kilogram. It is worth mentioning that the JICA Forestry Project is doing excellent work to promote medicinal plant cultivation across various areas of the tribal district Kinnaur and forest divisions of Anni, Rohru, Chopal, and Kullu.

Medicines Prepared From Kadu Roots

Picrorhiza kurroa (Kutki), commonly known as Kadu, is a medicinal plant that is on the verge of extinction. It is used in both traditional and modern systems of medicine, where medicines are prepared from its roots. Due to unscientific extraction by local traders, this plant has been struggling for survival. Because of its limited distribution in the Western Himalayas, small population size, and high market value, it has been included among the 37 top-priority plant species identified for conservation and cultivation. The cultivation of Kutki can not only provide an alternative source of income but also generate self-employment opportunities. Local people highly value Kadu for the treatment of stomach disorders and high fever. It is also useful in treating scorpion stings, blood pressure, intestinal pain, eye diseases, bile disorders, and throat infections. It is reported that medical practitioners in Nepal and Tibetan medicine systems use its rhizome for treating cough, cold, and fever.



“The JICA Forestry Project is playing an important role in promoting the cultivation of Kadu, a medicinal plant that is on the verge of extinction in the state. From the financial year 2024 to 2026, 16.20 lakh Kadu saplings have been planted across six forest divisions, and positive results are expected in the coming times”

— Dr. S. K. Kapta, Director, Jodi-Bufi Cell

Towards Livelihood Improvement 10,006 People Moving Ahead



Rachana Chandel

Subject Matter Specialist (PMU)

For the past seven years, since 2018, the JICA Forestry Project has been doing commendable work in the fields of employment and self-employment in rural areas of the state. Implemented across 22 forest divisions, the project has connected 10,006 people with self-employment through 920 Self-Help Groups, 400 Village Forest Development Committees, and 60 Biodiversity Sub-Committees. These individuals are actively working towards livelihood improvement through self-reliance.

It is encouraging to note that women's participation in the project is significantly higher than that of men. About 94 percent of the beneficiaries are women, who are strengthening their household economies through their involvement in the project. Out of the 10,006 members associated with the 920 Self-Help Groups, 9,282 are women and 724 are men.

In addition, educated unemployed youth across 22 forest divisions and 72 forest ranges have also been provided employment opportunities under the project and are earning their livelihoods. Overall, the JICA Forestry Project is working in Himachal Pradesh towards forest ecosystem management, community development, and livelihood enhancement.

The main objective of the project is to improve ecosystem services through forest areas for sustainable socio-economic development in Himachal Pradesh. It is noteworthy that under the JICA-funded Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystem Management and Livelihood Improvement Project, implementation is being carried out with active participation of local communities. Various activities are underway, including mushroom cultivation, leaf-plate enterprises, handloom and weaving, tailoring training, beekeeping, promotion of organic products, and conservation of natural water sources in rural areas.



Learning Opportunities Through Exposure Visits to Meghalaya, Odisha and Tamil Nadu



Meghalaya



Odisha



Tamil Nadu



Three teams of the Himachal Pradesh JICA Forestry Project went on exposure visits to the states of Meghalaya, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. The first team visited Meghalaya from November 24th to 28th 2025. Thereafter, two teams undertook exposure visits to Odisha and Tamil Nadu from January 19th to 25th, 2026. During these visits, team members got the opportunity to observe the excellent work carried out under the JICA Forestry Projects in the respective states. It is noteworthy that in Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu and Odisha the JICA Projects have implemented several impactful development initiatives in rural areas. Observing these initiatives provided valuable learning experiences and insights for the representatives from Himachal Pradesh.

FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT