

Paper industry urges govt to allot degraded land for pulpwood plantation

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The Indian paper industry has urged the government to provide degraded land on a long-term lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation to address raw material shortage and boost rural employment.

The industry has highlighted that a large chunk of degraded land is available in the country, and even if a small fraction of that is allotted on lease to paper mills for pulpwood plantation, it can be a game changer for industry growth and greening of India.

The paper industry has faced shortage of wood, the key raw material, and it is the biggest concern for mills in India, the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) said in a statement on Saturday.

While the paper industry is continuing with agro forestry efforts, pulpwood plantations need to be enhanced rapidly to meet the requirements of domestic industry, the IPMA stated.

"Even if a fraction of the degraded land available in the country is provided on lease to the industry for pulpwood plantation, the same can be a game changer for growth of domestic manufacturing, rural empowerment and greening of India," it said.

"We have been trying to convince the government that this land can be given to the paper industry on long-term lease. It will provide the desired quantity of wood not only to paper mills, but to several wood-based industries while generating a huge amount of rural employment," IPMA President Pawan Agarwal said.

If domestic agro forestry is not encouraged, import of wastepaper and wood pulp will have to be further increased causing heavy strain on the industry and economy, Agarwal added.

The IPMA also said that for procurement of wood, the industry has worked incessantly with over 5 lakh marginal farmers over the last



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several years and has successfully brought over 12 lakh hectares of largely degraded land under plantations through agro forestry.

The IPMA estimates a growth of 6-7 per cent per annum in paper consumption in the country for many years. Suitability of paper as biodegradable and sustainable material for packaging, especially for replacing single-use plastic is boosting the usage of paper across different sectors of the economy, IPMA mentioned.

It stated that the move will also help reduce carbon footprint of the country. India needs to bring an additional 25-30 million hectares of degraded land under forest and tree cover to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030, it added.