

Bamboo and Mixed Hardwood in Bihar Forests

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Bihar is in the industrial catchment of paper mills situated in west Bengal Bihar region. The forests of Bihar supply raw materials to M/s. R.I. Ltd. In Bihar, M/s. Bengal Paper Mill Co. Ltd., M/S. India Paper Pulp Co. Ltd. and the Titaghur Paper Mills Co. Ltd. in West Bengal. Bihar Forests produce about 2,00,000 tonnes of bamboos annually out of which about 1,12,000 tonnes have been leased to various paper mills in this region as named above. The balance of about 88,000 tonnes of bamboos go every year to meet the local as well as outside needs of the people for their domestic consumption and for other trades. At the present level of consumption of bamboos produced in the State, it is not possible to spare any extra quantity of bamboos for the paper mills. Although large scale bamboo plantations have been undertaken in this State under the various Fourth Five Year plans, we have not been able to achieve much in this direction and it is expected that by the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan we will have about 25,000 hectares of bamboo plantations in Bihar. The extent of bamboo plantations to be undertaken in future will be limited on account of non-availability of suitable sites in the forests of Chotanagpur for large scale industrial plantations of bamboos. Another limiting factor in this connection would be the protective problems facing bamboo plantations in general.

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It is rather very difficult to accord full protection to the bamboo plantations raised in the State. Thus, by and large, the tempo of bamboo plantations in this State has gone down as explained above.

This leaves us with no other alternative than to utilise mixed hardwood species for production of pulp and paper. We have relatively plentiful mixed hardwoods in our forests and after the recent developments in the technology for the production of pulp and paper based on hardwoods, one need not be very pessimistic about shortage of raw materials for paper industry in the near future. Concentrated attention and continued efforts, however, are necessary to ensure that the paper industry draws adequate raw materials from hardwood sources. At this critical juncture of development in the sphere of paper industry, none can afford to be choosy about raw material so far as technological advancement permits the use of mixed hardwoods. The paper industry has had enough time and opportunity by now to conduct suitable experiments on commercial scale for utilisation of hardwoods at their mills and for installing desired machinery and equipment for pulping of hardwood. Of course, the new paper mills should start, from the very beginning, the use of mixed hardwoods for pulping purposes. It has been a very happy sign to find new consciousness among many paper mills about the use of hardwood for manufacture of paper. In fact many of the big paper mills

are already using varying quantities of hardwoods in manufacture of pulp and paper.

M/s. Bengal Paper Mills Co. Ltd. have been granted ten years lease for 20,000 tonnes of hardwoods per year from Bihar forests. This paper mill also purchases pulpwood from forest contractors of this State to the extent of another 20,000 tonnes per year. M/S Rohtas Industries Ltd. get about 10,000 tonnes pulpwood every year from Bihar forest either by direct purchases or through forest contractors. M/S Star Paper Mills also purchase mixed hardwoods from the contractors of this State for which no definite figures are available but it is estimated to be of the order of 5,000 tonnes annually. Similarly M/S. Titaghur Paper Mills also purchase about 5,000 tonnes of pulpwood from Bihar every year directly from the forest contractors.

The potentiality of availability of hardwoods from the Bihar forests is tremendous. The area of forests in Bihar is about 30,000 Sq. KMs. A recent forest resources survey of Palamau District alone has revealed that a surplus of about 1,00,000 tonnes of mixed hardwood would be available every year for pulping purposes without disturbing the present pattern of utilisation of hardwood. We have taken plantations of fast growing species *Acacia moliniformis*, and by the end of IV plan it is estimated that the acreage will be about 35,000 hectares. Although this is much below the requirement.