

conservation agreements private partnership platform

INDIA - Supporting communities to conserve a tiger reserve

ACTIVE
until Oct. 2019

The Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, home to five different types of forest, Bengal tigers, Indian elephants, leopards and many other flora and fauna, spans 140,000 hectares across southern India. This biodiversity faces a number of threats, however, including species loss due to unsustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (e.g., goose berries and wild honey), pollution of soil and water due to chemical-intensive agriculture, and habitat degradation due to unregulated livestock grazing and fuelwood collection.

To address these challenges, this project aims to use “conservation agreements” to engage the reserve’s indigenous communities in sustainable harvesting of NTFPs, organic agricultural practices, improved fuelwood collection plans, and fodder cultivation to reduce grazing pressures on the forest, in exchange for premium market access for their products—demonstrating how, with the right market-based incentives, communities within a protected area can continue to improve their livelihoods while also supporting conservation goals.

What is a “conservation agreement”?

It is a deal between a community and a group or person funding a conservation project. In exchange for making specific conservation commitments, communities receive benefits from the funder.

THE COMMUNITIES AGREE TO:

- Observe protocols for sustainable harvesting of NTFPs
- Practice organic farming
- Follow planned grazing system and fuelwood collection protocols

IN RETURN FOR:

- Premium prices for sustainably harvested NTFPs and organic produce
- Subsidized organic inputs, such as organic millet and pulse seeds, fertilizer and pest control
- Technical support on ecologically friendly practices and NTFP collection practices
- NTFP collection tools
- Water quality monitoring
- Training and equipment for local environmental monitors

INVESTMENT

CAPPP: \$109,789

Both ENDS, Netherlands: \$31,327

Welthungerhilfe, Germany: \$2,039

Keystone Foundation: \$15,548

IMPLEMENTER

Keystone Foundation is a non-profit trust and field-based organization that works in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, home to the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, and with communities on the linkages between conservation, enterprise and livelihoods.

PARTNERS

Tamil Nadu Forest Department

- Key government entity with the legal mandate to conserve the tiger reserve; implements eco-development activities and helps to train the Barefoot Ecologists

Sathyamangalam Tiger Conservation Foundation

- Supports infrastructural development that enables access to the villages and produce-collection hubs

Aadhimalai Pazhangudiynar Producer Company Limited

- A farmer-owned company that buys and processes NTFPs and organic produce from the communities

Last Forest Enterprises

- A social enterprise owned by Keystone Foundation



RESULTS TO DATE

- 86 households signed the conservation agreements in July 2018
- 6 villages engaged
- Willingness from other farmer producer companies as well as the Department of Horticulture to engage in dialogue about organic farming

MONITORING

A team of “Barefoot Ecologists” (local environmental monitors) has been trained and equipped to monitor the volume of non-timber forest products (NTFP) that comply with harvesting protocols. The project also monitors compliance with grazing and fuelwood plans. Through the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) protocols, farmers conduct peer monitoring on compliance to organic production standards. As a regional council under PGS, Keystone Foundation ensures trainings for and monitoring of the farmer groups. Socio-economic outcomes are tracked by measuring changes in household incomes from NTFP sales, the number of NTFP processing jobs created for women, and the acreage of fodder established by the livestock farmers.

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyyinar Producer Company Limited supports local marketing and branding of the sustainably harvested and organic produce. Aadhimalai is fully owned by the farmers through shareholding. Last Forest Enterprises Pvt Ltd supports the national marketing and branding of the sustainably organic harvested and organic produce and is the primary buyer of Aadhimalai products.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The project aims to work with all 20 villages within the tiger reserve. At the exit stage, the Aadhimalai Pazhangudiyyinar Producer Company Limited will continue to enforce sustainable harvesting of non-timber forest products by offering premium prices for compliant produce.



Contact

AMOS THIONGO | athiongo@conservation.org
www.conservation.org/csp

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