

Annexure-A

Policy Document

on

Collection and Removal of Chil Pine Needles from Forest Land

HIMACHAL PRADESH FOREST DEPARTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

1. Background

The leaves of Chil Pine tree (*Pinus roxburghii*) are locally known as *Chillaru*. The leaves of the Chil trees are thin, long and are needle shaped. There is huge fall of pine needles in the month from April to June and they form a thick layer under the forest canopy. Pine needles are acidic in nature and highly inflammable. These needles also prevent any kind of under growth and ground vegetation and make the ground slippery for animals, humans. These also prevent underground water recharge underground as water rolls down over the pine needles.

2. Distribution of Chil Pine Forests

Himachal Pradesh has two types of Chil forests:

- (i) 9C1: Lower or Shivalik Chil Pine Forests
- (ii) 9/C1B: Upper or Himalayan Chil Pine Forests

An area of 1, 25, 885 ha is estimated to be covered with Chil pine forests. As per study conducted by Indo German Dhauladhar Project, 1.2 tones of pine needles are shed per hectare by Chil pine trees annually. Thus a huge quantity of about 1,51,062 (One lakh fifty one thousand sixty two) tones of pine needles is shed by the Chil pine forests every year. These pine needles are very combustible and cause of devastating forest fires during summer season causing loss to timber, resin, plantations, wild life and other rare biodiversity worth crore of rupees. The department is incurring heavy expenditure on fire preventive and control measures.

3. Chil Pine Needles as a Minor Forest Produce

The Forest Department made amendment in H.P. Forest Produce Transit (Land Routes) Rules 1978 during 2006 and added pine needles in the list of Minor Forest Produce and export permit fee for Chil Pine needles was fixed for Rs 5 per quintal. The power to issue export permit was given to Pradhans of the concerned Panchayat. Due to this initiative cement factories located in the State came forward and collected small quantities of Pine needles through Panchayats.

4. Purpose of the policy

- (i) To encourage all stake holders to work for removal of Chil Pine needles from the forest lands in order to reduce fire hazards.
- (ii) To encourage the industries to use Chil Pine needles as a fuel.

5. **Investment Subsidy for Setting up of Pine Needle based Industries**

As explained in forgoing paras, the Chil forests are found in large tracts in the State which are highly prone to fire. Therefore, in order to protect these forests from fire, pine needle based industries such as manufacture of briquettes, pellets as biofuel, pine needle composite boards, paper making, innovative products etc. shall be encouraged by the State Government by providing investment subsidy of 50 percent of the capital cost for establishing such industry. Heating fuels such as briquettes, pellets can be used as substitute of coal in brick kiln industries, boiler units and other industries thus encouraging large scale removal of pine needles which would immensely help in saving forest wealth from forest fires and also provide employment to the local people.

The infrastructure, machinery and equipment cost in respect of proposals moved for setting up of pine needle based industries shall be validated by the Industries Department and the Forest Department shall consider such proposals for grant of 50% subsidy on such costs subject to a maximum of Rupees Twenty Five Lakhs per unit. Cost of land shall not be considered for grant of subsidy. Cost of machinery, building, equipment for collection etc will only be covered. Budget will be obtained from F.D depending on requirement in that year.

The subsidy shall be disbursed as follows:-

- (i) The individual, society or company proposing to set up industry shall apply to DFO concerned in whose area industry is to be set up on performance prescribed by HoFF.
- (ii) The DFO will forward application to C.F after verification of land and recommendation of GM, DIC to confirm tentative cost.
- (iii) Applications where subsidy amount is within Rs. 5 lakh per unit will be sanctioned by CF.
- (iv) Beyond Rs. 5 lakh per unit subsidy cases will be sent to HoFF for sanction.

- (v) Sanction letter will be issued by DFO allowing up to 2 years to set up the industry. Time extension in exceptional circumstances may be given by PCCF (HoFF).
- (vi) Subsidy will be disbursed in 3 installments i.e 25% on receipt of complete machinery and equipment and completion of building on site 50% on commissioning of plant/industry and 25% on successful running for 3 months.
- (vii) In case the industry is sold before commissioning subsidy sanction may be transferred to new owner.
- (viii) If industry is abandoned, dismantled or not run regularly at least 25% of the yearly production capacity during 5 years period of the commissioning, DFO shall recover the subsidy from the owner. If the owner refuses, DFO will have right to recover the subsidy by sale of assets. An undertaking to this effect will be furnished by owner along with application.
- (ix) The industrial unit set up under this scheme will be given priority in allocation of pine needles.
- (x) The industry can also use multiple forest produce as raw material like lantana, pine needles, waste biomass etc.

6. Undertaking Research

The department shall also lay emphasis for undertaking research in this field for conversion of needles/hazardous biomass into briquettes of high specific density by involving premier institutions. This may help in reduction of loading/unloading, long distance transportation and storage costs apart from enhancing the fuel efficiency for economic viability.

7. Guidelines for collection and removal of pine needles

As per exercise undertaken in the field, one daily wager (current wage rate @ Rs 225/ per day) normally collects pine needles ranging between 1 to 1.5 quintals per day including its stacking on road head when collection is done within a distance of about 500m from road. In view of existing wage rates, cost of collection per quintal shall be around Rs 150 per quintal. The cost will increase if collection is done in forest areas situated beyond 500 meters. The Industrial Units such as Ambuja Cements is paying an

average amount of Rs 170/- per quintal to the local people for collection of pine needles along roadside and within 500 meters from the road head. Mahesh Katha Udyog is paying Rs 200/ per quintal on FOR basis. The collection is economically viable only along roadsides where availability of pine needles is in abundance.

This policy envisages that no charges will be payable to the department for collection and utilization of pine needles by the private parties/industries/entrepreneurs as well as local right holders. The department shall also make efforts to provide funds for removal of these pine needles under relevant departmental schemes/projects. The following guidelines are formulated for collection and removal of needles which may be followed:

- (A) The Forest Division wise and Circle wise detailed information about availability of *Pine needles* will be made available by the Department on the official web portal.
- (B) Pine needles collection and removal will be carried out in the following broad categories:-
 - (i) By the Forest Department directly with its existing resources i. e. through fire watchers etc. under the Forest Fire Protection Scheme (No additional staff either on daily wage basis, contract etc. be asked for).. The department shall also explore possibilities to provide funds for collection in forest areas having abundance of pines needles under Externally Aided Projects in addition to the funds available under fire protection schemes. In some cases transportation cost may be covered by the Forest Department in any scheme. The information about the quantity of pine needles collected/likely to be collected by the department in a particular season shall also be made available on the official web portal.
 - (ii) By the Panchayati Raj bodies.
 - (iii) By organizations located in the area like Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Clubs, NGOs and Village Forest Management Societies (VFMS).
 - (iv) By private factories/ industries or their agents using *Pine needles* as raw material.
 - (v) By right holders.

(C) Provision of funds

While Forest Department may utilize funds available under Forest Fire Protection schemes or other available schemes and Externally Aided Projects which have provision for forest fire control including removal of fire hazards as per norms of the scheme when it following B(i) above. The following provisions in other cases i.e. (ii) to (v) shall be followed.

(i) In cases where Panchayats, Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Clubs, NGOs, Right holders and Village Forest Management Societies (VFMS) etc. are involved, the pine needles shall be collected and removed free of charges by Forest Department for their own consumption or for further supply to the private industries/entrepreneurs. They may get Government grants or funds from various sources/schemes if available.

(ii) For private parties for use in industry by them or through their agents, collection and removal of Pine needles shall be done at their own costs.

(D) Encouraging industries and other stakeholders in removal of Chil pine needles

(i) For Pine needles collected by Department under departmental scheme:

In case an industry located in Himachal Pradesh requires pine needles as a raw material, the pine needles collected at site by the department shall be removed by them free of charges by Forest Department for their usage. They may apply to the concerned DFO who will make allocation based on availability. He will divide area by creating units which could be beat boundaries or as may be suitable depending on quantity available. In case more than one industry applies for same unit of area, allocation may be made in proportion of total requirement of the industry. If this is not possible and two or more insist on same area, an open auction can be conducted and money collected can be used for further collection of pine needles.

(ii) For Pine needles collected by Panchayats, Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Clubs, NGOs and Village Forest Management Societies (VFMS) etc.

The pine needles shall be collected and removed by Panchayats, Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Clubs, NGOs, VFMS etc. free of charges to Forest Department for their own consumption. They may further supply Pine needles as such to the private industries for usage as raw material at the rates announced by these private industries/entrepreneurs or rates that may be mutually settled.

(iii) Own Area Allocations:

Private industry located in H.P. may request for allocation of area for collection and removal of Pine needles as raw material. This request will be made to the CF of the circle from where Pine needles are required.

- a) The CF will make yearly requirement assessment and make indicative allocation of larger areas for 10 years in order to augment supplies of Pine needles as raw material on long term basis.
- b) The CF will make firm allocation of area for collection and removal of Pine needles only for one year at a time.
- c) Collection and removal of Pine needles will be done by the concerned Private industry at their own costs.
- d) In case there are more than one applicants and CF cannot make amicable allocation of area to the satisfaction of all applicants, then he may define specific areas and conduct open auction amongst applicants. The money collected can be used for collection of pine needles.

(E) In above mentioned categories the concerned party/parties have to follow the guidelines as under:

- a) The period for collection of pine needles from the allocated forest areas will be from March to onset of monsoon. The concerned party may collect and remove the Pine needles from the allotted forests by engaging laborers OR through Gram Panchayat, Mahila Mandals, Yuvak Clubs, local NGOs, Right holders and Village Forest Management Societies (VFMS) at their own cost and transport the removed material to designated destination.
- b) The concerned party will announce the rates of Chil Pine needles for collection, removal in their application.

- c) The laborers engaged for collection, removal and its carriage upto road side from the allotted forests will be issued Identity Cards by the concerned party.
- d) The concerned party will not claim and will not get any type of incentive from the Forest Department for collection, carriage and transportation of Chil Pine needles unless covered under a scheme or plan.
- e) The local right holders shall be encouraged for collection of Pine needles for their bonafide use. They may also supply Pine needles to the private industries at the rates announced by them or mutually settled rates.
- f) Keeping in view these guidelines, the concerned party will have to abide by the following conditions:
 - 1) The concerned party will collect and remove only Chil Pine needles and not any other biomass from the allotted forests. The collection and removal of pine needles will be done manually using broom, hand rake etc. No mechanical means unless allowed by DFO specifically will be used for collection and removal of pine needles.
 - 2) The concerned party will not use any inflammable material while collecting and removing the pine needles from the allotted forests.
 - 3) The concerned party will not cause any damage to the forests and nearby plantations.
 - 4) The Forest Department will maintain records regarding collection and removal of Chil Pine needles and its transportation.
 - 5) In case of dispute matter will be referred to CF concerned whose decision will have to be accepted.
- g) While the rates payable by industry for opine needles will be settled mutually between the borrowers and suppliers. Government through Forest Department may intervene if it is seen that rates are unreasonable. Government may fix rates for periods ranging from 3 months to one year if required in order to ensure that the collections of pine needles are assured for returns and the industry remains viable.
