

CHAPTER 5: FORESTRY AND WILD LIFE

5.1 Tax administration

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) heads the Forest Department under the administrative control of the Principal Secretary, Forest. PCCF is assisted by 12 Additional PCCFs (APCCFs) and six Chief Conservators of Forests (CCFs) at Headquarters. The forest area in the State has been divided into six circles each headed by a Chief Conservator of Forests. These circles have been further divided into Forest Divisions which are administered by the Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) who are assisted in field by the Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) and Range Officers (ROs).

The Department is administered under provisions of the following Acts and Rules:

- The Indian Forest (IF) Act, 1927 and Rules¹ made thereunder;
- Forest Conservation (FC) Act, 1980 and Rules² made thereunder;
- Chhattisgarh Financial Code;
- Working Plan of the Divisions; and
- Instructions/orders issued by the Government/Department from time to time

5.2 Results of audit

Audit test checked records of 19³ out of 60 offices relating to Forest Department during the year 2016-17. Expenditure incurred and revenue generated by the Department during the year 2015-16 aggregated to ₹ 1,105.23 crore and ₹ 409.75 crore respectively. The audited units incurred expenditure of ₹ 455.30 crore and collected revenue of ₹ 246.89 crore. Audit noticed irregularities of ₹ 116.22 crore in 1,329 cases which fall under the categories as detailed in **Table 5.1:**

Table 5.1: Results of audit

(₹ in crore)			
Sl. No.	Category	No. of cases	Amount
A. Expenditure			
1.	Irregular expenditure	183	40.90
2.	Avoidable expenditure	31	10.61
3.	Unfruitful expenditure	152	19.27
4.	Excess expenditure	72	11.96
5.	Other irregularities	128	10.40
Total		566	93.14

¹ Chhattisgarh Protected Forest Rules, 1960; Chhattisgarh Timber and other minor forest produce rate fixation (extension) Rules, 1974; Establishment of Forest Village in Reserve and Protected Forest Rules, 1977; Chhattisgarh Grazing Rules, 1986 and Chhattisgarh Transit (Forest Produce) Rules, 2001

² Forest Conservation Rules, 2003

³ DFO, Balodabazar, Balrampur, Bhanupratappur (West); Bilaspur; Dhamtari; Gariyabad; Jashpur; Kanker; Katghora; Kawardha; Khairagarh; Korba; Korea; Mahasamund; Manendragarh; Raigarh; Rajnandgaon; Surajpur and Surguja

B. Receipts			
6.	Short realisation of revenue due to sale of forest produce below the upset price ⁴	646	3.35
7.	Revenue not realised due to deterioration/shortage of forest produce	55	5.92
8.	Loss of revenue due to low yield of timber/bamboo	28	1.24
9.	Other irregularities	34	12.57
Total		763	23.08

During the course of the year, the Department accepted 217 cases involving ₹ 19.80 crore. In the remaining cases, Audit is pursuing the matter with the Department.

During 2016-17, the Department effected recovery of ₹ 2.22 lakh in three cases in respect of audit objections pertaining to previous Audit Reports and Inspection Reports. Out of recovered amount, ₹ 45,000 pertains to Audit Reports and Inspection Reports prior to 2011-12.

5.3 Follow up of previous Audit Reports

In the Audit Reports for the period from 2011-12 to 2015-16, Audit had pointed out various observations amounting to ₹ 306.90 crore in 39 paragraphs against which Department accepted observations involving ₹ 85.44 crore and recovered ₹ 18.45 crore.

The PAC had selected 22 paragraphs of Audit Reports (2002-12) for discussion and gave its recommendation (2004-06) on three paragraphs. However, Action Taken Note (ATN) has been received in only one paragraph.

5.4 Breach of Forest Conservation Act, 1980

Two Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) incurred expenditure of ₹ 2.33 crore on construction of six new Water Bound Macadam (WBM) roads without taking clearance from GoI as required under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

Guidelines (April 2005) issued by Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) under FC Act, 1980 stipulates that upgradation of roads constructed in forest area prior to 1980 from 'kutcha⁵ to pucca⁶' is allowed. However, no widening of roads shall be undertaken and no breaking of fresh forest land shall be carried out without prior permission of Central Government under FC Act, 1980.

The CCF, Bilaspur and Surguja sanctioned (between July 2014 and April 2015) ₹ 3.42 crore for the upgradation of forest roads to WBM roads during the year 2014-15 and 2015-16. During test check of Progress Report of the construction activities for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16 in two⁷ DFOs, Audit noticed (between April 2016 to June 2016) that the Divisions upgraded nine forest roads of 37 kilometer length to WBM roads by incurring expenditure of ₹ 3.42 crore.

⁴ Upset price is the reserve price of each timber lot below which the lot cannot be sold during the first auction.

⁵ Fair weather road negotiable only during fair weather, as opposed to "all weather road"

⁶ All weather road (WBM, CC, BM) which is negotiable during all weathers

⁷ Korea and Marwahi

Further scrutiny of Working Plans (WPs)⁸ of the Divisions revealed that out of nine forest roads which were upgraded, six roads having a length of 25 kilometer⁹ were not mentioned in the WPs. As these roads were not mentioned in the WPs, the expenditure of ₹ 2.33 crore¹⁰ incurred was on construction of new WBM road, but not on upgradation of existing road. Breaking of fresh forest land for construction of new forest roads was carried out without taking clearance from the GoI as required under the FC Act.

Accepting the audit observation, the DFOs Marwahi and Korea replied (April 2016 and June 2016 respectively) that the road was constructed on demand of local representatives/ villagers.

The matter was reported to the Government/Department (July 2017). Their reply has not been received (August 2018).

5.5 Excess and avoidable expenditure on unirrigated mixed plantation

The norms for departmental plantation of unirrigated mixed plantation was set higher than the plantation norms under CAMPA resulting in avoidable expenditure of ₹ 2.03 crore.

The norms for site preparation work¹¹ for unirrigated mixed plantation under State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (State CAMPA) for the year 2014-15 was ₹ 52,000 for plantation of 1,100 plants per hectare. The pit size prescribed in the Working Plan for plantation of bamboo and other species is 45 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm and 30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm respectively.

Audit test check (between May 2016 and August 2016) of allotment files and plantation records in four¹² Divisions revealed that site preparation for plantation of 14.25 lakh mixed plants¹³ was carried out (2014-15) in 1,295.192 hectare¹⁴ by incurring expenditure of ₹ 9.43 crore under departmental head. Audit further scrutinised the norms for unirrigated mixed plantation under departmental head and noticed that the Department had set the norms of ₹ 72,800 per hectare for site preparation of 1,100 plants per hectare for the year 2014-15.

While comparing the norms of site preparation with CAMPA work¹⁵, Audit noticed that under departmental norms, the pit size prescribed for plantation of 1,100 plants per hectare was 45 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm as against the size of 30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm under State CAMPA. Out of plantation of 14,24,711 plants

⁸ Working Plan is the main instrument of forest planning in the country for scientific management of forests

⁹ Korea- one road (5 km) and Marwahi –five roads (20 km)

¹⁰ Korea (₹ 50.53 lakh) and Marwahi (₹ 1.82 crore)

¹¹ Site preparation work involves work like site cleaning, pit digging, fencing work etc. carried out in advance to plantation work

¹² Balodabazar; Balrampur; Jashpur and Korba

¹³ 3,60,043 (bamboo) and 10,64,668 (other species)

¹⁴ Balodabazar (296.71 hectare); Balrampur (634 hectare); Jashpur (260 hectare) and Korba (104.482 hectare)

¹⁵ Both the departmental works and CAMPA predominantly comprise the same type of plants/trees.

in 1,295.192 hectare under departmental norms, 10,64,668 plants was of other species for which pit digging of 30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm was prescribed in the WP while for the remaining 3,60,043 plants the pit size prescribed was 45 cm x 45 cm x 45 cm. The Department instead of carrying out the work of 10,64,668 plants (other species) by digging pits of 30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm size, carried out the work by digging pits of bigger size. As a result, the labour charges under departmental plantation and the consumption of vermin-compost/fertilizers exceeded by more than three times¹⁶, resulting in excess expenditure of ₹ 2.03 crore¹⁷ in the work of site preparation for unirrigated mixed plantation under departmental head in the year 2014-15.

In their replies to the audit observation, the concerned DFOs replied (between May 2016 and August 2016) that the norms for unirrigated mixed plantation under departmental head were fixed by the higher authorities and the work was executed as per the norms and the project report approved by the Department.

The matter was brought to the notice (July 2017) of the Department for their comments. Their reply has not been received (August 2018).

Recommendation:

The Department should ensure uniformity in setting of norms for forestry work of same type covered under different schemes.

5.6 Store purchase procedures not observed

Five forest divisions procured store items amounting to ₹ 3.23 crore without floating open tender in violation of the Chhattisgarh Store Purchase Rules, 2002.

Chhattisgarh Government Store Purchase Rules, 2002 stipulates Limited Tender¹⁸ for procurement of store items valued between ₹ 5,000 and ₹ 50,000, through open tender for store items valued above ₹ 50,000. The State Government in its order (July 2003) clarified that direct purchase from *Sahkari Upbhokta Bhandar/Kendriya Bhandar/ National Consumer Cooperative Forum (NCCF)* is not permissible and provisions of Store Purchases Rule should invariably be adhered to while procuring store items.

Audit test check of vouchers, store purchases files in five¹⁹ divisions revealed that Secretary, Forest Department directed (September 2014) all the divisions to procure store items directly from *Kendriya Bhandar*, Raipur. This was contrary to the provisions of the Chhattisgarh State Store Purchase Rules, 2002 and also the Secretary, Forest Department is not the competent authority to relax the provisions of the Chhattisgarh Government Store Purchase Rules, 2002.

Five Divisions procured items such as Global Positioning System (GPS), Tracking devices, Neem cake, pesticides etc., valued at ₹ 3.23 crore directly

¹⁶ As per the plantation norms one fourth of the pit digged for plantation should be fed with manure i.e. under departmental norms (91,125 cu cm/4= 22,781.25 cu cm) were consumed as against under State CAMPA (27,000 cu.cm./4= 6,750 cu.cm.) per pit was to be consumed.

¹⁷ Labour charges: ₹ 12.60 per pit (departmental work)- ₹ 6.30 per pit (CAMPA) = ₹ 6.30 per pit and vermin-compost cost: ₹ 18.18 per pit (departmental work)- ₹ 5.45 per pit (CAMPA) = ₹ 12.73 per pit. Total ₹ 19.03 per pit x 10,64,668 plants of other species

¹⁸ Procurement of store items by inviting quotation from at least three suppliers

¹⁹ Balodabazar, Dhamtari, Katghora, Korba and Korea

from *Kendriya Bhandar*, NCCF and Chhattisgarh State Consumer Cooperative Society Federation (CSCCF) during the period 2014-15 and 2015-16 . As each purchase was valued above ₹ 50,000, these items should have been procured through open tender.

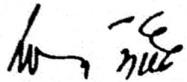
The matter was brought to the notice (September 2017) of the Department for their comments. Their reply has not been received (August 2018).

Raipur
The 26 November 2018


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Comptroller and Auditor General of India