

Promotion of Membership Relations by the Kingdom of Bhutan

a. Relevant Laws and Policies

Forest and Nature Conservation Rules and Regulations (Amendment) 2025

The Forest and Nature Conservation Rules and Regulations (Amendment) 2025 revises the 2023 version to strengthen forest protection, resource management, and enforcement in Bhutan. It clarifies the disposal of confiscated forest products, introduces fees for marking and forestry clearance, and regulates felling of threat-posing trees in the communities. Amendments emphasize proper record-keeping by Community Forest Management Groups, stricter forest fire prevention measures, and updated fishing limits and penalties. It revises allotment rules for timber and Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs), export and trade procedures, and introduces new fines for offences such as illegal felling, fire setting, and wildlife trade. Additional fees for eco-tourism, export, and technical services are outlined. The amendment also refines definitions (e.g., “semi-finished products,” “power infrastructure”) and updates penalties for protected species and NWFPs to ensure sustainable forest governance and conservation compliance nationwide. Additionally, of schedule of species and their corresponding offence and enforcement issues are addressed.

b. National Strategies in the Forest Sector.

1. National Forest Fire Prevention and Response Strategy (2024)

To address the increasing threat of forest fires, the High-Level Forest Fire Prevention and Response Committee, chaired by the hon'ble Home Minister has developed National Forest Fire Prevention and Response Strategy which was then endorsed by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The strategy identifies various causative factors of forest fires and outlines tailored interventions for each, coupled with clearly defined responsibilities and terms of reference for implementing agencies. The Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), as the lead institution, is tasked with facilitating the proposed interventions in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Initially, strategic activities were tailored for Thimphu District, with plans to scale up to other high-risk regions. Complementing this initiative, the National Forest Fire Management Action Plan has been developed to detail targeted prevention, response, and post-fire rehabilitation interventions across 13 fire-prone Districts.

Way Forward: As forest fire prevention is identified as one of the priority areas for the Department, resource mobilization for the implementation of the strategy along with adoption of technology and learnings from other advanced countries are essential.

2. National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035) Draft

The Bhutan National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan (NASAP) 2026–2035 positions agroforestry as a transformative solution for sustainable land management, food security, and climate resilience. Building on Bhutan's rich forest-agriculture traditions and ecological diversity, NASAP aims to institutionalize agroforestry across all agroecological zones, targeting farmers, youth, and women. Despite widespread informal adoption, implementation remains fragmented. NASAP addresses this through six strategic areas: policy reform, capacity building,

climate-smart systems, livelihood enhancement, financing, and monitoring. Aligned with Gross National Happiness and national development plans, it supports Bhutan's carbon-negative status and global commitments under UNFCCC and SDGs. With a USD 9.138 million budget, the strategy promotes inclusive development, biodiversity conservation, and resilient rural economies. This Strategy is currently in a final draft stage and the Department expects it to be approved at the earliest by the Government for implementation.

Way Forward: After the formal approval of this strategy, the Agroforestry will gain additional importance due to its overarching benefits on land management, food security and climate resilience. This creates an opportunity for the Department to promote and upscale agroforestry interventions for sustainable forest management as well as for securing local livelihood of our rural communities.