

Report on
Opportunities in the Development Sector in North East India - Stakeholder
Consultation Meeting

9th December 2024

Guwahati, Assam

A stakeholder consultation meeting was organised by Action for Food Production (AFPRO) on 9 December 2024 in Guwahati, Assam. The purpose of the consultation was to understand challenges, issues and opportunities in North East India States. Dr Jacob John, Executive Director - AFPRO chaired the meeting. After key note address by Executive Director, presentation was made Ms Minakshi Sharma, Assistant Regional Manager, AFPRO. The meeting was attended by Mr. Jatin Bavishi - IDH, Ms. B Lalmuansangi Mauni – NABARD, Mr. Prabal Sen – Caritas India, Mr. Jyotish Gohain – GIZ india, Mr. Manoj Verma – National Productivity Council, Ms. Nilanji Dutta – North East Network, Mr. Amarjit Lahkar – Crop Small Agriculture Service, Mr. Sanjoy Changkakaty – Tetlia FPC, Mr. Gaurav Singh – Tata Consumer Products Limited, Mr. Binoy Shankar Bora – Aaranyak.

This brief report summarises the salient features of issues, challenges and opportunities that came to the fore during presentations and discussions.

Agriculture and Allied Sector: Issues and opportunities

North East India falls in Eastern Himalaya agro-climatic region/ zones. It is diverse region for undertaking activities in agriculture and allied sectors.

Subsistence farming is practiced by indigenous people of Assam. Modern agriculture practices are becoming unsustainable, non-remunerative prices of agricultural commodities is another major issue.

There are needs and opportunities to enhance agriculture-based livelihoods like promotion of maize, kiwi, dragon fruits, traditional varieties of crops, setting up seed bank to support genetic diversity and climate resilience, improvement of tea quality and productivity, promotion of model farming, setting up /strengthening of Self Help Groups, Farmer Producer Organisations, value addition, promotion of intercropping (arecanut and cocoa), silk (particularly tassari), organic cotton, textile, fisheries, ecotourism, renewable energy (solar irrigation pumps, bio gas, etc.). Considering the climate change issues and degradation natural resources, Regenerative Agriculture is a need of an hour which needs to be incorporated in all crops like maize, rice, tea, etc.

Value chain assessment and collective action through FPOs could be promoted. Clusters for different fruits, tea, or rice can be mapped out and FPOs can formed in linkages with NABARD and other relevant organizations.

Biodiversity Conservation: Issues and Opportunities

North East India is part of globally recognised “Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot”. However, biodiversity in the region is threatened due to habitat loss, human wildlife conflict, illegal trade in wildlife, wildlife poaching, climate change, infrastructure development, etc.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework has 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030. India has developed and updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2023-24). North East Indian States including Assam has also developed State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. There is a rich natural and cultural heritage in North East India and vast traditional knowledge which needs protection and documentation.

Based on above needs and opportunities, interventions for biodiversity conservation like afforestation, restoration of degraded forests and wetlands through community based approaches and innovative methods based on traditional knowledge can be implemented. Community based interventions like People's Biodiversity Register, strengthening of Biodiversity Management Committee, Joint Forest Management Committee for biodiversity conservation based on indigenous knowledge can also be promoted.

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) is one of the key issues which hinders the biodiversity conservation. Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict particularly w.r.t wild elephant, wild boar, monkey, big cat, etc. using modern technologies based on sensors, AI, etc. can also support to minimize the issue. HWC related interventions may address issues related to both agriculture and allied sector, and biodiversity conservation. Apart from this, application of nature based solutions (based on indigenous knowledge) for mitigation of natural disasters can be incorporated which has impacts on biodiversity loss like flooding, landslides, etc.

Cross Cutting Themes

Gender: While not all states in the North East of India are matrilineal, some do have strong matrilineal traditions particularly Khasi and Garo communities in Meghalaya. Therefore, women participation and gender mainstreaming need to be fostered in all development initiatives related to agriculture and biodiversity conservation for improved incomes and livelihoods.

Poor village Infrastructure: Poor accessibility to basic needs like drinking water, sanitation facility, public health facilities, transportation, etc. affects overall socio-economic growth.

Climate Change: The states with a relatively high vulnerability particularly Mizoram, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh requires prioritisation of adaptation interventions, including activities proposed in agriculture and biodiversity conservation. Focus on Carbon Credit and Green Credit for benefit of local communities to be maintained.

Cross Cutting Challenges

Reverse migration, remote/ poor accessibility and transportation are limiting factors for developing marketing and value addition initiatives.

Conclusion

There are several opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors, and biodiversity conservation where community based interventions can be made with effective participation of stakeholders in North East India.

The meeting ended with Vote of Thanks to participants.

Annexure: List of Participants

Sr.no.	Name	Organization
1.	Dr. Jacob John	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
2.	Ms. Meenakshi Sharma	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
3.	Mr. Jatin Bavishi	IDH
4.	Mr. Prabal Sen	Caritas India
5.	Mr. Jyotish Gohain	GIZ
6.	Mr. Arunava Gupta	Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP), Aaranyak
7.	Ms. Nilanju Dutta	North East Network , Assam
8.	Mr. Manoj Verma	National Productivity Council
9.	Mr. Amarjit Lahkar	Crop Small Agriculture Service
10.	Ms. B Lalmuansangi Mauni	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
11.	Mr. Sanjoy Changkakaty	Tetlia FPC
12.	Mr. Gaurav Singh	Tata Consumer Products Limited
13.	Mr. Bijoy Shankar Bora	Aaranyak
14.	Mr. Saugot Chowdhury	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
15.	Mr. Dhanajay Kumar	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
16.	Mr. Anuj Pratim Bordoloi	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
17.	Mr. Sujit Kumar Bora	Action for Food Production (AFPRO)
18.	Mr. Sangram Salunke	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
19.	Mr Krishna Kumar	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
20.	Ms Parina Einjen	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
21.	Ms Mamta Singh	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
22.	Dr Seema Chelat	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
23.	Dr Pradeep Kumar Oraon	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
24.	Ms Geeta Deswal	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)
25.	Mr Akhilesh Sinha	Action for Food Production (AFPRO), (Virtual Mode)