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**Need for Expansive Land  
Management Policy**

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## NEED FOR EXPANSIVE LAND MANAGEMENT POLICY

### In Context

- The discourse of land resource management has witnessed a major shift especially in the developing countries.

### About land-management practices

- Land management falls under the purview of **State governments**.
- Further, cultural land is privately owned and land-use decisions are constitutionally vested with the owner.
- Land is central to all human activities and It provides ecological, economic, social, and cultural services.
- The multi-dimensional character of land is often overlooked in land management practices, resulting in excessive stress, land degradation, and environmental draw down.

### The challenges in India

- **Huge pressure on land:** India with **only 2.4% of the world's geographical area** and **more than 17%** of the world population experiences several land management challenges.
  - ♦ **Arable land** in India is around **55% of total geographical area** and forest cover accounts for another **22%**.
    - The rest is desert, mountains, etc. Around **30% of total geographical area** is **degraded land**.
  - ♦ Development targets and the demand for land to accommodate the growing population, infrastructure, rapid urbanisation, and social, cultural, and environmental aspects are placing unprecedented pressure on land.
- **Environmental** : Across the country, natural areas are being squeezed and ecological functions being lost. It adversely affects the livelihood opportunities of the people who directly depend on environmental resources and also the buffering effects of natural ecosystems in the face of disasters such as floods and droughts, temperature rise, and environmental pollution are severely compromised.
- **Management** : In India, current land management practices are sectoral with each department following its own approach.
  - ♦ The challenges to adopt and implement appropriate land management practices in the country include **knowledge gaps, a short-term planning bias, a fragmented approach, lack of action for unforeseen events, and regulatory barriers**.

### Approach of Global Community

- Globally, the annual losses of ecosystem services due to **land degradation has been estimated at \$6 trillion**.
- The **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), adopted in 1994**, is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management
  - ♦ The **UNCCD (COP14)** in 2019 specifically discussed the **problem of land degradation** experienced by different countries and the need to find ways of achieving land degradation neutrality.
- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's** special report on 'Climate Change and Land' (2019) suggested country-level stocktaking of land management practices.

- ◆ It also proposed several near- and long-term actions with the thrust on land management options that reduce competition for land with co-benefits and minimum negative impacts on key ecosystem services.
- The **Food and Agriculture Organization report**, 2021, argued that a sense of urgency needs to prevail over a hitherto neglected area of public policy and human welfare— that of caring for the long-term future of land, soil, and water.
- The **European Landscape Convention** proclaimed that landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being.
- The **U.K. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology** in its report in 2021 observed that “actions for addressing and adapting to climate change, achieving food security and tackling the biodiversity crisis are all embedded in and depend on how land is managed”.

### Suggestions and Way Forward

- As a critical mechanism to achieving sectoral integration and addressing the existing challenges, it is imperative to **set up a multi-stakeholder platform** at the district and sub-district levels to bring together farmers, other land managers, policymakers, civil society organisations, business leaders, and investors under a **common platform**.
- **Article 243ZD (1)** of the Constitution provides for district planning committees to consolidate plans from panchayats and municipalities.
  - ◆ This committee may be activated in the direction of preparing a land management plan, covering both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.
- A **landscape approach** will be useful as it will provide deep insights to assess the potential of land and the scope of allocation and reallocation of land for appropriate uses.
- This will **help evaluation, negotiation, trade off, and decision-making**.
- A climate-smart landscape approach will contribute to climate objectives, increased agricultural production, improved local livelihoods and the conservation of biodiversity.
- India's parliamentarians can initiate deliberations on the emerging challenges of integrated land management practices and help devise appropriate policies for long-term sustainability by involving all actors across the scale, both horizontal and vertical.

### Mains Practice Question

**[Q]** How Changes in the land-use pattern impact environmental conditions ?Critically analyse the Prevailing Land management practices in India .