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News: Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)

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- Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) is **launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, offering **voluntary third-party certification designed to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.**
- IFWCS aims to **offer an alternative to private foreign certification agencies that have been operating in India.** It seeks to **ensure greater integrity, transparency, and credibility in certifying sustainable forest management and wood-based products.**

Certification Scope

- The scheme covers three main areas for certification: **Sustainable forest management, Sustainable management of trees outside forests (like plantations), and Chain of custody**, which guarantees the traceability of forest products throughout their supply chain, ensuring ethical sourcing and handling.

Nodal Agencies

- The scheme will be **overseen by the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council**, which will act as a multistakeholder advisory body.
- **Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal** will act as the **scheme operating agency** and will be responsible for overall management of the Scheme.
- The **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India** will **accredit the certification bodies** which will carry out independent audits and assess adherence of various entities on the standards prescribed under the scheme.

Trees Outside Forests Standard

- A **separate Trees Outside Forests Standard** is now introduced as a part of the **Scheme**.
- ‘Trees outside Forests’ **means trees growing outside recorded and notified forests, in farm lands of an individual farmers or group of small farmers or plantation area on private land of institutions and industries, etc. and include all trees on the hedges and bunds, trees in different models of agroforestry, silvo-pastoralism, urban and rural forestry systems and block plantations.**

Benefits

- The certification is expected to enhance trust and transparency in processes related to forest management and wood-based products.
- The IFWCS can provide market incentives to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management and agroforestry practices in their operations.
- This includes state forest departments, individual farmers, or Farmer Producer Organizations engaged in agroforestry and farm forestry, as well as other wood-based industries in the value chain.