

Science Awareness Webinar - 12

Food Forests: An Agroforestry Strategy for Countering Climate Change through Enhanced Soil Carbon Sequestration and Soil Organic Matter.



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MODERATOR

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ABSTRACT OF THE TALK

Food forests (FFs) are ecologically sustainable systems that mimic natural forests by integrating diverse fruit trees with annual and perennial food crops. This approach offers small farmers in India a means to enhance food and nutritional security while generating additional income. FFs are characterized by layered planting, use of fast-growing nurse crops like banana and papaya, and continuous live mulch to maintain soil moisture, suppress weeds, and enrich soil nutrients through biological nitrogen fixation. A key principle is minimal soil disturbance—crops are harvested without uprooting plants, promoting the buildup of soil organic matter and carbon sequestration via root decomposition. FFs support nutrient cycling and resource efficiency, especially with proper canopy and moisture management. Though less commercially intensive than other agroforestry models, FFs prioritize soil health and long-term sustainability.

Evidence from Kerala, including the Speakers' own farm, shows growing interest and successful implementation of FFs, particularly among smallholders. As a climate-resilient strategy, FFs are gaining popularity in regions with limited land resources and hold promise for broader adoption across humid tropical zones.

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