



Land Reclamation and its Impact on Agriculture: With Special Reference to Theni District in Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract

Desertification is a global ecological problem. It is common in many areas in the Theni district of Tamil Nadu. The study villages in the Theni district are affected by the aeolian sand deposition, forming linear dunes along the Western Ghats. They have been so for hundreds of years. Arable/agricultural land has been covered by dunes for an area of 12,000 ha (1999). High dunes are stretching for almost 20-25 km along the Western Ghats, after about 40% the area (4,800 ha) has been sand quarried in the last several years. The villages get very low rainfall of about 650 mm to 750 mm a year as they are in the rain shadow of the Ghats. The study looks at what happened after sand quarrying/mining of the area by the human agency during 2012-2018 and how the reclaimed areas are now used, for small-scale agriculture, in the last six years. Secondary and documentary data are not available for the exact extent of reclaimed land being used, as no survey has been done since 1976. Also, lands under the dunes could not be surveyed. The objectives of the study are: (1) To examine the process of land reclamation in the study area through sand mining from the dunes and sand encroached areas; and (2) To analyse the use of reclaimed land for agriculture, by the marginal and small farmers. Land reclamation has been happening for several years as an individual effort. Some farmers have decided on their own or the advice of a neighbour. In some cases, they have followed others. Lands of great extent (nearly 100 ha) have been reclaimed from the dunes in Maniampatti and Silamalai are our current concern. The paper speaks about the impacts of land reclamation on the agriculture of the villages from a questionnaire survey.

Keywords: Desertification, Land reclamation, Sand mining, Marginal and small farmers, Participatory appraisals, Theni district