



Status of tribal agriculture in Odisha perspective

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ABSTRACT

Shifting cultivation is most prevalent in Eastern and North Eastern Regions of India. Odisha alone accounts for the largest area of 1.6 m ha (36.6%) under shifting cultivation in India. However, there are wide variations in the areas reported under shifting cultivation in Odisha by the different agencies. This system of agriculture is extensively practiced by tribals in Odisha and about 2 lakh tribal families from more than 20 tribal communities are engaged in this practice. Shifting cultivation is locally known as the *podu chasa* but tribals in different parts of Odisha have their own names for this practice. The tribals consider it as a means of livelihood and a way of life mixed with celebration of many festivals. Though the evil effects of shifting cultivation are devastating and responsible for the degradation of the environment and ecology, it is still practiced by the tribals of Odisha. Due to growing tribal population, the earlier practice of 15-20 years *Podu* cycle has been reduced now to 2-3 years, thereby resulting in large scale soil erosion and land degradation. The characteristics, distribution and extent of area under shifting cultivation, and tribal perception and impact of shifting cultivation practice in Odisha are discussed. Promising initiatives to curb shifting cultivation are indicated.