



15-Dec-2019

Email: [mediarelations@ishafoundation.org](mailto:mediarelations@ishafoundation.org)

## **Rally for Rivers Board reviews Cauvery Calling implementation plan**

*Board visits a model agroforestry farm in Coimbatore*

**15 December 2019, Coimbatore:** The Rally for Rivers board met at Isha Yoga Center, Coimbatore today to review and discuss the large-scale implementation of Cauvery Calling project in 28 Cauvery basin districts which involves plantation of 242 crore trees on farmland through agroforestry in the next 12 years. The board discussed various ways to make agroforestry an integral part of agricultural practice in the nation, particularly in the Cauvery basin and interventions needed to overcome policy challenges which prevent growing, felling, transport and selling of agroforestry produce.

In collaboration with Government of Karnataka, Cauvery Calling teams are gearing up to start plantation in 54 rural Taluks of Karnataka in the river basin.

A.S. Kiran Kumar, former chairperson of Indian Space Research Organisation and a member of the board, said, "It is heartening to see the pace at which Cauvery Calling campaign has reached the implementation phase. The efforts being made by the Cauvery Calling teams to implement a project of such a large-scale and volume is commendable. I have been seeing the support and credibility the campaign has garnered even internationally from agencies such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) acknowledging the efforts and demonstrable model that Isha is working towards."

Speaking on the need for an agricultural reform for revitalization of soil and water in the nation, Sadhguru said, "The most vital agricultural reform needed in the nation right

now is that a farmer should be liberated from a variety of controls and allowed to grow, fell, transport and sell his produce according to the dictates of the market. Government support is needed, but no controls are needed. This is vital for revitalization of soil, water and agriculture in the nation and for ensuring that the next generation takes to farming.”

Commenting on the unprecedented nature and scale of the campaign, Justice Arijit Pasayat, former Supreme Court of India judge and a member of the Rally for Rivers Board, said, “We started Cauvery Calling on a blank slate but in a short span of time it has created the desired, positive impact and results. The very fact that people have been receptive and responsive to the campaign shows that they have found utility and credibility in what they are doing.”

Earlier today, the board members visited a model agroforestry farm that was started through intervention from Isha's ecological project Project GreenHands in Semmedu, Coimbatore. Velumani who converted his farmland partially into agroforestry in 2012 and is not only reaping immense economic benefits through his agroforestry produce but has also noticed a visible enhancement in soil and water conditions in and around the field.

The board also reviewed the ongoing Waghadi River Revitalization Program in Yavatmal, Maharashtra which Rally for Rivers is implementing for the last one year in collaboration with Government of Maharashtra.

The board comprises Mr. Ravi Singh, CEO and Secretary General, World Wide Fund for Nature-India; Justice Arijit Pasayat, Retired Judge, Supreme Court of India; Dr AS Kiran Kumar, former Chairperson, Indian Space Research Organisation; Ms. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson and Managing Director, Biocon Ltd; Mr. Shashi Shekhar, former Secretary, Water Resources, Government of India; Mr. Pravesh Sharma, former Secretary and MD of Small Farmers’ Agri-Business Consortium, Government of India; Mr. B Muthuraman, former Chairperson, Tata Steel, Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, Confederation of Indian Industries and Mr Narasimha Raju, Retd IAS, former Secretary, Government of Karnataka.

The next board meeting is scheduled in March 2020.

### **About Cauvery Calling**

Cauvery Calling is a first of its kind campaign, setting the standard for how India's rivers – the country's lifelines – can be revitalized. It will initiate the revitalization of the Cauvery river by supporting farmers to plant 242 crore trees in the river basin. This will increase water retention in the basin, while improving the income of farmers by 300-800% in 5-7 years and transforming the lives of 84 million people.

**If you would like to know more about this, please write to [mediarelations@ishafoundation.org](mailto:mediarelations@ishafoundation.org).**