

Kodagu Model Forest

Member of the Regional
Model Forest Network
–Asia since 2005

Home to India's sacred forests and
shade-grown coffee agroforestry

Landscape snapshot

Nestled in the rugged hills of
the Western Ghats, Kodagu
Model Forest boasts:

80%

tree cover
with natural
and sacred
agroforests

38%

coffee plantations under
multistoried agroforests

48%

natural forest
cover hosting
major tropical
forests



HUMAN POPULATION

~500,000 inhabitants
18 ethnic groups and
tribal communities
across 300 villages



AREA

410,800 hectares

Landscape highlights

Kodagu Model Forest is part of the Western Ghats



a 1,600 km-long mountain range



a UNESCO World
Heritage Site since 2012



one of 36 global biodiversity hotspots



home to at least
325 threatened species (UNESCO)



The Kaveri River, originating in Kodagu, Karnataka, stretches over 800 km as South India's third largest river. It provides water to 80 million people downstream, including in Bengaluru and other major cities.

sustainable



coffee



honey



Coorg
orange



cardamom



rice



Forest profile

Four types of natural forests:



evergreen



semi-evergreen



moist deciduous



dry deciduous

managed by
the forest department

Prevailing forest conditions:



community
forest



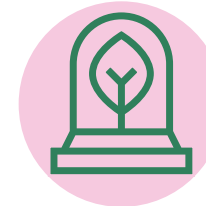
plantation
forest



conservation
forest



1,214 sacred groves
managed by
18 communities



1 national park
and
3 wildlife
sanctuaries



Biodiversity highlights

925

flora species
accounting for
6% of Indian flora



68 endemic to the Western Ghats

 **16 Critically Endangered**

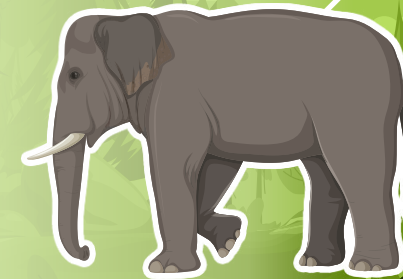
3,990
fauna species

 **13 Critically
Endangered**



Home to

1,100 elephants



149
tigers



Notable achievements

Coffee agroforestry in Kodagu:

The world's most diverse coffee production system



India's **largest**
shade-grown
coffee region



produces **38%**
of the
country's coffee



supports **51%**
of **local**
employment

Forest restoration



6,280 seedlings planted
across 60 hectares of the district



Invasive species eradicated
in 25 hectares across 4 sacred groves
• 100 species conserved with an **85% success rate**



4 vetiver nurseries
• **40,000** vetiver slips cultivated to stabilize eroded slope

Brewing sustainability: Kodagu, India's heart of coffee agroforestry



Situated on the Western Ghats mountain range in India, Kodagu spreads across 410,800 hectares. Despite being one of the smallest districts in Karnataka, Kodagu accounts for 38 per cent of India's coffee. It produced over 132,620 metric tons of coffee in the 2023–24 cycle.

Kodagu's coffee-cultivated areas are managed under agroforestry, a land use system that integrates trees into agriculture. Coffee shrubs are grown under taller native trees that form large, shade-providing canopies, providing ideal conditions that boost the growth of fine quality coffee beans and beneficial biota offering valuable ecosystem services.

Thanks to high native tree richness, Kodagu's agroforested coffee generates consistent income and livelihoods, with 51 per cent of the district's workers employed in the coffee-producing industry.

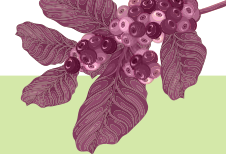
Like many other parts of India, Kodagu has a long history of nature worship. The tradition of sacred groves, known locally as 'devakad', regards forests as sacred dwellings for gods, reflecting a unique form of community-led forest conservation. Kodagu is home to over 1,214 sacred groves honouring 65 different deities, preserving both cultural heritage and biodiversity.

Despite its successes in sustainable land management, Kodagu faces significant environmental challenges. Human–wildlife interactions, particularly with elephants, lead to crop losses and occasionally, threats to human life. The region is also vulnerable to climate change-exacerbated disasters like landslides, floods and erratic monsoons that threaten coffee plantations, forests and local infrastructure. Disaster preparedness and community-led conservation efforts can help improve disaster risk reduction and ensure human–wildlife coexistence.



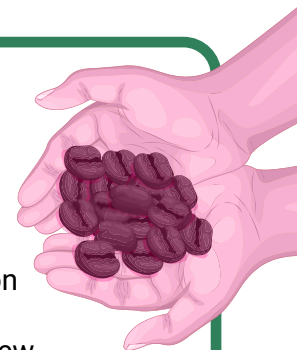
Current work

- Conflict mitigation: reduced human–wildlife conflict with local communities and forest department
- Sacred groves: conservation and restoration through multi-stakeholder approach
- Sustainable farming: incentives via eco-certification and payment for ecosystem services (PES)
- Partnerships: collaboration with local, regional and international institutions
- Clean cooking: introduction of smokeless stoves in local households
- Disaster response: support during floods and landslides
- Community empowerment: raising awareness on health, education and livelihoods through district-wide community forums



Future priorities

- Conflict mitigation: continued efforts in human–wildlife coexistence
- Regenerative restoration: coffee estates, sacred forests and agricultural land
- Farm incentives: expanded eco-certification and PES programmes
- Model Forest Network: establishment of new sites across the Western Ghats in Karnataka



IMFN Climate Contribution Agreement 2025-2026

Through collaboration and funding support from the International Model Forest Network (IMFN), the Model Forest is restoring degraded natural forests and forest plantations, and recovering agricultural land abandoned as a result of landslides and human–wildlife conflict.



Vision

A sustainable Kodagu where forests, a unique coffee agroforestry system and other ecosystems are managed to ensure environmental and socio-economic equilibrium and conservation of catchments areas, serving as a model for the Western Ghats and other regions.

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