



# Forest Dependence, Institutions and Enforcement: An Empirical Study in the Drought Prone District of Purulia, West Bengal

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**Abstract:** The paper attempts to measure forest dependence by constructing a forest dependence index based on forest product collection for meeting livelihoods and to examine how village level forest institutions and enforcement have impacted on forest dependence index. Besides, the paper tries to identify the factors influencing forest dependency and its implication for forest conservation. The present paper is based on primary data collected from the Purulia forest division in the district of Purulia, one of drought prone districts of West Bengal during the month of January, 2020. A multistage sampling technique and questionnaire method are followed for data collection. In the field survey, nine villages and 252 households are involved. Forest dependence index was 0.38 and more than 60 percent of households are highly forest dependent. The forest dependence index is influenced by caste, agricultural employment, off-farm employment, forest income, institutional and enforcement indices. There existed strong forest governance implying that institutions and enforcement have efficiently worked to prevent high forest dependency. This paper has important policy implication for forest conservation, the creation of alternative employment and income from off-farm sectors.

**Keywords:** Forest dependency index, Forest products collection, Off-farm sector, Institution, Enforcement, Forest conservation

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