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percentage of land-use change detected is less than one per cent in terms of total area, about 641 hectares forest land appears to have been converted from barren land to agriculture and about 580 hectares of forests to agriculture.

In a separate set of data, since satellite images of 2011-12 were available for six districts, only 26,807 finalized FR cases were analyzed, covering 45,034 hectares in Jalgaon, Dhule, Nandurbar, Nashik, Thane, and Gadchiroli districts. It was found that 39,996 (89 per cent) hectares is under cultivation within the approved plots in 2011-12 which is a four per cent increase from 2007-08. Forest/tree cover and barren land has reduced from 910 to 433 hectares and 5476 to 4605 hectares respectively between 2007-08 and 2011-12. This means that people have cleared forest cover and started cultivation after FRs have been recognized on these lands, the study points out.

In these six districts, at least 5037.88 hectares of ineligible forest land on which Forest Rights have been recognized is still not converted into cultivation as per 2011-12 satellite images. In FR cases' analysis on Cartosat-1 satellite images of 2007-08 and 2011-12, it has been observed that in 827 cases out of 26,807 finally recognized FR cases, land-use changed between 2007-08 to 2011-12.

The percentage of land-use changes in finally recognized FR cases shows an increase in 2011-12 (3.1 per cent) compared to 2007-08 (2.3 per cent). In an analysis of claims applied for but not recognized, it increased from 12.4 per cent to 18.3 per cent. Land use changes violate the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and data from all districts needs to be revisited for verification of claims and ensuring forests are not cut down. (Reference: **The Hindu**)

Unfortunately the earlier Government disqualified the evidence of satellite images.

What happened in Sonitpur-Assam?

The satellite imagery that Sanctuary has examined from across the country comparing the 2005 forest status with 2013 is depressing. Every fear we had has come true with a vengeance. Elastic cut off dates designed to turn illegitimate claims into legitimate ones has been an old politicians' ploy to regularize slums in urban areas. It was always our fear that a similar strategy would be employed for the FRA. And it is not just central India where this tragedy is playing itself out. Social activists are conveniently silent about Sonitpur in Assam where out of 60,000 FRA claims, 30,000 or so came from just that one district. Consequently, what was once a thick flourishing forest was hacked down to facilitate the false claim that agriculture had been practiced in that geography "for decades". Mustard began to be sowed here within one season of the timber mafia moving out with their hardwoods, leaving just stumps (some with a girth of over five-metres). The extent of this tragedy? Virtually the entire forest was extirpated adjoining the Nameri Tiger Reserve along a length of around 15+ km. (Reference: **The sanctuary Asia-June, 2014**)

Write Petition in Supreme Court:

A writ petition has now been filed by Praveen Bhargav (Wildlife First), Kishor Rithe (Nature Conservation Society, Amravati), and Poonam Dhanwatey (Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT)), in the Supreme Court of India demanding that an independent committee of experts or the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) examine the track record of implementation