

IIT-Mandi motivates entrepreneurs to set up pine needle-based industry

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To motivate entrepreneurs to set up a pine needle based industry, Indian Institute of Technology Mandi's Centre for Innovative Technology for the Himalayan Region (CITHR) organised a workshop on the 'use of briquette machine for dry pine needle briquetting'.

The workshop was organised on Wednesday at IIT-Mandi which witnessed participation of 24 entrepreneurs from a different division of Himachal joined the workshop.

The main goal of the workshop was to motivate entrepreneurs to set up a pine

needle based industry. Centre for Innovative Technology for the Himalayan Region at the Institute is funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. In the workshop, under the guidance of IIT-Mandi, Principle Investigator and Associate Professor, Prof Arti Kashyap the procedure involved in dry pine needle briquetting was explained in detail.

A demonstration and hands-on training of the setup was also given at the Centre for Uplifting Himalayan Livelihood (UHL) so that the participants could easily understand how the machine works. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has

announced a subsidy of 50 percent up to 25 lakh, for one unit, on capital expenses for pine needle based plants, he said.

"This assistance can be obtained by giving a letter in the office of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). Till date, 21 applications are stated to have been received by the Forest Department to setup pine needle based industry," he added. Due to the non-biodegradable and highly-inflammable nature pine needle causes a major threat to the environment, forest biodiversity and local economy in the Himalayan region.

Center for Innovative Technology for the Himalayan Region is working to save

the forest from the fire caused by dry pine needles for the last three years. It has successfully prepared the briquettes and pellets from pure pine needles and the mixing of pine needles with other bio-masses.

The Center has its own briquette and pellet production plant set up in IIT-Mandi campus. The capacity of the machine is 150 kilograms per hour with a connected load of 15 HP.

The cost of the setup is Rs. 5.5 Lakh and the production cost of the dry pine needle briquettes is Rs 3,500/ton and according to the heating value of the product its selling price would be Rs 6500/ton.