

# Cauvery Calling

An Economic Model for Farmers with a Significant Ecological Impact

Annual Report: April 2024 - March 2025



“Every extra green leaf is a powerful step towards mitigating the climate crisis evolving on the planet.”

Sadhguru

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## **1. Introduction**

**Cauvery Calling** is a first-of-its-kind campaign born from the momentum of **Sadhguru's Rally for Rivers** movement, which had garnered the support of **16.2 crore citizens**. Cauvery Calling is setting the standard for how tropical rivers, “the planet’s lifelines,” can be revitalized. More than just an ecological initiative, **Cauvery Calling** is an innovative economic model for farmers, driving both financial stability and environmental restoration. Building upon the success of **Project GreenHands'** work since 1998, Cauvery Calling empowers farmers across **46 districts in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu** to adopt **tree-based agriculture**. This not only revitalizes farmlands but also fosters biodiversity and combats climate change.

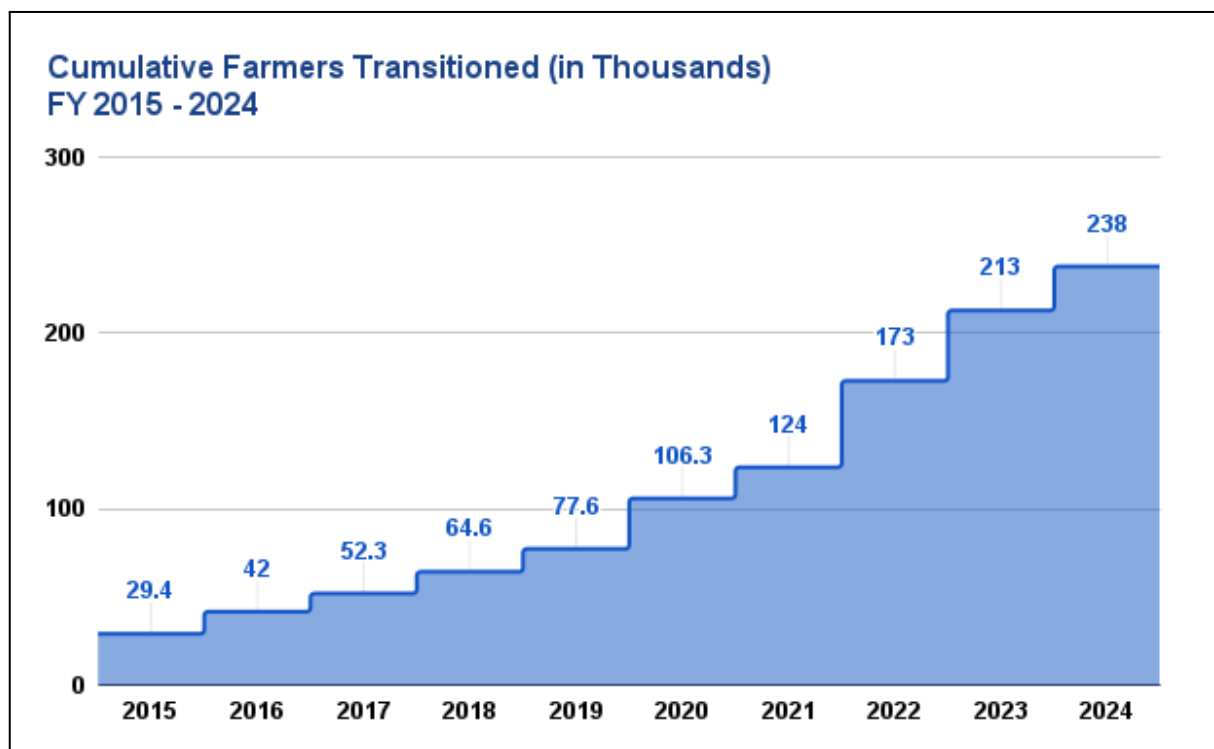
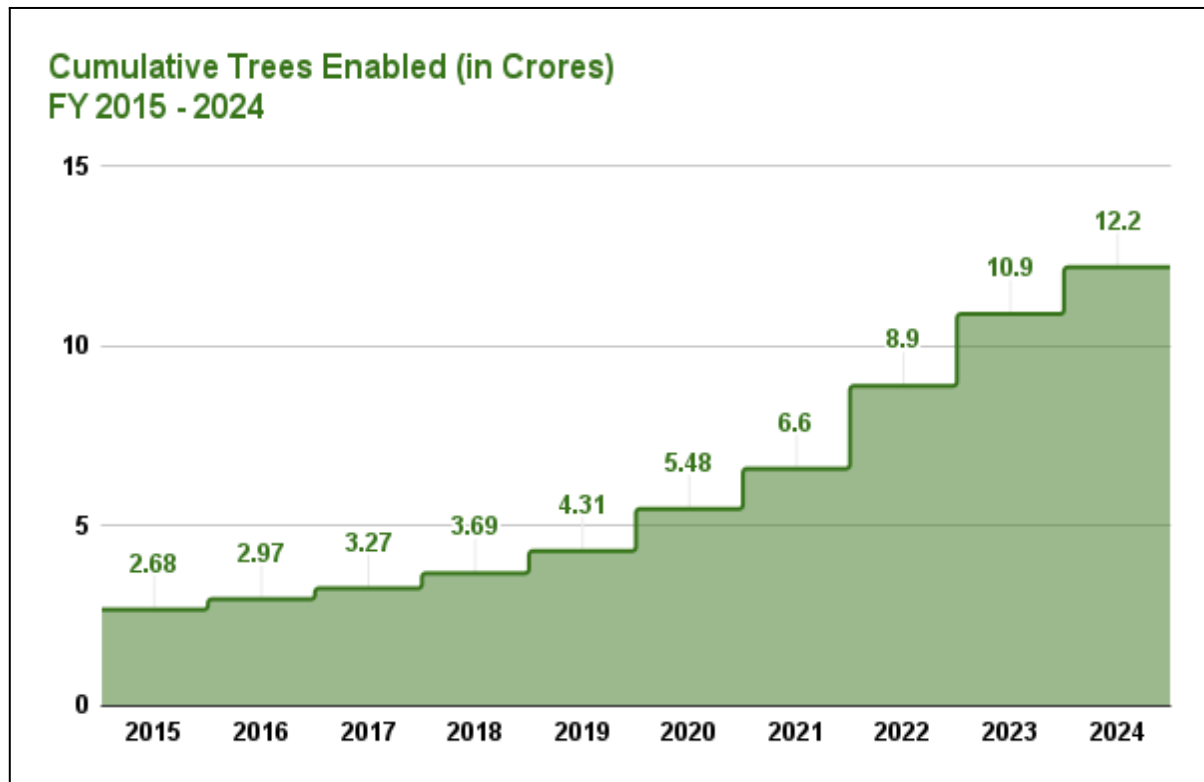
By addressing **water scarcity, soil degradation, and farmer distress**, **Cauvery Calling** offers a **unique and impactful solution**. This report details the project's growth and impact on these crucial aspects in FY 2024-25 and the **cumulative number of tree plantings** enabled and farmers transitioned to **tree-based agriculture**.

### **27 Years of Empowering Farmers, Transforming Landscapes:**

Cauvery Calling's commitment to **ecological restoration** began over two decades ago with **Project GreenHands**. Through this initiative, Isha gained invaluable experience working directly with farmers and communities. This laid the foundation for Isha’s impact to date:

- **Trees Enabled:** 12.2 crore
- **Trees Enabled in FY 2024-25:** 1.36 crore
- **Farmers Transitioned:** 2,38,000 farmers empowered to adopt sustainable, tree-based agricultural practices.
- **Farmers Transitioned in FY 2024-25:** 25,000+

The following graphs illustrate the cumulative project growth in terms of tree plantings enabled and farmers transitioned.





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## 2. Impact on the Farmer Community

### Farmers Transitioning to Sustainable Practices:

Cauvery Calling has demonstrably improved the lives of farmers by promoting a shift towards profitable and sustainable tree-based agriculture. Research suggests that adopting tree-based agriculture has the potential to boost a farmer's average yearly earnings by up to **6.4 times** compared to traditional agricultural methods within a span of 20 years. This translates to long-term financial security and improved livelihoods for farming families.

Since Cauvery Calling's inception, a remarkable **2,38,000+ farmers** across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have transitioned to tree-based agriculture. In the last financial year alone (FY 2024-25), **25,000+ farmers** embraced tree-based agriculture.

Farmer Outreach for the Financial Year 2024-2025					
Category	Acres	Farmers	Total Acres	% of Farmers	% of Land
Marginal	≤ 2.5	10,372	18,375	42%	13%
Small	> 2.5-5	10,010	40,419	40%	28%
Semi Medium	> 5-10	3,483	29,256	14%	20%
Medium	> 10-25	1,219	21,643	5%	15%
Large	> 25	380	34,623	2%	24%
Total		25,464	1,44,315	100%	100%

### Farmer Nurseries: A Livelihood Model Strategy:

Recognizing the importance of creating sustainable livelihoods for farmers, in 2022, farmer nurseries were piloted, empowering them to become active participants in the project's growth. This initiative has proven highly successful.

There are two primary models within the farmer nursery program:

#### Production Nurseries:

These nurseries are run by 22 farmers trained by Cauvery Calling. The farmers receive training, seeds and sapling bags to produce high-quality organic saplings. Crucially, Cauvery Calling offers an **assured buy-back arrangement**, guaranteeing a market for the produced saplings. This model fosters entrepreneurship and financial security. In FY 2024-25, these production nurseries run by farmers produced a staggering **50 lakh+ saplings**.

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The success of the farmer nurseries extends beyond immediate income generation. The **awareness generation and training activities** have significantly enhanced farmers' knowledge of tree-based agriculture techniques. This is particularly evident among the **25% of farmer-producers in the 25-35 age group**. Their increased profitability inspires a new generation to consider careers in agriculture, ensuring the program's long-term sustainability.

### **Distribution Nurseries:**

This model has empowered 22 farmers to distribute saplings from the nurseries established on their lands. Cauvery Calling provides these farmers with ready-to-sell saplings and offers incentives for successful distribution. In FY 2024-25, such nurseries successfully distributed **25 lakh+ saplings**. This model is crucial for expanding project reach and ensuring sufficient sapling availability across a vast area.

These production and distribution nurseries empower farmers to actively contribute to Cauvery Calling's success while creating a sustainable source of income for themselves and their families.

### **Nursery Support Staff: Empowering Women:**

Cauvery Calling is committed to social upliftment alongside environmental restoration. The project offers **permanent employment** opportunities to landless farmers and daily wage laborers. These positions provide **crucial welfare benefits and financial stability**. **Women are a driving force** in Cauvery Calling's 31 self-operated nurseries, with managerial and supervisory roles also being women-led. Currently, **325 women and 63 men** find employment and empowerment through these nursery support staff positions.



The nursery in Cuddalore is one of the world's largest single-site production nurseries with an annual production capacity of more than 85 lakh saplings of 54 different species.

Four years ago, **Praveena from Chinna Kattusagai village** joined the Cauvery Calling Nursery with no prior work experience. Despite facing doubts and discouragement from those around her, she chose to believe in herself and persevered.

As time passed, the work became easier, and she built strong friendships with her colleagues. Her journey at Cauvery



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Calling Nursery has brought her financial stability and self-assurance. Today, Praveena can send her two children to school and manage her family's expenses independently.

“What makes Cauvery Calling special is the sense of belonging. Despite challenges at home, once I step through these gates, I feel part of one big family. There’s no competition - only support and understanding. We share our joys and difficulties like brothers and sisters.

Being a part of Cauvery Calling Nursery has truly transformed my life, not just economically but also emotionally. I’m deeply grateful for the opportunities and the belief they’ve placed in us,” she says.

### **Impact of High-Quality Planting Material:**

Cauvery Calling prioritizes the distribution of high-quality, organic saplings to participating farmers. To ensure farmer commitment, these saplings are provided at a nominal charge of ₹3 per sapling. This heavily subsidized rate substantially lowers the upfront cost for farmers, thereby encouraging greater participation in the program.



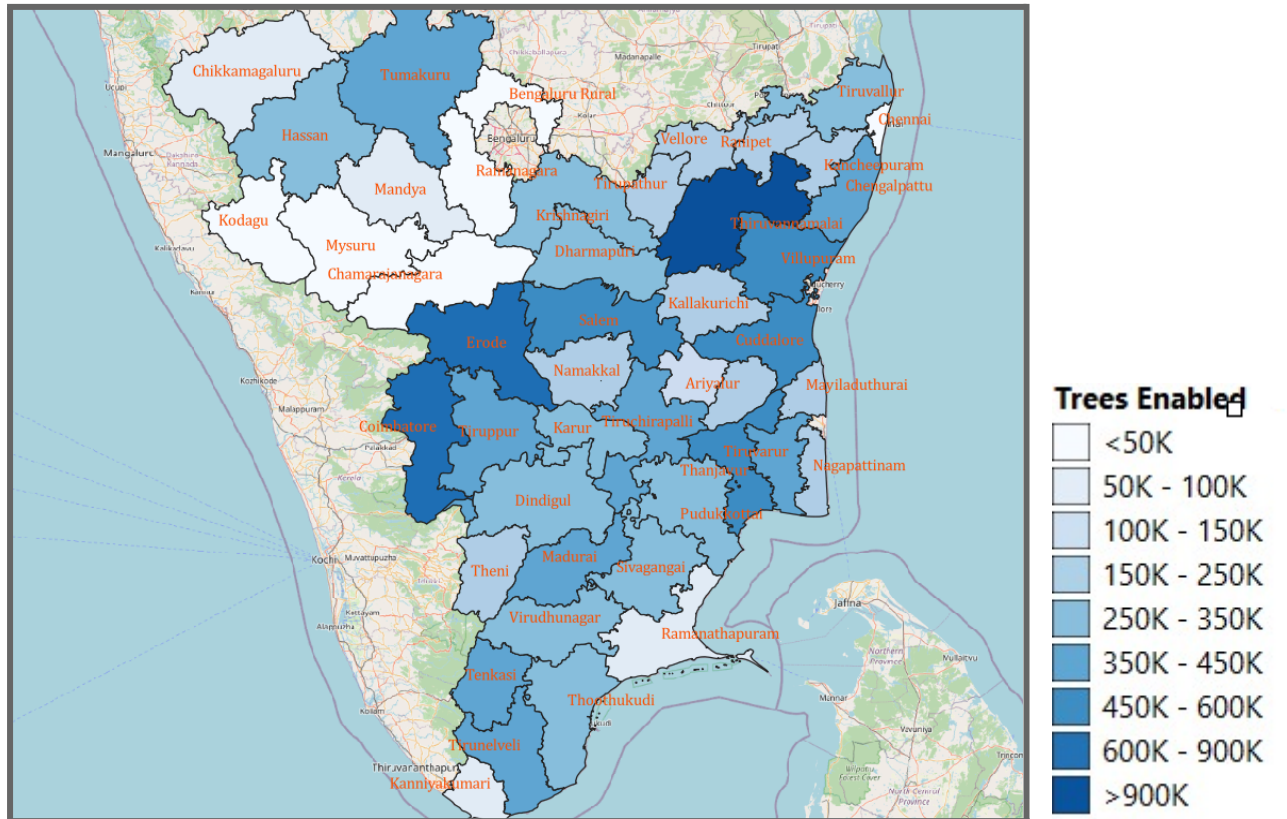
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### **3. Ecological Impact**

The large-scale tree planting facilitated by Cauvery Calling is projected to have a significant positive impact on the regional ecology. Here is a breakdown of the anticipated benefits from the estimated 85,000 hectares covered by the 12.2 crore saplings planted so far:

- **Carbon Sequestration**: These trees are expected to sequester an impressive **4.9 crore tons of CO<sub>2</sub>** over a 30-year growth period, contributing significantly to climate change mitigation.
- **Enhanced Water Security**: Tree cover will intercept **768 hundreds of crore liters of rainwater** every year. Increased tree cover promotes water percolation, replenishing groundwater reserves.
- **Combating Land Degradation**: An increase in tree cover and the increase in soil organic matter via decomposing leaves (litter) will help reverse land degradation, a critical challenge in the region.
- **Improved Soil Health**: Tree root systems provide vital soil protection against erosion, while promoting higher soil organic matter. This leads to enhanced water percolation and improved overall soil quality.
- **Microclimate Regulation**: The presence of trees moderates temperatures and increases moisture, creating a more favorable microclimate, benefiting both plant and animal life.
- **Biodiversity Enhancement**: The project fosters biodiversity by creating habitats for a wider range of plant and animal species, both above and below the ground. Increased soil organic matter and moisture content due to tree cover further promote a thriving soil biosphere.

**Trees Enabled – FY 2024–25 | Project Districts Heat Map:**



District-wise tree planting enabled are mentioned in Annexure A

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## **4. On-Ground Farmer Mobilization Impact**

Cauvery Calling prioritizes extensive on-ground efforts to mobilize farmers and promote the adoption of tree-based agriculture. During FY 2024-25, this commitment was evident through the following key achievements.

### **Farmer Outreach:**

Our dedicated team of **160 field executives** conducted a remarkable **32,272 individual on-farm consultations**. These consultations provide personalized support to farmers. Field executives conduct **soil and water testing** on participating farms. Based on these results, they recommend **regionally-appropriate tree varieties** that align with each farmer's **income generation goals** and preferences. This ensures long-term sustainability for both the farmer and the environment.

### **Widespread Awareness Generation:**

Cauvery Calling actively raises awareness about the benefits of tree-based agriculture. In FY 2024-25, the project successfully:

- **Reached 100,000+ farmers** in-person through various outreach initiatives.
- Organized 7 plantation celebratory drives in 506 event locations with the **participation of 8,552** people, 4,000 of them being farmers, and enabled the plantation of **10 lakh trees**.
- Provided **tree-based agriculture training to 8,721 farmers**.
- Secured **433 media publications**, further amplifying project reach.
- Addressed over **8,000 helpline calls**, providing prompt assistance to farmers.



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## **5. Social Media Impact**

Cauvery Calling has a strong social media presence and is using it to educate farmers and raise awareness about the importance of river and soil revitalization. Here are some key highlights from FY 2024-25:

### **Educational videos:**

Cauvery Calling has created 100+ educational videos in local languages (Kannada and Tamil) that have been **viewed over 3.5 crore times** on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

### **Farmer support:**

Cauvery Calling is nurturing a community of around **50,000 farmers** through more than 225 WhatsApp groups. Farmers can get their questions answered by farmer resource leaders and in-house technical experts. The team resolved over **8,000 helpline calls** this year.



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## 6. Success Stories: Farmers & Donors Impacted

### 1: Ramamoorthy, Farmer from Virudhanagar district, Tamil Nadu

From barren land to a thriving green haven, Ramamoorthy has transformed his farm by planting 4,000 trees, including kumizh teak (white teak), sandalwood, mahogany, neem, and pithecellobium dulce.

Thanks to tree-based agriculture, farmers like him are restoring soil health, protecting open soil, reviving river basins, and securing a sustainable future.



### 2: Tamilanban, Farmer from Sivagangai district, Tamil Nadu

After retiring from teaching, Tamilanban turned his focus to his two-acre farm in Sivagangai. Guided by Cauvery Calling, he intercropped timber species like mahogany, teak, and rosewood. Six years on, his 100 thriving mahogany trees alone are worth ₹15 lakh. "The leaves turn to compost, the soil is alive, and water isn't a worry anymore," he says. His story shows how even small farms can grow into green gold.



<https://consciousplanet.org/en/cauvery-calling/blog/beyond-coconut-diversifying-income-and-ecology-a-groforestry>

### 3: Kannamma, Farmer from Erode district, Tamil Nadu

Kannamma's story is one of grit, resilience, and a love for the land that transcends generations. From a thriving farmer to a displaced one, and then back to her roots, her journey reflects the challenges faced by many in rural India. But within her story lies a beacon of hope, ignited by the Cauvery Calling initiative.



<https://consciousplanet.org/en/cauvery-calling/blog/never-give-kannammas-journey-of-resilience-cauvery-calling>

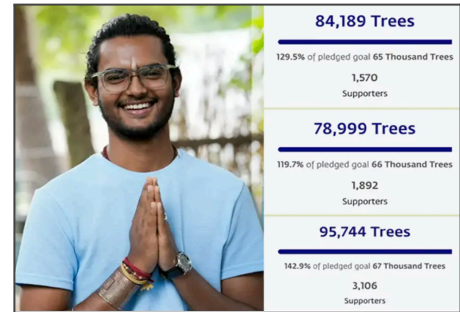
#### 4: Ram Mohan

In a touching tribute to his late wife, Sunantha, Ram Mohan brought her dream to life by contributing 50,000 trees to the Cauvery Calling campaign. Her wish was simple yet profound: to see trees thriving in her native Karur district in the Cauvery river basin.



#### 5: Anaadi Vikram Mishra

In honor of Sadhguru's 65th, 66th, and 67th birthdays (2022-2024), Anaadi Vikram Mishra took on an inspiring challenge: to contribute to the plantation of 65K, 66K, and 67K trees. His passion for Cauvery Calling drove him to surpass his targets for all three years, gifting lakhs of trees that will rejuvenate the land for generations.



#### 6: State Bank of India (SBI)

SBI's unwavering support for the **Cauvery Calling movement** enabled the plantation of **900,000 saplings annually** over the past two years, benefiting thousands of farmers across **eight districts in Tamil Nadu**.

Their steadfast partnership has been instrumental in advancing **tree-based agriculture**, **restoring soil health**, and **supporting sustainable rural livelihoods**.



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## **7. Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals**

The Cauvery Calling initiative will have a huge positive impact on the environment and human wellbeing. Cauvery Calling closely addresses 9 SDGs and touches all 17. It will fulfill the following SDGs, to name a few:

**SDG 1 - No Poverty:** In the Cauvery basin, farmer households typically earn ₹58,800 or \$800 annually. Over the past decade, our farmer-developed models in Tamil Nadu have demonstrated manifold income increases through tree-based agriculture. Converting a portion of the farm to tree-based crops ensures a farmer's financial stability.

**SDG 2 - Zero Hunger:** More than 60% of the population is in the agriculture sector in India. The improved soil quality will increase yields and nutritional content. Transitioning to tree-based agriculture, including horticulture, over cash-crops like paddy and sugarcane, yields more fruits, vital for rural diets amidst high rural poverty levels. Economic upliftment through sustainable farming tackles hunger and malnutrition. Tree-based agriculture boosts climate resilience and increases soil organic matter and moisture content for sustainable food production.

**SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation for All:** Increased river flow due to more interception of rainwater because of tree cover and reduced chemical fertilizer runoff from conventional crops will improve clean water availability, particularly in river-dependent rural areas.

**SDG 8 - Decent Work & Economic Growth:** Tree-based agriculture increases income, creates valuable farm assets, and frees farmers from labor-intensive tasks, opening avenues for allied livelihoods like value addition and marketing. This shift is poised to stem rural migration, elevate living standards, and generate more rural agricultural jobs.

**SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities:** Over 238,000 farmers have transitioned to tree-based agriculture, raising incomes and reducing reliance on mono-cropping and water-intensive practices. This can curb urban migration and bolster the rural economy. Through Cauvery Calling's farmer nursery franchise, farmers can earn engineer-level income from less than an acre of land.

**SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production:** Amidst a growing population and rising demand for forest products, cultivating forest or tree produce in agricultural land is the only way to save forests from being destroyed for timber or other goods.

**SDG 13 - Climate Action:** Cauvery Calling aims to sequester crores of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> via large-scale tree plantation. Additionally, tree-based agriculture has much higher resilience to climate-change-related weather fluctuations.

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**SDG 15 - Life on Land:** Tree-based agriculture enriches soil and above-ground biodiversity. While trees provide habitats for insects, small reptiles, and birds, fostering a thriving ecosystem above ground, they also significantly enhance soil biodiversity by enriching the soil and reversing desertification. Improved water sequestration and river flow will safeguard the Western Ghats, a global biodiversity hotspot. Increased timber supply will mitigate deforestation, promoting sustainability in the timber industry.

**SDG 17 - Partnership for the Goal:** The entire Cauvery Calling project is based on the key insight that only an all-inclusive people's movement will shape and sustain long-term change. The program has forged partnerships with farmers, civil society, concerned government bodies, and local NGOs. In addition, to eventually scaling this effort up to the entire tropical world, a number of international partnerships have been shaped (details in the following section).





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## 8. Global Recognition for Isha's Environmental Leadership

Isha's commitment to tackling environmental challenges in India has garnered significant global recognition and support. Here are some key achievements.

### International Partnerships:

Isha is recognized as a leading voice on environmental issues by esteemed organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**. This is reflected in Isha's accreditation with the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**, membership in the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, and partnership with the UN Environment Programme.

**World Economic Forum Recognition:** Cauvery Calling was named a leading innovator in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Trillion Trees: India Challenge. The WEF featured Cauvery Calling in a two-minute video on their UpLink platform, which connects entrepreneurs with investors and partners. This engaging video explains the challenges addressed by Cauvery Calling, its proposed solutions, and the envisioned impact.

Watch the video here: [World Economic Forum \(@wef\) / X](#)





## UN Engagement:

Sadhguru, Isha's founder, was invited to address critical environmental issues at the UN General Assembly in 2018 (**launch of the Decade of Action for Water**), World Economic Forum in 2020 (**launch of the Trillion Tree Campaign**), UNCCD COP15 (**presented a 3-pronged strategy to revitalize soil**) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP28 and COP29 (**climate finance for agriculture**). **Save Soil and Cauvery Calling** played a **significant role in soil** being recognized as a **solution for climate change** at the **UNFCCC COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan - 2024**.



**Project Director Anand Ethirajalu presented Cauvery Calling at UNCCD COP16**, highlighting its potential for environmental impact.

Watch the video here: [Open Dialogue Session](#)



## Award Recognition:

Isha's impactful work has been acknowledged through prestigious awards. These include India's highest environmental honor, the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar (2010), Tamil Nadu State Environment Award (2012), the National Water Award (2018), and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Aqua Foundation (2019) bestowed upon Sadhguru. Isha Outreach's Cauvery Calling initiative was recognized as a Top Innovator by the Trillion Trees: India Challenge in 2022.

These recognitions solidify Isha's position as a global leader in environmental action and pave the way for further collaboration and impact on a worldwide scale.

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## **9. Global Potential**

Cauvery Calling has garnered international attention for its innovative approach to river revitalization. Here's why the movement has the potential to be a blueprint for ecological restoration efforts around the world.

### **Symbiotic Approach:**

Cauvery Calling represents a paradigm shift by promoting harmony between economic and ecological wellbeing. It empowers farmers through tree-based agriculture, improving their livelihoods while simultaneously restoring the environment.

### **Inclusive Collaboration:**

The movement fosters collaboration between diverse stakeholders - farmers, civil society groups, governments, and NGOs. This united front strengthens the initiative's reach and impact.

### **Scalability:**

Unlike traditional afforestation projects, Cauvery Calling does not require acquiring new land. It leverages existing agricultural land by integrating trees with crops, making it a highly scalable model.

The growing reach of Cauvery Calling is evident, displaying its ability to serve as a model for other initiatives on a global scale.



**“Cauvery Calling could be a large-scale project that helps improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations.”**

**—Ibrahim Thiaw, United Nations**

## 10. Annexures

### A. District-wise Tree Planting Enabled

Districts	Trees Enabled
Ariyalur	2,28,268
Bengaluru Rural	22,482
Chamarajanagar	16,155
Chengalpattu	4,18,465
Chennai	42,543
Chikkaballapura	42,360
Chikkamagaluru	62,806
Coimbatore	7,29,923
Cuddalore	5,95,693
Dharmapuri	3,09,295
Dindigul	3,12,225
Erode	6,39,537
Hassan	2,52,626
Kallakurichi	2,04,068
Kancheepuram	1,66,009
Kanyakumari	93,206
Karur	3,12,605
Kodagu	15,186
Krishnagiri	3,14,348
Madurai	4,06,351
Mandya	88,060
Mayiladuthurai	2,15,678
Mysuru	25,804
Nagapattinam	1,62,536

Districts	Trees Enabled
Namakkal	2,31,269
Perambalur	1,13,298
Puducherry	1,81,957
Pudukkottai	3,36,567
Ramanagara	17,832
Ramanathapuram	92,721
Ranipet	1,98,828
Salem	5,25,002
Sivaganga	2,96,685
Tenkasi	3,69,505
Thanjavur	5,00,477
Theni	1,64,561
Thiruvallur	2,77,117
Thiruvarur	4,22,622
Thoothukudi	3,10,389
Tiruchirappalli	3,53,071
Tirunelveli	3,62,222
Tirupathur	1,99,707
Tiruppur	4,22,820
Tiruvannamalai	9,05,325
Tumakuru	3,93,024
Vellore	2,13,809
Viluppuram	5,68,490
Virudhunagar	2,94,469



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## B. Videos:

- If farmers wish to grow trees on their land and need assistance, Cauvery Calling's field assistants provide free guidance. This video demonstrates the process in a simple way:

[Cauvery Calling provides a Comprehensive Guide to Tree-based Agriculture](#)



Find more educational videos in this [playlist](#).

- Here is a farm that shows us that with a few simple interventions, soil about to be completely degraded can be brought back to life. This is the story of a farmer who, by using sustainable and regenerative farming methods, was able to reverse his farm's output and increase organic carbon levels in soil from less than 0.5 to 3.36! This is what the future of farming looks like:

[A living example of Save Soil](#)



Find more model farmer stories in this [playlist](#).

- A look at 15 farms that have transitioned to tree-based farming in the last 15 years.

[Watch video](#)



Find more project update videos in this [playlist](#).