

4. India's Silk Value Chain – Economy

Recently, the Central Silk Board has announced an ambitious plan to double India's silk value chain, currently valued at ₹55,000 crore, to ₹1.1 lakh crore by 2030

Central Silk Board (CSB)– Institutional Framework



Statutory Status and Mandate – The Central Silk Board is a statutory body functioning under the Ministry of Textiles. It was established under the Central Silk Board Act, 1948, subsequently amended through the Central Silk Board (Amendment) Act, 2006 to strengthen governance and sectoral outreach. The Board acts as the apex advisory and executive authority for the overall development of sericulture and the silk industry in India.

Core Functions – Formulation of national policies and development programmes for sericulture. Implementation of schemes covering the entire silk value chain Silkworm seed production, Cocoon production, Silk reeling, weaving, and marketing. Undertaking and supporting scientific, technological, and economic research in sericulture.

Regulation and supervision of

1. Quality control of silkworm seeds
 2. Standardisation of silk production processes
- Promotion of export-oriented silk production and global competitiveness.

Organisational Details

Headquarters– Bengaluru, Karnataka

Operates through

1. Research institutes
2. Regional offices
3. State-level sericulture departments

About Silk and Sericulture

Concept of Sericulture – Sericulture is the art and science of silk production through the rearing of silkworms. It is a unique agro-based activity integrating

1. Agriculture (mulberry cultivation)
2. Forestry (wild silkworms)
3. Cottage and village industries (reeling and weaving)

It sustains millions of rural households, particularly small and marginal farmers.

Historical and Cultural Legacy of Silk in India– India's association with silk spans over 5,000 years, with references in

1. Atharva Veda
2. Mahabharata

India's location along the historic Silk Route enabled

1. Extensive trade with Central Asia, China, and Europe
2. Cultural exchange and diffusion of textile techniques

Indian silks such as

1. Kanchipuram
2. Banarasi
3. Patola

4. Muga
5. Eri symbolise aesthetic refinement, ritual purity, and artisanal heritage.

Types of Silk Produced in India

Mulberry Silk- Accounts for around 70% of India's total silk output. Produced from silkworms fed exclusively on mulberry leaves. Known for fine texture, durability, and lustre.

Tasar (Tussar) Silk- Derived from wild silkworms reared on forest trees. Primarily produced by tribal communities. Characterised by its coarse texture and natural gold sheen.

Eri Silk- Also known as 'Ahimsa Silk', as cocoons are not boiled with pupae inside. Popular for thermal properties and eco-friendly appeal. Extensively used in shawls and winter garments.

Muga Silk- Exclusive to Assam and parts of North-East India. Recognised as a Geographical Indication (GI) product. Renowned for its natural golden colour and exceptional durability.

Sericulture and Sustainable Livelihoods

As highlighted in NITI Aayog's Eleventh Five-Year Plan Sericulture is aligned with inclusive and sustainable rural development due to

1. Low initial capital requirement
2. Short gestation period and quick returns

Generates around 11 man-days of employment per kg of raw silk.

Plays a crucial role in

1. Women's empowerment
2. Self-employment and home-based work
3. Livelihood security in rainfed and semi-arid regions

Major Silk Producing Regions in India

South India (Mulberry Silk)- Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh

1. Karnataka alone contributes ~35% of India's total silk production.
2. Strong institutional support and advanced reeling infrastructure.

Eastern India (Tasar Silk)

1. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal
2. Predominantly forest-based and tribal-driven production systems.

North-East India (Muga and Eri Silk)

1. Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur
2. Region is home to rare Muga silkworm species.
3. Traditional, household-based sericulture practices.

Northern India (Mulberry Silk)

1. Jammu & Kashmir
2. Known for high-quality mulberry silk used in carpets and fine garments.

Production and Employment Significance

Current Status- India produces 41,121 metric tonnes of raw silk annually. Composition-

1. Over 70% mulberry silk
2. Remaining share from Eri, Tasar, and Muga

Projected production by 2030- ~54,000 metric tonnes.

Global Standing

1. India is the second-largest producer of silk globally, after China.
2. Accounts for nearly 25% of global silk output.

Employment Impact- Provides livelihoods to over 6 million people, including

1. Small and marginal farmers
2. Women workers
3. Tribal communities

Ensures year-round employment, unlike many seasonal agricultural activities.

Key Challenges in the Sericulture Sector

Climate and Environmental Risks- Silkworm rearing is highly climate-sensitive. Droughts, heat stress, and erratic rainfall affect cocoon quality and yield.

Market and Price Volatility- Fluctuating cocoon and silk prices impact income stability of small rearers.

Technological and Productivity Gaps- Need for

1. Improved silkworm seed quality
2. Mechanisation in reeling and weaving
3. Higher reeling efficiency and quality control

Competition from Synthetic Fibres- Rising preference for cheaper synthetic and blended textiles affects demand for natural silk.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

Silk Samagra and Silk Samagra-2 (2021-2026)- Comprehensive schemes covering farm to fabric. Silk Samagra-2 has an outlay of ₹2,161 crore. Focus areas-

1. Seed development
2. Modern reeling and weaving technologies
3. Export promotion

North East Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS)- Strengthens Muga and Eri silk clusters. Supports infrastructure and market linkages.

Sericulture Cluster Development Programme (SCDP)- Enhances common facilities and infrastructure

1. Karnataka
2. Jharkhand
3. Assam

SAMARTH Scheme- Skill development programme targeting

1. Youth
2. Women

Provides training in sericulture, silk processing, and allied activities.

Conclusion

The Central Silk Board plays a pivotal role in transforming sericulture into a sustainable, inclusive, and export-oriented rural industry. With targeted policy support, technological upgrades, and climate-resilient practices, the silk sector can

1. Strengthen rural livelihoods
2. Promote women-led enterprises
3. Preserve India's rich textile heritage

Sericulture remains a strategic bridge between agriculture, industry, culture, and sustainability.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/indias-silk-value-chain-to-cross-110000-cr-by-2030-central-silk-board/article70468070.ece>