

DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is the permanent destruction of indigenous forests and woodlands, and does not include the removal of industrial forest such as plantations of gums or pines. It has resulted in the reduction of indigenous forests, and every year, 12 million hectares of forests are cleared. At this rate, most of the moist Tropical Forests could be lost by the year 2050, and some countries such as Ivory Coast and Nigeria could lose all their tropical forests by the year 2010 if no conservation steps are taken.

Forests contain the vast majority of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, Over the last 35 years 30% of the planet's biodiversity was lost. Because of deforestation 12-15 million hectares of forest are lost each year and 87% of global deforestation occurs in just 10 countries, with Brazil and Indonesia accounting for 51% of emissions from forest loss.



CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION

- Overgrazing and the felling of trees for firewood and building materials.
- Commercial logging for the world market and development of cash crops and cattle ranching are the major causes of deforestation.
- Forest and woodlands are also converted to agricultural land to feed growing numbers of people.
- To add to the problem the poor soils of the humid tropics do not support agriculture for long so people are often forced to move on and clear more forests in order to maintain production.

CONSEQUENCES OF DEFORESTATION

- a) The carbon cycle. CO₂ is taken up from the atmosphere and used to produce the carbohydrates, fats, and proteins that compose the tree. After deforestation, the trees are burnt or rot, releasing CO₂ and therefore increasing the atmospheric CO₂ concentration contributing to the greenhouse effect.
- b) The water cycle. Trees draw water up through their roots and transpire it. With removal of part of the forest, the region cannot hold as much water (as most of the water circulating through the region's ecosystem remains within the plants) causing a drier climate.

The local and global climates may be altered through the disruption of:

- *Soil erosion* With the loss of vegetation more soil is lost.
- *Silting of water courses, lakes and dams* occurs as a result of soil erosion.
- *Extinction of species* Forests serve as habitats for many species so when deforestation occurs thousands of species will be lost.
- *Desertification* Deforestation is one of many causes of this.

Sources: <http://www.bcb.uwc.ac.za/envfacts/facts/deforestation.htm>
http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/how_we_work/conservation/forests/zeronetdeforestation/