



15 LIFE
ON LAND



LIFE ON LAND: WHY IT MATTERS

What's the goal here?

To sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.

Why?

Forests cover nearly 31 per cent of our planet's land area. From the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the food we eat—forests sustain us.

Think about it. Around 1.6 billion people depend on

forests for their livelihood. Almost 75 per cent of the world's poor are affected directly by land degradation. Did you know that forests are home to more than 80 per cent of all terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects? And of the 8,300 animal breeds known, 8 per cent are extinct and 22 per cent are at risk of extinction.

Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins can also be the basis for climate change

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adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies as they can deliver benefits that will increase the resilience of people to the impacts of climate change.

Forests and nature are also important for recreation and mental well-being. In many cultures, natural landscapes are closely linked to spiritual values, religious beliefs and traditional teachings.

What would it cost to correct the problem?

The UN Forum on Forests Secretariat estimates that achieving sustainable forest management on a global scale would cost US\$70-\$160 billion per year. The Convention on Biological Diversity estimates that US\$150-\$440 billion per year is required to halt the loss of biodiversity at a global level by the middle of this century.

What would it cost if we don't correct the problem?

Biodiversity delivers multiple services from local to global levels, while responses to biodiversity loss range from emotional to utilitarian. For instance, insects and other pollen-carriers are estimated

to be worth more than US\$200 billion per year to the global food economy. Three-quarters of the top-ranking global prescription drugs contain components derived from plant extracts, which would be threatened. Natural disasters caused by ecosystems disrupted by human impact and climate change already cost the world more than US\$300 billion per year. Deforestation and forest degradation results in loss of habitat for all species, a decrease in freshwater quality, an increase in soil erosion, land degradation and higher emissions of carbon into the atmosphere. In short, not taking action on forests impacts both the health of the planet and our communities.

What can we do?

Inevitably, we change the ecosystems we are a part of through our presence—but we can make choices that either affirm diversity or devalue it.

Some things we can do to help include recycling, eating a locally-based diet that is sustainably sourced, consuming only what we need, and limiting energy usage through efficient heating and cooling systems.

We must also be respectful toward wildlife and only take part in ecotourism opportunities that are responsibly and ethically run in order to prevent wildlife disturbance.

Well-managed protected areas support healthy ecosystems, which in turn keep people healthy. It is therefore critical to secure the involvement of the local communities in the development and management of these protected areas.

To find out more about Goal #15 and the other Sustainable Development Goals, visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>