

Climate Change : Climate Solutions

Forest Facts: Law of the Jungle

Learn ten of the key facts and figures about the world's forests, their importance to the environment, and how they are being destroyed by human activity.



Picture Gallery (click on the picture to start)

Ten of the most important forests on the planet (Photo: Shutterstock)

01. The total forest area of the world is just below 4 billion hectares, nearly 30 percent of Earth's area. Russia contains the largest forested area, followed by Brazil, Canada and the United States. Tropical rainforests cover an area larger than Europe.

02. Over 1 billion people rely on forests for their livelihoods. Around 60 million indigenous people, about the population of the United Kingdom, depend on forests. A third of the world's people use biomass fuels, mainly firewood, for cooking and heating.

03. The world's rainforests are home to half of life on earth. The Amazon is the richest biodiversity hotspot in the world, holding about a quarter of land species.

04. Tropical and temperate forests absorb around a ton of CO₂ per hectare per year from the atmosphere. Due to the depth of peat, one hectare of tropical peat forest can store 3000 to 6000 tons of carbon per hectare.

05. An area of rainforest the size of a football pitch is lost every four seconds. About 13 million hectares of tropical forests are destroyed each year, an area nearly twice the size of Belgium.



Picture Gallery (click on the picture to start)

Ten key causes of deforestation and forest degradation (Photo: Reuters)

Related Articles

Fighting Deforestation: Willing to Play and Pay?

Protecting Forests: Cutting CO₂, not Trees

06. The highest levels of deforestation are in South America, with 4.3 million hectares lost per year. The fastest rates of deforestation are in Southeast Asia.

07. Deforestation and forest degradation releases about 1.7 billion tons of carbon annually, about 20 percent of global carbon emissions. Total emissions from deforestation in 2008-2012 are expected to equal 40 billion tonnes of CO₂.

08. The biggest causes of deforestation and forest degradation are agricultural expansion, cattle ranching, road and urban infrastructure development, commercial logging, mining, subsistence farming, and collection of firewood.

09. The United States is the world's biggest supplier of wood, with nearly 20 percent of the world market. It is followed by Brazil, Canada, Russia and China. According to WWF, nearly 30 percent of the EU's timber imports could be from illegal logging.

10. To halve emissions from the forest sector by 2030 through carbon markets would cost between 17 and 33 billion dollars a year, according to the Eliasch Review. The EU reckons that it would cost 15 to 25 billion euros every year to halve deforestation by 2020.

Sources: Centre for International Forestry Research, Global Canopy Programme, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, The World Bank, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, WWF, Eliasch Review

editor: James Tulloch

publishing date: January 05, 2009

Comments

[See all comments \(0\)](#)

[Post comment](#)

© Allianz 2007, All Rights Reserved