

FOREST DECLARATION ASSESSMENT 2026

Summary for Policymakers

October 2026



ABOUT THE FOREST DECLARATION ASSESSMENT

The Forest Declaration Assessment is an independent, collaborative initiative led by a coalition of civil society organizations and researchers, known as the Forest Declaration Assessment Partners. Since 2015, the Assessment has published annual updates on progress toward global forest goals. All findings undergo a rigorous peer review process conducted by experts across the globe.

ABOUT THIS SUMMARY

This Summary for Policymakers presents the headline findings and key messages of the Forest Declaration Assessment 2026. The Assessment primarily reports on forest outcomes in 2025; other reference periods are indicated throughout.

For the full findings and supporting analysis, consult the Forest Declaration Assessment 2026 main report. Detailed methodologies, data sources, and limitations are provided in the accompanying Technical Annexes.

Explore the full report: www.forestdeclaration.org/resources/forest-declaration-assessment-2026/

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1. Introduction

Forest loss still outpaces commitments

In 2025, the world lost more than 7 million hectares of forest to deforestation. That is lower than in recent years, but it follows a period of persistently high loss: since 2021, deforestation has averaged more than 8 million hectares a year.¹ In 2024, the latest year for which such data are available, at least 65.4 million hectares of forest lost ecological integrity because of human pressures. Together, these figures show a lasting gap between the commitments made by governments, companies, and financial institutions and the incentives that still drive commodity production, infrastructure expansion, land use, and investment.

Global instability is pushing forests down the agenda

These challenges are unfolding in an increasingly complex global environment. Geopolitical instability, armed conflict, economic uncertainty, energy security concerns, and shifting trade patterns are pushing forests down, or even off, the political agenda. They are also straining the long-term international cooperation that forest conservation and restoration depend on.² Forest protection is often framed as a constraint on development, energy, or food production. In fact, forests underpin all of these priorities.³

Forest loss undermines economic prosperity and resilience

Consider the Brazilian Amazon, for example: evidence shows that forest clearing can spark a short burst of economic growth, but that economic performance falls as deforestation continues.⁴ Deforestation-free economic development pathways, by contrast, could add USD 8.2 billion per year to the region's economy by 2050.

The costs of deforestation and degradation reach far beyond forest boundaries. They include lower crop yields,⁵ less reliable rainfall,⁶ poorer water quality,⁷ more competition for water, more vulnerable energy systems,⁸ and higher risk of disease passing from animals to people.⁹ By accelerating climate change, forest loss also adds to pressures behind forced migration and conflict.¹⁰ Whether forests continue to function as stable components of the Earth system, or whether their loss accelerates a cascading ecological, social, and economic decline, will be determined in significant part by what happens between now and 2030.¹¹

Protecting forests is a strategic investment

Conserving and restoring forests is therefore a strategic investment in resilience. For governments, this means investing in natural infrastructure that supports national security, energy security, and long-term prosperity.¹² For businesses, it means managing exposure to more than USD 50 trillion in nature-related risks and safeguarding the ecosystem services that underpin short-, medium-, and long-term business value.¹³

This annual assessment report examines where progress is being made and where gaps remain. It also sets out the action needed: ambitious enough to match the challenge and equitable enough to endure.

2. Key findings

2.1. Progress toward overarching forest goals

Global deforestation fell sharply in 2025, but the world remains far off track. The improvement shows how quickly forest loss can fall when policy and enforcement align. However, regional trends show that progress is uneven, as it is concentrated in a small number of countries rather than reflecting a global shift.

In 2025, just over 7 million hectares of forest were lost to deforestation (**Figure 1.1**), releasing an estimated 3.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent. That is nearly 10 times France's total greenhouse gas emissions for the same year. Even so, deforestation fell by 15 percent from 2024, the largest annual decline recorded since the 2018–20 baseline period.

Yet the world remains 70 percent off track from the pathway to halt deforestation by 2030. Since the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration in 2021, consistently high annual losses have created a cumulative deficit of 10.7 million hectares: forest that would still be standing had the world followed a 2030-compatible pathway. The largely flat trajectory from 2021 through 2024 means that 2025 remains, so far, the exception rather than the norm.

The decline in global deforestation hides regional trends that are increasingly diverging. In Tropical Latin America and the Caribbean, deforestation fell to 33 percent below its 2018–20 baseline, with the largest annual reduction recorded between 2024 and 2025. Tropical Asia recorded a modest decline for the second year in a row, but annual deforestation rates remain close to the 2018–20 baseline. In Tropical Africa, deforestation continued to rise, reaching 2.4 million hectares in 2025, nearly matching the 2.5 million hectares lost to deforestation in Tropical Latin America and the Caribbean.

Primary forest loss also varies widely by region. Across the tropics, humid tropical primary forest loss fell by 36 percent between 2024 and 2025 but remained 11 percent above the 2018–20 baseline.¹⁴ Much of that decline, however, reflects the end of an exceptional spike in fire-related loss in the Amazon basin, not a structural improvement in how primary forests are protected. Since 2021, the cumulative deficit of progress has

reached 9.4 million hectares – equivalent to nearly five football pitches of primary forest lost every minute for five years.

The degradation of tropical moist forests follows a similar pattern. Across the tropics, it fell 34 percent from the exceptional 2024 peak, to 3.5 million hectares.¹⁵ Tropical Latin America and the Caribbean saw a 50 percent reduction after the widespread fire-driven degradation of 2024. **In Tropical Africa, where forest fires are not a major driver, degradation of tropical moist forests rose by 25 percent.** In the past decades, most fire-driven degradation remained relatively short-lived and potentially reversible. However, more frequent and severe fires, compounded with direct human land-use pressures, risk shifting larger areas into persistent states from which recovery is slower and less certain.

A broader measure of ecological integrity shows the scale of forest change that deforestation figures alone miss. In 2024, a net 65.4 million hectares of forest worldwide transitioned to a lower ecological integrity class.¹⁶ In this case, though forests are still standing, their ecological condition and connectivity worsened due to exposure to human pressures.

Forest and landscape restoration follows a positive trend, but still falls short of global restoration targets. Restoration activities targeting deforested land and degraded forests are now recorded across approximately 11.8 million hectares,¹⁷ roughly 1 million hectares more than a year earlier. This increase reflects both new projects and wider reporting of existing efforts. Restoration activities range from reforestation and assisted natural regeneration of degraded forests to agroforestry, hedgerows, and other tree-based features in productive landscapes. Even allowing for substantial gaps in restoration monitoring, that is only around 6 percent of estimated global reforestation potential and remains far below the 30 percent restoration target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. And the area of restoration, alone, reveals little about true outcomes.¹⁸ Tracking progress requires understanding the change in indicators of ecological function, such as landscape connectivity; how durable the results are; and their social and adaptation benefits.

Restoration works best as part of an integrated territorial development strategy. That means linking ecosystem recovery with better livelihoods, nature- and climate-positive production, and stronger local governance over restored land.¹⁹ When backed by coherent policies,²⁰ restoration builds local value chains extending from labor, nurseries, and seed supply to technical and monitoring services.²¹ It also strengthens the natural assets that agriculture, forestry, and water supply depend on, and reduces the costs of losing ecosystem services. With estimated returns of USD 7 to 30 for every dollar invested,²² restoration is both an environmental necessity and a sound economic investment in local development.

KEY STATISTICS ON FOREST LOSS AND DEGRADATION

DEFORESTATION

7 million hectares lost to deforestation in 2025

→ **15%** decline from 2024

→ **15%** decline from 2018-20 baseline

→ **70%** off track from the 2030 pathway

10.7 million hectares of cumulative deficit - forests that would still be standing if we had been on track since 2021

HUMID TROPICAL FOREST LOSS

4.3 million hectares lost in 2025

→ **36%** decline from 2024

→ **11%** increase from 2018-20 baseline

→ **122%** off track from the 2030 pathway

9.4 million hectares of cumulative deficit since 2021

DEGRADATION

3.5 million hectares of tropical moist forest degradation in 2025

→ **34%** decline from 2024

→ **21%** decline from 2018-20 baseline

→ **58%** off track from the 2030 pathway

3.8 million hectares of cumulative deficit since 2021

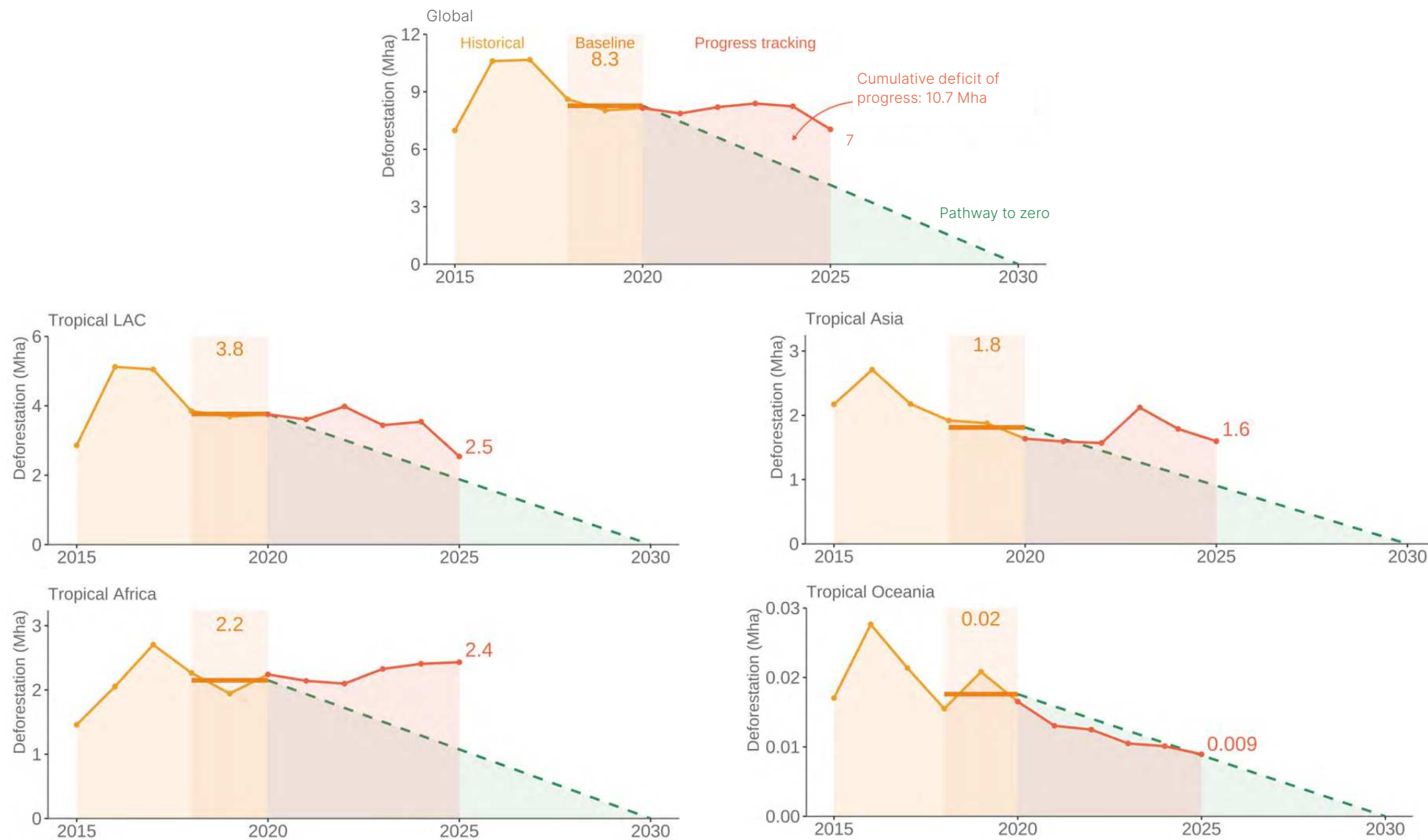
65.4 million hectares downgraded to lower ecological integrity class in 2024

→ **23%** increase from 2023

→ **32%** decline from 2018-20 baseline

→ **13%** off track from the 2030 pathway

Figure 1.1. Global and regional deforestation from 2015-2025, with 2030-compatible pathway, in million hectares (Mha)



Note: Y-axis scales differ among regions.

Source: Own analysis using tree cover loss data (Hansen et al. 2013, updated through 2025) and drivers of tree cover loss (Sims et al. 2025, updated through 2025).

2.2. PROGRESS ON SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

Commodity production is still the leading driver of forest and ecosystem loss. Regulation and traceability are beginning to change behavior among supply chain actors, but ambitious action to halt commodity-driven deforestation and ecosystem conversion remains concentrated among a minority of companies and jurisdictions. In the last year, some voluntary commitments have been rolled back or abandoned.

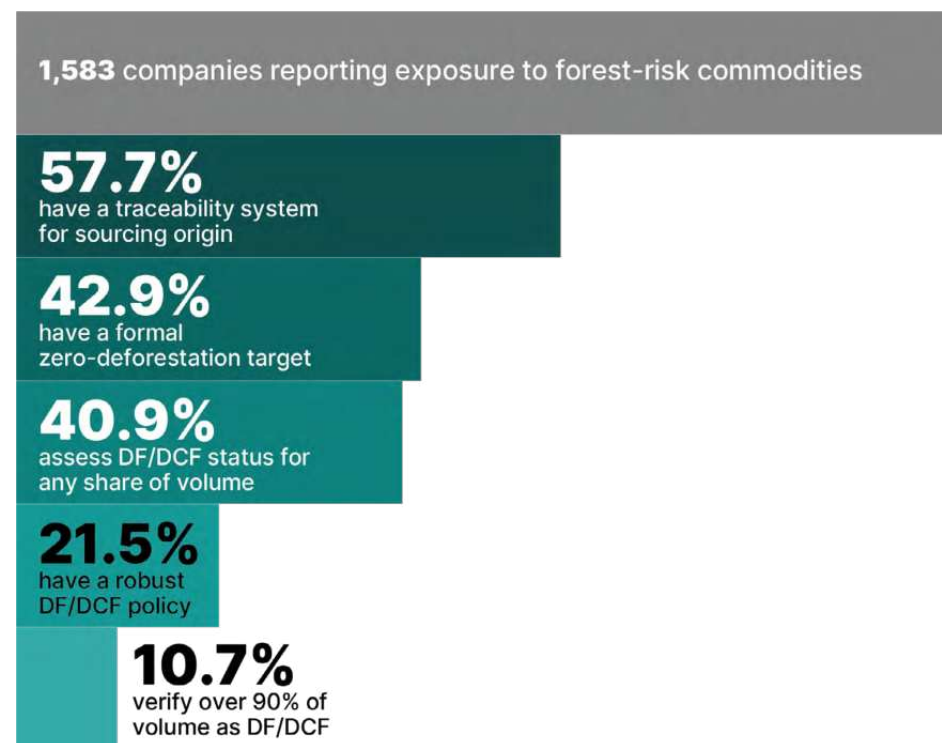
Commodity-driven deforestation fell to 6.01 million hectares in 2025, down from the 2018–20 average of 7.24 million hectares.²³ The decline was driven in important part by reduced agricultural and pasture expansion in the Brazilian Amazon, where federal authorities strengthened enforcement using satellite monitoring.²⁴

But growing global demand continues to put forests and other ecosystems under pressure. Pasture expansion for beef cattle remains the largest agricultural driver of deforestation.²⁵ Mining is also an increasing threat: new evidence suggests that mining-related deforestation may be two to three times higher than previously estimated,²⁶ while roads, settlements, and agriculture associated with mining can extend its forest footprint far beyond mine sites themselves.²⁷

Forest loss is only part of the footprint. Crop-driven conversion of natural grasslands, savannahs, and other non-forest ecosystems has been estimated at 9–13 million hectares per year — an area larger than annual deforestation — despite these ecosystems storing large amounts of carbon and supporting globally important biodiversity.²⁸

Corporate action is advancing, but remains heavily concentrated among leaders. Global Canopy's Forest 500 assessment found that, of the 500 most influential companies in forest-risk commodity supply chains, only 19 — 4 percent — qualified as leaders with deforestation- and conversion-free commitments across all relevant commodities and comparatively strong evidence of implementation. Another 168 had no deforestation or conversion commitments at all. Fourteen companies actively weakened or abandoned existing commitments in 2025.

Figure 2.2. Share of CDP-disclosing companies meeting selected deforestation- and conversion-free supply chain indicators, as of 2025



Notes: Shares of 1,583 companies disclosing forest-risk commodity exposure through CDP's 2025 Forests Questionnaire. DF/DCF = deforestation-free / deforestation- and conversion-free. Indicators are not necessarily sequential steps with overlapping populations (i.e., not every company with a target also has a traceability system), but are presented in descending order of prevalence to illustrate the overall attrition from awareness to verified outcome.

Source: CDP (2025) disclosure data provided to the Forest Declaration Assessment.

One area where companies are making rapid, visible recent progress is on the traceability of their supply chains. Among the 1,583 companies disclosing forest-risk commodity exposure through CDP in 2025, traceability systems were more widely reported than formal zero-deforestation targets. However, only about one fifth reported being able to trace at least 90 percent of sourced volumes to the production unit or sourcing area (**Figure 2.2**). Regulation appears to be one driver of corporate action: even before implementation, the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) is shaping business expectations and catalyzing corporate investments in supply chain traceability.²⁹

Producer countries are also anticipating the implementation of the EUDR. At least 60 government-led initiatives responding to the EUDR were underway across 25 producer countries as of April 2026.³⁰ For example, Ghana's cocoa board transitioned its Cocoa Traceability System from pilot to national rollout, as part of its broader digitalization agenda, with the timeline accelerated to align with EUDR requirements.³¹ In June 2026, Colombia became the first tropical forest country to enact a nationwide cattle traceability law linking livestock tracking with land tenure and deforestation monitoring.³² Brazil's Selo Verde platform is integrating government data on land use, deforestation, cattle transport, and legal compliance across a growing number of states.³³

At the same time, the durability of policy ambition cannot be taken for granted. The EUDR has now been delayed twice, and its scope narrowed. New signals of national level ambition are slow to materialize: among the third round of nationally determined contributions submitted under the Paris Agreement, only one reviewed NDC 3.0 explicitly commits to ending deforestation by 2030; while 85 percent of assessed Biennial Transparency Reports do not report on deforestation at all.³⁴

Voluntary approaches are even more vulnerable. The Amazon Soy Moratorium was for nearly two decades one of the clearest examples of an effective voluntary zero-deforestation agreement. In 2026, major traders withdrew after policy changes in Mato Grosso removed tax incentives from companies adhering to it.³⁵ The episode shows how quickly voluntary gains can unravel when public policy and economic incentives move in the opposite direction.

2.3. PROGRESS ON FOREST FINANCE

More money is reaching forests through explicit forest finance commitments, but far more money still encourages – through subsidies and investments – activities that put them at risk. Meeting forest goals requires both more finance for conservation and restoration and reform of the much larger financial flows that put forests at risk.

Annual international public finance for forests more than tripled, from an average of USD 1.8 billion in 2018–20 to an estimated USD 6.1 billion in 2022–25.³⁶ By the end of 2024, almost 99 percent of the USD 16.2 billion pledged under major COP26 forest finance commitments had been released.³⁷ This is significant progress – yet it is also nowhere near the required scale.

The estimated USD 6.1 billion in annual international public forest finance is equivalent to only around 1 percent of the USD 410 billion governments spend each year on potentially harmful agricultural subsidies (**Figure 3.2**).

Fossil fuel subsidies widen the imbalance further. Governments spent USD 921 billion supporting fossil fuel production and consumption in 2024,³⁸ and emergency energy measures introduced during 2026 are expected to push that figure above USD 1 trillion.³⁹ The 2025 milestone under Global Biodiversity Framework Target 18 to identify harmful incentives was missed.⁴⁰ Nineteen countries have completed national assessments of harmful subsidies, but reform remains at an early stage.⁴¹

There are important new opportunities to scale positive finance. The Tropical Forest Forever Facility has been endorsed by more than 60 countries⁴² and attracted USD 7.3 billion in sponsor capital commitments.⁴³ At full capitalization, it could generate billions of dollars annually in long-term payments for tropical forest countries, with at least 20 percent of country-level payouts reserved for Indigenous Peoples and local communities. But the Facility still faces a USD 2.7 billion gap to its USD 10 billion initial sponsor-capital target.

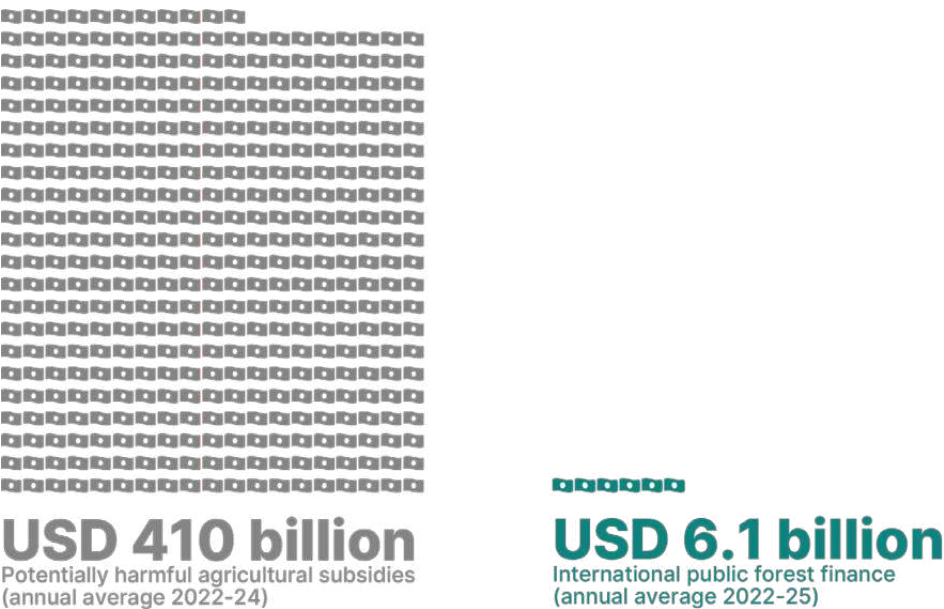
The financial sector itself remains deeply exposed to forest loss. Between 2016 and 2025, financial institutions provided at least USD 429 billion in credit to companies involved in six major forest-risk commodity supply chains.⁴⁴ While the number of financial institutions adopting deforestation policies has almost quadrupled since 2014, per Forest 500, progress has

stalled in recent years, and 89 of the 150 institutions most exposed to forest-related risks still have no such policy.

Disclosure is moving faster. More than 800 organizations have committed to reporting in line with the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures,⁴⁵ and 28 jurisdictions had adopted International Sustainability Standards Board standards by April 2026, compared with 16 a year earlier.⁴⁶ But better disclosure will matter only if it changes lending, investment, subsidy, and procurement decisions.

The imbalance remains stark: governments and financial institutions are beginning to pay for forests while continuing to finance their destruction at vastly greater scale.

Figure 3.2. International public forest finance compared to potentially harmful agricultural subsidies



Source: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2025) and own analysis based on OECD (2025), Climate Funds Update (2025), and progress reports for key forest finance pledges.

KEY STATISTICS ON FOREST FINANCE

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC FOREST FINANCE

USD 6.1 billion per year on average 2022–25

→ **>3x** from the USD 1.8 billion annual average 2018–20

99% of the USD 16.2 billion pledged at COP26 released by the end of 2024

FOREST-RISK FINANCE

USD 410 billion per year in potentially harmful agricultural subsidies

USD 429+ billion in credit provided to companies in six major forest-risk commodity supply chains over 2016–25

TROPICAL FOREST FOREVER FACILITY

USD 7.3 billion in sponsor-capital commitments as of Sept. 2026

USD 2.7 billion gap to the USD 10 billion sponsor-capital target by end 2026

20+% of country-level payouts reserved for Indigenous Peoples and local communities

2.4. PROGRESS ON FOREST RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

Land tenure and other rights, participation in government, effective enforcement, and access to justice – these factors determine whether forest commitments survive beyond the paper they are written on. Even as the value and importance of rights – especially those of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant peoples, and local communities – are gaining political recognition, and monitoring technologies are advancing, implementation remains the weak link.

The last year showcased some genuine institutional progress. COP30 saw record Indigenous participation.⁴⁷ Sixteen countries and one subnational jurisdiction committed to recognize and strengthen 160 million additional hectares of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' lands by 2030. The Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) established a mechanism for directing at least 20 percent of national payouts to Indigenous and local community organizations.⁴⁸ These gains are important steps, but they do not yet translate to meaningful power and secure rights for groups that have historically been marginalized and underrepresented in formal governance spaces.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities are estimated to hold customary rights over roughly 5.5 billion hectares — 42 percent of the world's land — but only around 1 billion hectares carry clear, legally recognized ownership rights.⁴⁹ Some 37 percent of the world's irrecoverable carbon lies within mapped customary territories, most of it in forests.⁵⁰

The same implementation gap appears in national climate planning. More than 70 percent of 84 reviewed nationally determined contributions (NDCs) mention underrepresented groups, including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, but most references remain descriptive.⁵¹ Few explain how rightsholders participated in preparing the NDC, how they will participate in implementation, or how free, prior, and informed consent, territorial rights, or equitable benefit-sharing will be protected.

Protected-area expansion will test these governance systems further. Protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures currently cover 17.33 percent of the world's terrestrial and inland waters.⁵² Meeting the 30x30 target therefore requires a near doubling in coverage

by 2030. Where that expansion occurs, whose rights are recognized, and how areas are governed will matter as much as the number of hectares designated.⁵³

Enforcement remains another weak link. Estimates suggest that 61–94 percent of tropical deforestation for commercial agriculture is illegal.⁵⁴ Environmental crime, including illegal deforestation and timber and wildlife trafficking, generates as much as USD 281 billion annually.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, at least 124 land and environmental defenders were killed in 2025;⁵⁶ a broader assessment documented the killings of at least 358 human rights defenders, with those working on land, environmental, peasant, and Indigenous Peoples' rights among the groups most frequently targeted.⁵⁷

Alongside these grim statistics, there are encouraging signs that the ability to detect illegal forest loss is improving. Governments are expanding national traceability systems. Cross-border cooperation on illegal timber and mining is increasing. New tools — from satellite monitoring to bioacoustic sensors, AI image recognition, and DNA analysis — are making previously invisible activity easier to identify.⁵⁸

But technology cannot substitute for governance. Monitoring is useful only if violations lead to fair and effective enforcement. Tenure recognition is useful only if rights can be exercised in practice. Participation is meaningful only if affected people have real influence over decisions. Despite recent progress, just and effective forest governance remains as-yet unrealized.

3. Priorities for achieving the 2030 forest goals

2025 showed that progress is possible

This year's findings offer a measure of relief. Global deforestation fell 15 percent in 2025, the sharpest year-over-year decline since the beginning of the decade. Forest finance has grown faster over the past five years than at any point since the Paris Agreement. Companies and producer countries are building new traceability systems, and international commitments on forest tenure and finance have begun to move from pledges toward implementation.

These are wins worth celebrating. But they should not be mistaken for the transformation still needed.

A dip in a bad trend is not the same as a bend in the curve

What, then, would truly transformative change look like? Sustained progress requires changes to economic incentives and governance: harmful subsidies redirected toward sustainable agriculture and energy; mandatory disclosure and due diligence that cover both deforestation and degradation; public finance closing the gulf between the billions currently flowing to forests and the tens of billions required; companies and financial institutions moving from risk recognition to measurable implementation; and tenure rights backed by durable legal title, institutional capacity, and direct access to finance.

Policy and enforcement must endure beyond short-term gains

Strong policy, backed by robust enforcement, remains the most durable lever for lasting change. Voluntary commitments can help pioneer new approaches, but they can unravel quickly when the incentives around them change. Government policy is not immune to political reversal either, but it can provide a legal floor that does not depend on the willingness of any one company, investor, or trader to keep its word.

Ensuring that policy lasts for the long term matters for the same reason. Strong regulatory frameworks, sustained investment in enforcement

WHAT'S STILL AT STAKE

22.5 million hectares would be lost to deforestation by 2030 if we replicate the 15% year-over-year decline

→ about the size of the United Kingdom

32 million hectares would be lost if we replicate the 3% yearly decline averaged since 2021

→ about the size of Côte d'Ivoire

institutions, durable tenure recognition, and coherent fiscal incentives all create the conditions for progress to compound. Short-term crackdowns and temporary market conditions, on the other hand, can deliver one- or two-year wins, but those wins can be easily reversed.

The stakes over the remaining years to 2030 are hard to overstate. Even if the world repeated the unusually strong 15 percent reduction in deforestation achieved from 2024 to 2025 every year through 2030, another 22.5 million hectares of forest would still be lost — an area nearly the size of the United Kingdom. If progress instead continued at the average 3 percent rate achieved since the beginning of the decade, losses through 2030 would reach roughly 32 million hectares.

Forest-rich countries and rights holders must shape, and benefit from, the transition

The risks from that scale of loss are not distributed evenly. Many forest-rich countries face intense pressure to develop and advance their economies, while trying to maintain and sustain valuable ecosystems whose climate, biodiversity, water, and economic benefits extend far beyond their borders. Communities living in and around forests often bear the costs of forest loss without driving the demand that causes it.

Forest strategies will therefore fail if the wealthiest set the terms while the most vulnerable shoulder the burden.

We have the tools; we must use them at scale

The path to achieving the 2030 forest goals runs through large-scale incentive reform, inclusive governance, and rights-based approaches that confront these imbalances directly. The pieces are already visible: regulation that is changing supply chains before it enters fully into force; finance mechanisms designed to reward standing forests; better monitoring and traceability; growing recognition of collective tenure; and jurisdictions showing that determined policy and enforcement can rapidly reduce forest loss.

The challenges facing forests are formidable, but their future is not predetermined. Governments, businesses, and financial institutions now need to sustain and expand the measures that are working, with forest-rich countries and rightsholders able to shape and benefit from that progress. Their decisions over the remaining years to 2030 will determine how much forest is lost, and how much is protected for generations to come.

Endnotes

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