



What is it about?

Forests are crucial for people and planet. Forests are not only the place where many human activities take place, but they are also the habitat for an indefinite number of other species and the ecosystems they form.

About 1/3 of ice-free land is covered with forests, ranging from pristine forests in the Amazon to industrial forestry in the Canadian province of Quebec (IPCC 2019). Most forests are located in just five countries: Brazil, Canada, China, Russia and the USA.

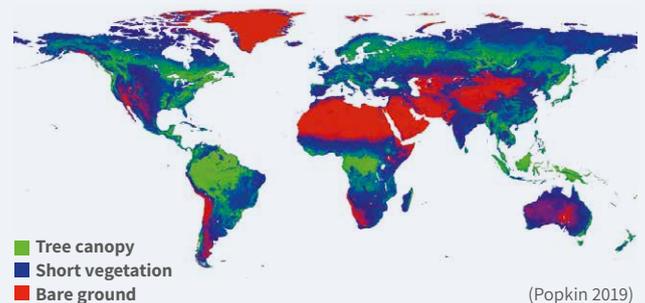
FORESTS are larger land areas that are not primarily used for agriculture or infrastructure, and that have a tree canopy cover of more than 10% with trees that can reach a height of 5 metres (FAO 2000).

Why are forests important for our climate?

Forests play a crucial role in the fight against climate change by storing carbon. As trees grow, they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store it in their biomass. Carbon is also stored in forest soils when leaves, woody material and roots decompose. Some soils store even more carbon than the trees themselves (Morison 2020).

The carbon stored in trees and forest soils is at risk of being lost when a forest is poorly managed (e.g. monocultures) or disturbed by droughts, fires, pests or floods (IPCC 2019, p. 20). The future effects of climate change will increase these events, thus threatening to release carbon in the atmosphere.

Where are the trees?



How funders can support forests

- **Reduce deforestation and forest degradation**

Protecting existing forests from future losses and unsustainable management practices.

- **Afforestation**

Deliberately seeding new forests on land not forested for a longer period of time.

- **Restoration**

Re-establishing forests in areas where tree growth has been disturbed for less than 10 years due to natural or human disturbance.

Things to consider when funding forests

Funders wanting to make a sustainable impact need to bear some cross-cutting effects in mind:

• Food security & livelihoods

The expansion of agriculture, especially through the rising demand for animal protein, is behind much deforestation. Plans of protecting forests from future conversion must include alternative strategies for providing nutritious food (such as the mainstreaming of vegan diets) and livelihoods (such as alternative timber products). Involving local communities is a central factor for success.

• Biodiversity

Forest ecosystems are healthy when they are adapted to local circumstances and diverse in their composition. Especially large-scale afforestation over millions of hectares can be detrimental for ecosystems, leading to land degradation and worsen global warming. Small scale deployment of diverse endemic trees, however, leads to benefits across the board (Veldman et al. 2019).

• Time

Forests are a long-term strategy against climate change: they take a relatively long time to sequester new carbon at large up-front costs. At a time when rapid emission reductions are needed, funders supporting afforestation and restoration should do so as part of a broader theory of change that includes measures tackling the sources of emissions.

4 Fast Facts

1

Humans have cleared 50 % of the primary forests on the planet, at increasing speed in the last 50 years, mostly to make room for agriculture.
(WRI 2020; Ahrends et al. 2017)

2

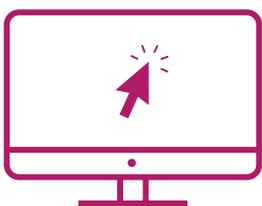
More than 30 % of the CO₂ released from burning fossil fuels, is absorbed by forests every year.
(IUCN 2021, p. 1)

3

Nearly 25 % of the world population rely on forests for their livelihood.
(IUCN 2021)

4

Forests provide US\$ 75–100 billion per year in goods and services such as clean water and healthy soils.
(IUCN 2021)



Visit Active Philanthropy's Climate Solutions Hub to discover related funding opportunities and additional resources on forests and many other climate-related issues!

[Link to bibliography](#)