



Tropical rainforests are one of the most diverse habitats on the planet. The Amazon rainforest alone is home to one in ten of all plant and animal species known on Earth. But forests all around the world are being destroyed. Greenpeace is determined to protect them. The map below shows the location of the world's main forests.



Why do the forests matter?

Habitats for wildlife

Eight out of ten species found on land call forests their home. In the Amazon rainforest there are approximately 40,000 species of plants, more than 400 mammals, almost 1,300 varieties of birds and an insect population in the millions. Many species found in forests are increasingly rare. In fact, half of all orangutans in Borneo were wiped out between 1999 and 2015, mostly due to the expansion of palm oil fields.

Each day we lose 25 orangutans because of deforestation. Even if we were to replace the forests with new trees it wouldn't be enough: ancient forests are incredibly biodiverse and it would take decades for a new forest to support the same amount of life.



Essential to humans

Billions of people need forests for food, fresh water, jobs and medicines. The Amazon rainforest is home to more than 24 million people in Brazil alone, including hundreds of thousands of Indigenous Peoples belonging to 180 different groups. Trees also give out oxygen, which we all breathe.

But forest communities are being forced from their land. These people live peacefully with the forest and protect it. However, as deforestation has increased and more of their land is taken by governments and corporations, they are experiencing a dramatic rise in violence from criminal groups invading and taking over their lands.



Controlling climate change

Forests help to control the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. For example, the Amazon stores about 100 billion metric tons of carbon – that’s more than ten times the annual global emissions from fossil fuels. This helps to prevent the rise in global temperatures which is one of the reasons why deforestation is so bad for the environment. It stops trees from doing their job to control the climate. If our forests are not healthy, the Earth cannot support a lot of life.

What’s the problem?



Globally, half of the world’s forests have already been lost. Tropical rainforests have been particularly affected. For example, in the rainforests of Indonesia an area the size of a football pitch is torn down every 25 seconds!

Deforestation describes the removal of trees and is mainly caused by people. Here are some of the main reasons why.



Palm oil

Palm oil is found in everyday items like shampoo and chocolate bars. Palm oil is popular because it’s cheap and useful, but growing palm oil trees is a disaster for the world’s forests. Between 1990 and 2015, around 24 million hectares of ancient rainforest was destroyed in Indonesia to make way for palm tree fields. That’s an area the size of the UK.



Unsustainable farming practices

In the last few decades, food companies have filled our shelves with meat, cheese, eggs and milk used in other items such as chocolate. This has led to a rapid increase in livestock (farm animals) – particularly cows, pigs and chickens. In fact, it is estimated that around 60% of all mammals on the planet are livestock. Only 4% are wild – the other 36% is us! This increase in livestock is destroying the forests. All these animals need land to graze on and a lot of food, so forests are being cleared to make fields for growing crops or grazing.



Forest fires

Fires are used to clear forests. This is rising. By the end of August 2019, Brazil had over 90,000 fires. Over 46,000 of these were in the Amazon rainforest. This was an increase of 145% from 1st January to 20th August 2019, compared to the same period the previous year. On the 19th August, so much smoke was produced that the sky turned black in São Paulo – a city more than 2,700km away from the blazes! Forest fires also release a huge amount of carbon dioxide which makes climate change worse.



Soybeans

Soybeans are eaten by people but around 90% of the harvest feeds farm animals, especially chickens. Miles and miles of tropical rainforests are cut down and replaced with soybean fields. In just 20 years, soybean production in Brazil has quadrupled. If we just fed them to humans, we wouldn’t need so many!

What's the solution?



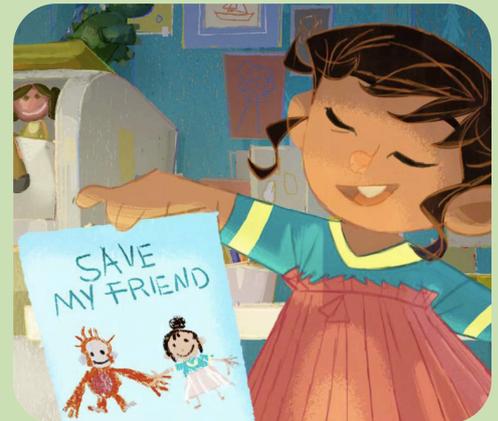
Investigating

Greenpeace's investigations team finds out who and what is destroying the forests. For example, we found out that KFC, McDonald's and Burger King are serving meat that is produced by companies deforesting the Amazon rainforest.



Raising awareness

Greenpeace makes sure people worldwide know what is happening to our forests. To spread the information we write articles, make films and hold big events. The film Rang-tan, released in 2018, was made so people knew palm oil was destroying orangutans' homes. We've also exposed, through articles and reports, how big brands like Nestlé, Unilever and Mars are using palm oil from damaging sources. When people have an understanding of the problems, they are more likely to want to help us fix them.



People power

We know deforestation is more likely to stop with the help of ordinary people, just like you, calling for things to change. That's why Greenpeace creates ways for people to support our campaigns. Millions of people worldwide have signed petitions demanding companies stop buying 'dirty palm oil' (palm oil that destroys the rainforests). The more people who sign, the more likely it is that companies will listen. We help people to show their support in other ways too. For example, we help supporters send letters to local fast food restaurants, like KFC, demanding they stop deforesting the rainforests.



Persuade companies and governments

The support from people worldwide helps Greenpeace to make companies and governments change. Persuading people in authority to support different rules or laws is called lobbying. Since 2006, many companies have agreed to stop buying soybeans from farmers that destroy the Amazon rainforest. This has significantly reduced deforestation for soybean fields in the Brazilian Amazon. This agreement happened because of a Greenpeace campaign. The campaign showed how McDonald's and other food companies were selling meat from animals fed on soybeans grown in the Amazon.



What can you do to help?

What we eat and where we buy our food from can help protect our forests. Eating mostly foods made from plants (plant-based food) means we can feed more people and have a smaller impact on the environment whilst keeping ourselves healthy! Here are three simple things you can do to help protect our forests.



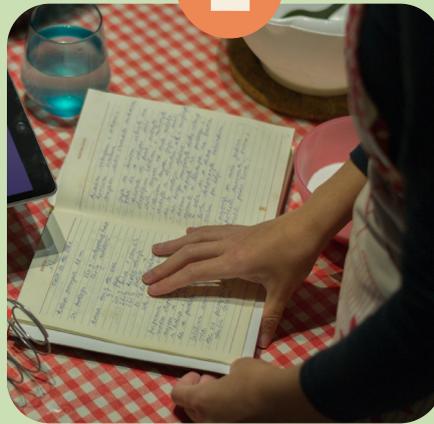
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Choose plant-based takeaways

When you get a takeaway or eat fast food – try a veggie or bean burger instead of chicken or beef.

2



Share your knowledge

Talk to your friends and family about the problem and the solutions. It's important people know what is happening and how to help. Share [this link](#).

3



Meat free days

Make a calendar of your week. Choose at least one day when you'll avoid eating meat. Share it with the other people you live with and encourage them to do it too.

Invite a Greenpeace Speaker

Ask an adult to invite a Greenpeace Speaker to talk to your class or club. They'll share their knowledge of the challenges our planet faces and ways you can help. Find out more: www.act.gp/speakers

Mon

Meat free monday!

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Meat free friday!