



LAND DEGRADATION: ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: How land degradation is threatening Earth's capacity to sustain humanity

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Land degradation, affecting 15 million sq. km globally, threatens food security, ecosystem health, and climate stability, driven by unsustainable practices, climate change, and urbanization. Nearly 30% of India's land is degraded or desertified, with soil erosion due to rainfall and runoff being a primary cause, impacting 26 states significantly.

Global Context of Land Degradation

Definition: Land degradation, as defined by the UNCCD, is the reduction in biological or economic productivity of ecosystems due to unsustainable practices.

Scale of Impact:

- Annually, 1 million square kilometers of land are degraded.
- Approximately 15 million square kilometers have already been affected globally.

Consequences:

- Threatens food security, ecosystem health, and climate stability.
- Reduces land ecosystems' ability to absorb carbon dioxide by 20% in the last decade.

Impacts of Land Degradation

Human and Ecosystem Health:

- Reduces food quality and quantity, heightening malnutrition risks.
- Leads to diseases from water scarcity and soil erosion.
- Affects aquatic ecosystems with pesticide-laden runoff, harming biodiversity.

Climate Change:

- Releases stored carbon, exacerbating global warming.
- Weakens ecosystems' role as carbon sinks.

Drivers of Land Degradation

Unsustainable Agricultural Practices:



- Overuse of chemicals, deforestation, and excessive irrigation.

Climate Change:

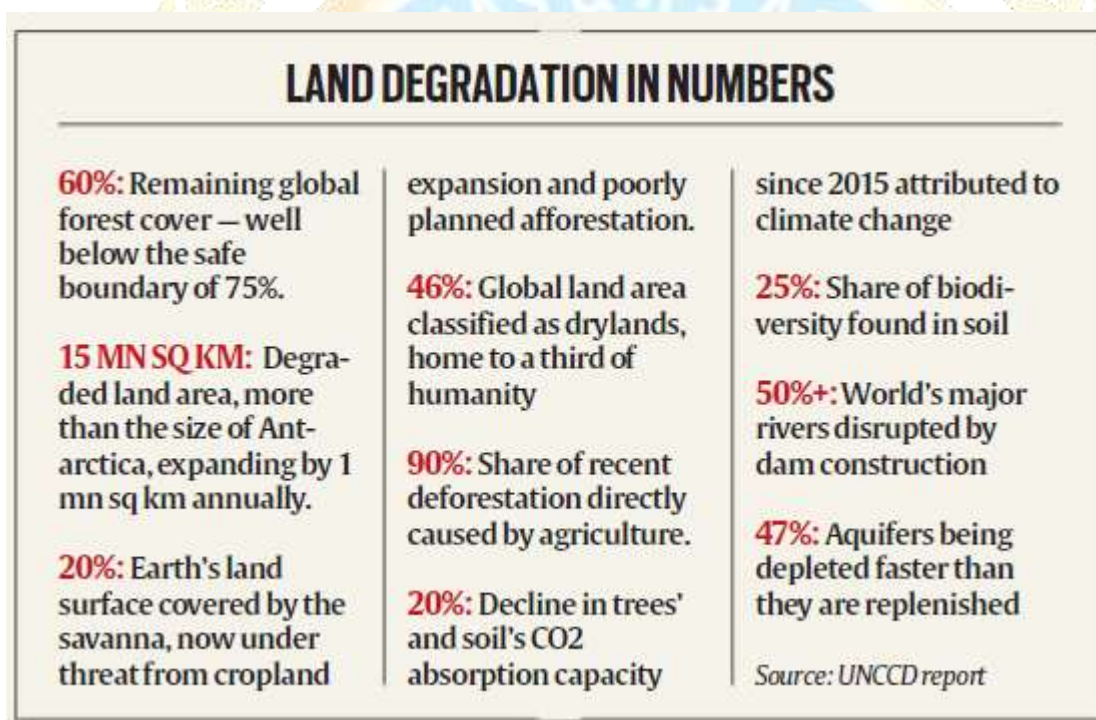
- Amplifies degradation through extreme weather and heat stress.

Urbanization:

- Expands habitat destruction, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

Most Affected Regions

- Drylands in South Asia, northern China, U.S. High Plains, California, and the Mediterranean.
- Low-income countries in tropical and arid zones, with limited resilience to impacts.



Land Degradation in India

Scale of Degradation:

- 30% of India's total geographical area (328.72 MHA) is degraded or facing desertification.
- 96.4 MHA is under desertification.

State-Level Impacts:

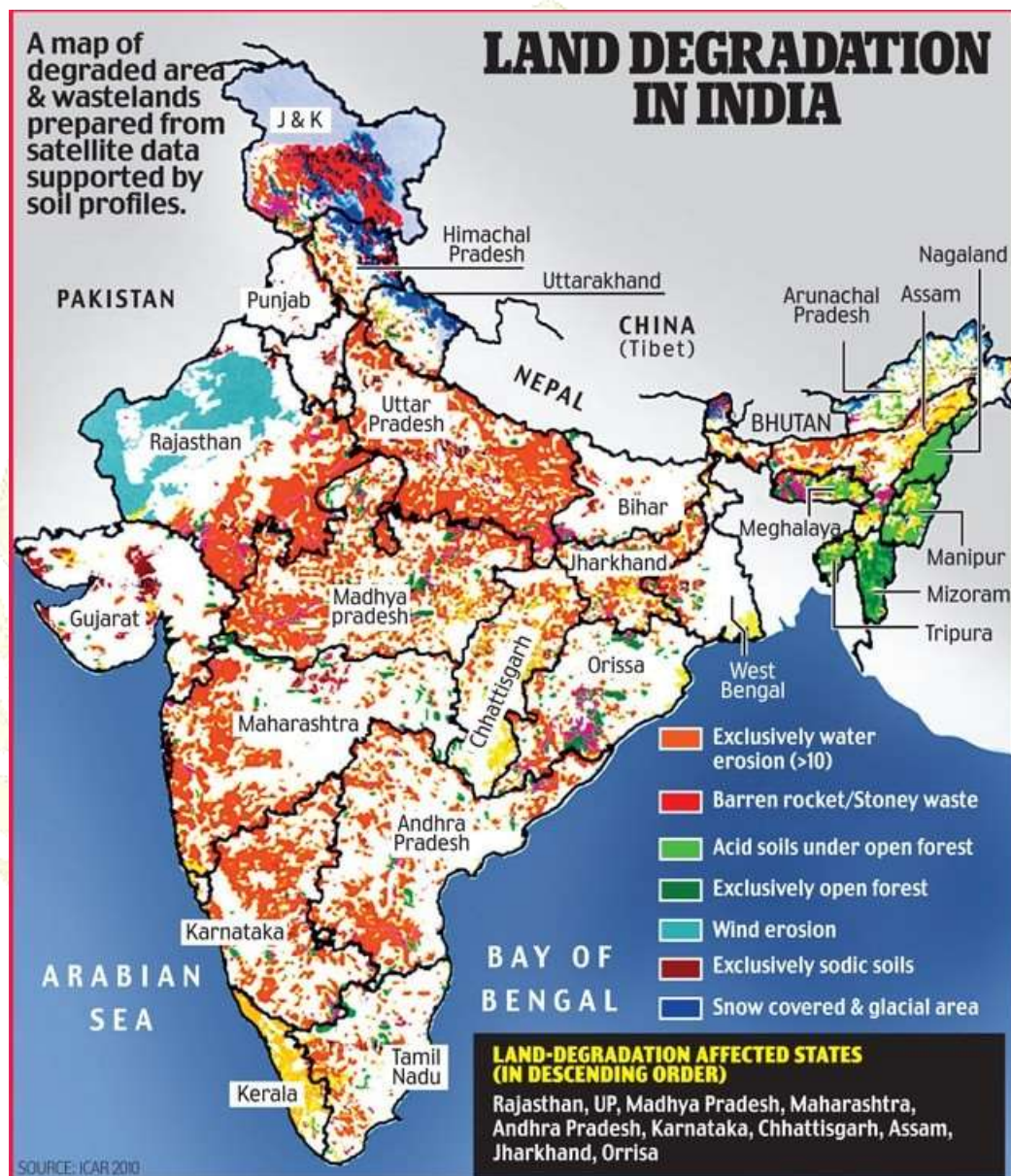


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- States like Rajasthan, Delhi, Goa, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Tripura, and Himachal Pradesh report 40-70% land degradation.
- 26 out of 29 states show increasing desertification over the past decade.

Key Driver in India: Loss of soil cover due to rainfall and surface runoff.



Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/how-land-degradation-is-threatening-earths-capacity-to-sustain-humanity-9703110/>