

3. Forest Declaration Assessment 2025 – Environment

Global forest health in crisis, deforestation off charts by 63%. The Forest Declaration Assessment 2025 reveals that global efforts are 63% off-track from achieving the 2030 zero-deforestation goal, with tropical forests losing 6.73 million hectares in 2024. Despite rising forest finance, massive agricultural subsidies and weak restoration efforts continue to drive global deforestation.

1. Context

The Forest Declaration Assessment (FDA) 2025 Report highlights that the world is severely off-track in achieving the global goal of halting and reversing deforestation by 2030. It reveals a widening gap between restoration promises and actual progress, alongside a massive financial imbalance between agricultural subsidies and forest protection efforts.

2. Key Highlights of the Report

(a) Global Deforestation Trends

Off-Track to 2030 Target – The world is **63% behind schedule** to achieve the zero deforestation target agreed under global climate pledges. This implies that if the current rate continues, global forests cannot meet the 2030 commitments under the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use.

Forest Loss in 2024 – The planet lost **8.1 million hectares** of forest in 2024 – approximately equal to the area of Austria. **Tropical forests** bore the maximum brunt, with **6.73 million hectares** of loss, showing that tropical biodiversity hotspots remain the most threatened.

Primary Drivers – Permanent agriculture accounted for **86% of global deforestation** over the past decade. Expansion of cropland for commodities like soy, palm oil, and cattle pasture continues to destroy large tracts of tropical forests.

Forest Degradation – Beyond outright loss, **forest degradation** (loss of ecological quality) has intensified. **Tropical moist forests** suffered **8.8 million hectares of degradation**, marking a **235% deviation** from the restoration target. This degradation reduces both carbon absorption capacity and biodiversity richness.

(b) Forest Restoration Progress

Restoration Pledge (COP26) – Countries pledged to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems (including forests) by 2030 under the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Actual Progress – Only **10.6 million hectares** are under active restoration—representing merely **5.4%** of the total reforestation potential. The report emphasizes the need for scaling up restoration through community-driven and nature-based solutions.

(c) Financial Imbalance

Parameter	Forest Finance	Agricultural Subsidies
Amount	USD 5.7 billion (2022–24)	USD 409 billion annually
Trend	Increased from USD 1.7 billion (2018–20)	Remains disproportionately high
Observation	Forest finance rose but remains insufficient	70× higher than forest finance; fuels deforestation indirectly

Funding Gap – To meet 2030 goals, an **annual investment of USD 117–299 billion** is required. The gap shows the urgency for redirecting or repurposing harmful subsidies toward forest-positive initiatives.

Financial Institutions’ Accountability – Only **40% of major financial institutions** exposed to deforestation-linked commodities (like timber, beef, soy, palm oil) have policies addressing forest risks. Indicates weak environmental due diligence in global finance.

3. About Forest Declaration Assessment (FDA)

Feature	Description
Nature	Independent civil society–led monitoring initiative.
Objective	Tracks global progress toward halting and reversing deforestation and restoring degraded forests by 2030.

Origin	Evolved from the New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF) Progress Assessment initiated in 2015.
Current Scope	Now covers multiple global pledges, including the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use (2021).
Coordinating Agency	Climate Focus – in collaboration with a consortium of international NGOs, research institutions, and advocacy groups.

4. Linkage to COP26 and Global Commitments

Aspect	Details
Venue & Date	Glasgow, Scotland (31 October – 13 November 2021)
Outcome Document	The Glasgow Climate Pact – aimed at limiting temperature rise to below 1.5°C.
Key Commitments	
1. Deforestation & Land Use	Over 100 world leaders (representing 85% of global forests) signed the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration to end and reverse deforestation by 2030.
2. Coal Transition	First COP decision explicitly mentioning a “phase down of unabated coal power”.
3. Methane Pledge	100+ nations joined the Global Methane Pledge to cut emissions by 30% by 2030 (compared to 2020).
4. Climate Finance	Developed nations reaffirmed mobilizing USD 100 billion annually for developing countries.
5. Carbon Markets	Consensus on Article 6 rules for transparent carbon trading and to avoid double counting.

5. Broader Implications

Climate Impact – Forests act as global carbon sinks; continued deforestation undermines Paris Agreement goals.

Biodiversity Crisis – Tropical deforestation threatens thousands of species and disrupts ecological balance.

Economic Dimension – Unsustainable agricultural expansion indicates a need for green transition in food systems.

Governance Reform – Calls for aligning public finance, trade policies, and private sector investment with forest-positive outcomes.

6. India's Relevance

India, as a signatory to the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests, has pledged to enhance forest and tree cover to 33% under its National Forest Policy. India's Green India Mission, CAMPA funds, and Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) support reforestation. However, balancing infrastructure development with ecological restoration remains a policy challenge.

Source – <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/forests/global-forest-health-in-crisis-deforestation-off-charts-by-63>