

Climate crisis cannot be tackled without shift away from damaging land use, major report warns

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Credit: WWF-US / Days Edge

The way we currently use land is both a major contributor to climate change and placing unsustainable demands on the land systems on which humans and nature depend, according to an authoritative new report presented in Geneva today.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Climate Change and Land, explores the relationship between [climate](#), people and land in a warming world. It warns that [climate change](#) is placing additional stress on land, increasing degradation, biodiversity loss and [food insecurity](#).

Dr. Stephen Cornelius, chief advisor on climate change and IPCC lead for WWF, said:

"This report sends a clear message that the way we currently use land is contributing to climate change, while also undermining its ability to support people and nature. We need to see an

urgent transformation in our land use. Priorities include protecting and restoring [natural ecosystems](#) and moving to [sustainable food production](#) and consumption.

"Good land choices are fundamental to tackling the climate crisis. A shift to sustainable land management must be accompanied by the necessary rapid and deep cuts to fossil fuel emissions if we are to meet the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. Action on one alone is not enough."

Humans use approximately 72 percent of the global ice-free land surface, with [land use](#) contributing around 23 percent of total human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through deforestation, habitat conversion for agriculture, and livestock emissions. The removal of forests, conversion of peatlands and other natural ecosystems releases carbon, while at the same time contributing to unprecedented biodiversity loss and land degradation. The food sector alone is responsible for 75 percent of deforestation worldwide, with the greatest pressure on forests taking place in the tropics. It is also a major driver of savannah and grassland conversion.

Climate change is already affecting the four pillars of food security—availability, access, utilisation and stability—through increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of some extreme events.

"Delayed action will increase the risk of climate change impacts on food security. Those most at risk are the world's poorest.

"Early action to address the climate crisis has the potential to provide multiple co-benefits across the whole range of land challenges, with many options

contributing positively to sustainable development and other societal goals," added Cornelius.

The report highlights the synergies and trade-offs inherent in our land choices. WWF considers an integrated suite of sustainable land management tools necessary to secure a climate safe future, while supporting food security and nature. Nature-based climate solutions should play a key role. For instance, mangroves help increase climate resilience, while providing a range of ecosystem services to local communities and supporting fish nurseries.

The science presented in the report further underlines that climate, people and nature are fundamentally linked. Efforts to mitigate climate change and halt nature loss must go hand in hand, and be fully integrated with climate adaptation and food security considerations.

Land-based mitigation options make up to a quarter of total mitigation proposed by countries in their country climate plans, submitted to the UN under the Paris Agreement.

"Countries should make full use of nature-based climate solutions, together with other key measures such as reducing fossil fuel emissions, to enhance their commitments under the Paris Agreement by 2020. The first opportunity to announce such bold plans will be the Climate Summit in New York in September," said Fernanda Carvalho, global policy manager for WWF's climate and energy practice.

Provided by WWF

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