

## **The Economic value of rainforests**

One of the biggest threats to the rainforests is their destruction for commercial gain. For example, the Amazon and rainforests in [Asia](#) are largely threatened by commercial logging, incineration, agriculture and industrial activity such as growing palm oil and livestock. However, their survival is worth more to modern economies than their destruction.

Controlling climate change is the most substantial contribution made by rainforests. According to the United Nations climate scientists, the world spends \$300 billion at present to stop the rise in greenhouse gases and buy up to 20 years to mitigate the climate crisis. The very existence of rainforests will help regulate climate change and minimize the amount spent on lowering CO2 emissions. Rainforests absorb approximately [2.4](#) tonnes of CO2 per year, which accounts for one-third of CO2 generated by fossil fuels annually, while releasing oxygen to the atmosphere, acting as a natural air purifier and controlling toxic emissions.

More than [25%](#) of modern medicines originate from rainforests as well. That is even more astounding considering it consists of only 1% of flora discovered in rainforests so far. As Professors [Robert Mendelsohn and Michael Balick](#) [argue](#), tropical plant species could be worth as much as \$147 billion to society as a whole, treating critical diseases such as HIV and cancer. The loss of rainforests will cost the pharmaceutical industry billions of dollars.

Rainforests are key sustainers of water bodies around the world. Large tree covers increase precipitation in the air, providing and regulating a healthy rainfall and nourishing all water bodies including fresh water. The depletion of rainforests will not only jeopardize a sufficient water supply to cumulative populations but further risk their contamination.

Rainforests are also home to [30 million](#) known species of flora and fauna, which is nearly half of the earth's wildlife and two-thirds of plant species. The loss of biodiversity incurred by deforestation breaks the equilibrium of all ecosystems. No matter how small or of how little significance a species is, they all have a vital role to play collectively, to sustain life on earth. The loss of biodiversity will decimate economies by affecting pollination and food sources, increasing irregular rainfall and exacerbating climate catastrophes.

## **Conservation of rainforests**

### **1) Reforestation**

The most common action taken in restoring the lost primary forests is by replanting them. In 2017, Conservation International partnered with the Brazil government and community NGOs to plant 73 million trees in the Brazilian Amazon. However, it is imperative that native plants are used for rehabilitating and restoring the degradation without using alien or foreign species, in order to sustain the original ecosystem of the primary forests.

### **2) Tougher laws**

Governments must ensure laws are enacted and law enforcement continues in order to safeguard the last surviving primary rainforests like in Indonesia, Madagascar and even the Amazon. Proper land demarcations, tougher fines for human encroachments, regulating deforestation for industries – such as tea and coffee plantations – and preventing species trafficking will further support protection of the remaining natural rainforests and its critically endangered and endemic biodiversity.

### **3) Investing in conservation and research**

Conservation of rainforests will be pivotal for their survival. Yet most conservation efforts are carried out by non-profit organizations and volunteers who will not succeed without adequate investment. For example, the Rainforest Trust supports local conservation groups such as in Ecuador to acquire 495 more hectares for the [Río Canandé Reserve](#), which encompasses higher concentrations of endemic and threatened species. Similarly, the UN REDD invested in the Democratic Republic of Congo to create an online [National Forest Monitoring System](#) to track and map data on logging concessions to prevent unlawful felling.

### **4) Awareness**

Educating young people about the social and environmental value of rainforests and directing them towards sustainable living will be essential to saving the remaining primary rainforests. Rainforest Alliance is one non-profit that uses its [seal](#) to mark eco-friendly products and services like eco-tourism

that do not harm rainforests further and encourage responsible and sustainable living.

It takes millions of years for rainforests to develop. That is why safeguarding the remaining natural rainforests is more effective than restoring and rewilding them. Understanding their economic value and conserving them will enable greener and more inclusive economies, leading to a better world.