

# Importance of the amazon rainforests

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Rainforests hold integral importance as they host 70% of the world's biodiversity disregarding the fact that most species haven't been discovered. This plays an essential role in plenty of human business', economies, pharmaceuticals, provides shelter to indigenous communities and day to day human activity including the fact that most of the tables we eat our meals at or study at come from one of 7 billion trees that have been deforested per year. Annually, many of acres of land are transformed into pastures to herd cattle to feed the economic greed of millions of fast food chains and the stomachs of millions of the hungry unfortunate. The consumption of beef is increasing at a rapid rate and so is the depletion of rainforests. The depletion of rainforests means a change in the global rainfall patterns and climate which is a problem that will be faced by all of humanity not long from now. I happened to come across the quote, ' eating less red meat would be a better way for people to cut carbon emissions than giving up their cars.' I began to question how a comparatively small change could create such a large impact on the world around us. The question made me delve into further research which propelled me into choosing this topic for my individual research to cover the following issues.

Warming and pollution Global Perspective: The consumption of beef is on a rapid increase worldwide due the viscous spread of large MNC's such as McDonalds that has also have said to ' radically change the beef industry.' Countries like Brazil, that are known for their Amazon Rainforests and rich botanical and wildlife treasures are also titled the Number 1 beef exporters in the world. Brazilian authorities have claimed that cattle ranching is one of the most injurious to the Amazon rainforest. Many reporters have asserted

that the Amazon has lost land the size of Washington to cattle ranching. This injurious damage is most seen in species such as the South American tapir, Pygmy Sloth and the red faced Ukari. ' Why are these so important?' you may ask, well species such as the tapir are considered to be one of the ' Big three' for tourists to see whilst they visit the southern American rainforest. The lack of these species could potentially lead to the dissatisfaction of tourists which may lead to an adverse effect on the country's economy. In addition to their economic significance these species hold an integral role in shaping the natural environment of the Amazon.

A study was done in a country called French Guiana, brazils neighbour to test the vitality of these species by fencing out an area of land wherein the tapirs were not allowed to enter. It was inferred from this experiment that the Tapir's were the animals responsible in packing down the soil and spreading seeds as these mammoth sized species would trample across the ground. Hence the absence of the tapir meant that there was a sharp decrease in the growth of plant species in that area. Unlike deer and peccaries tapirs are one of the only animal species that are successful in seed dispersal through mastication hence they're responsible in regenerating numerous botanic species. With the increased demand for biological, organic and natural products the Rainforest contains plenty of business opportunities. In addition to this the Amazon rainforest contains cures for fatal diseases including cancer, leukaemia, arthritis, malaria and various heart diseases. In order to build and grow these cattle ranches the increased deforestation in these areas has led to a direct concern for many foreign pharmaceutical companies like- Merk&Co, Pfizer, Novart and Bayer.

Above all, these cattle ranches are slowly but surely creeping in to the homes of indigenous tribes. The Gurani tribe has faced serious conflict with the cattle ranchers as they have taken away ancestral land. It had been reported that large cattle ranching companies have sent gunman that have supposedly murdered members of the Gurani tribe after taking away their land. This is a fine example of how the consumption of beef has indirectly lead to the violation of human rights at a very grass root and primary level. The Amazon rainforest has often been labelled as the ‘lungs of the earth’ and the ‘earth’s filter’ which means that it does play a massive role in the prevention of global warming which is a battle the entire world is fighting.

Clearing of land for cattle ranching does mean that there are more trees felled. When trees are cut, they emit carbon dioxide which then mingles with other greenhouse gases to make a blanket and cover the earth. This then causes a change in the surrounding temperatures that are said to damage all ecosystems including the Amazon itself which reports say are turning into the ‘savannah’ which is threatening the forest as a whole. International pressure has propelled Brazil to make many efforts to find sustainable methods for the future. Brazil itself has signed the REDD (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries) to reduce their carbon footprint. The Brazil locality has started to become more conscious of their surroundings and NGO’s like Alianca da Terra that create incentives for producers to maintain their forest land, have been sprouting up. This strongly depicts certain amounts of awareness in foreign countries which might save the almost extinguished fire that is the Amazon rainforest.

Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project (MAAP) has found that Peru another country which is known for its ‘ underappreciated deforestation’ has seen vast destructive impacts due to an increase in what is known as ‘ cowboy culture’. Data from 2016 further suggests that 2016 tree cover loss rates may be thrice as worse than that witnessed in 2015. One of the major regions affected by this is ‘ Huáncó’ the central point of endemism for numerous plant species and other animal taxa groups. Nonetheless the species that have faced the most detrimental damage include the sira poison dart frog, the purple sided leaf frog , the laguna toad and maria’s Giant glass frog. Besides the Sira poison dart frog which is the least concerning for the IUCN the others have been ranked as one of the most endangered species. The mountain range also houses endemic bird species such as the Sira curassow and the Sira tanager which are on the major decline due to deforestation. Due to the easy connectivity in Huáncó it has become a collective hub for cattle ranchers from various regions. According to Wilmar Plasencia, head of the Huanuco branch of the Institute of Development and the Environment, or IDMA, these migrants are the ones held accountable for the majority of the deforestation as the ancestral systems are designed to prevent over exploitation.

Local Communities use land for cattle ranching in the Peruvian area on a rotational basis, hence allowing the land to rest. Conversely land grabbers don’t follow this policy and further argue that they need to meet their necessities. This heavy social issue is pressing down on Peru especially since poverty levels can be as high 42% in the semi urban areas and up to 50% in the rural areas. (IOM) In 2017 there were many reported flood events,

mudslides in Trujillo in northern Peru which have devastated homes, crops, infrastructure and of course the wildlife habitat. The more recent extraordinary amounts of rainfall has been caused by uncommon warming of the water off Pacific coast of Peru deforestation being one of the greatest factors has led to local effects rather than global effects. The warm seas have led to a warmer atmosphere which means Peru has witnessed more rainy days than usual spanning from the southern state of Cusco to the Northern state of San Martin along with Camajanca. This unconventional rainfall has not only affected Peru but Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia leading to landslides, washing away of homes, roads and bridges.

Local Perspective: Although India as a country is mostly perceived to be vegetarian studies have shown that India is projected to be one of the largest consumers of beef, mutton and chicken. According to the sample registration system (SRS) baseline survey in 2014 released by the state government 71% of Indians that are above the age of 15 are non-vegetarian. This has an adverse impact on the numerous plant and animal species along with the people living in the cattle rearing vicinity. Studies have proved that the consumption of beef has led to the contamination and lack of water. Raising animals for food is one of the biggest contributors to water pollution in the world of industry. There are plenty of bacteria, pesticides and antibiotics that are not only condensed in animal flesh but also found in the faeces of cattle. These toxic chemicals have a disastrous effect on the surrounding ecosystem which is the case in Western Uttar Pradesh. Most of the waste that is excreted out of the factories gets deposited into rivers such as the Ganges, Yamuna and Ghagra which are some of the country's biggest

and most important rivers. This in turn has an adverse impact on the forest environment.

Since the trees are made 50% of water, clean water is also a necessity for them to grow and thrive. Studies have found an almost symbiotic relationship between trees and clean water- as trees act as water filters nonetheless in order to perform their job trees need water. This has been the case with the forest environment around the Ganges. Cattle rearing is a tedious job that requires bathing, washing and feeding of the cattle. In India, especially in the Uttar Pradesh region cattle tenders bathe their animals in the river. This again adds a larger amount of water in comparison to staple crops like wheat or rice hence in times of drought or water conservation consuming beef only adds to the problem. This polluted water further risks people in the locality suffering from fatal water borne diseases hence potentially diminishing lives of people both young and old. As a country with one of the lowest available supplies of fresh water where numerous children die due to diarrheal diseases the direct health consequences of meat consumption proved to be a major concern for environmentalists and medics alike. In addition to this, meat production in India is increasingly using more and more antibiotics thereby placing an increased stress in selection on drug resistant bacteria which is the cause of many new born deaths. Even though it is said that the Indian consumption of meat per person is 1/10th of that of countries like china because of the relatively smaller population however the increasing trend in meat consumption proves that the problems stated above are projected to escalate rapidly. Organisations like PETA (india)

through the digital platform are spreading awareness hence potentially increasing the chance of a reduction in meat consumption in the future.

Personal Perspective: As a non-vegetarian and person that eats meat on a rather daily basis the extensive research has put sustainability into perspective. Although a meat eating culture is a prevalent factor in many societies a small change in one's lifestyle not only benefits you as beef has been discovered as a carcinogenic product, but your community and more importantly the wider natural world which unknowingly plays such an important role in our lives.