

# Global environmental issues research paper

[Environment](#), [Water](#)



Deforestation started when people stopped nomadic living and settled down to farming. In order to do this room had to be made for settlements and farms so the land use changed from forestation to agriculture. International policies have been set to protect tropical forests, slow down deforestation and encourage sustainable use of forests particularly in the world's rainforests. Saving tropical rainforests is a priority because of their incredible plant and animal diversity. Scientists estimate that " more than half of (the world's species) live in the tropical moist forests which cover only 6 percent of the world's land surface" (Middleton, 1995, 36). The main reasons for deforestation are (a) farming, (b) cattle ranching, (c) logging, and (d) collecting wood for fuel. National governments such as in Brazil may offer incentives for using the land for ranching or agriculture. On the global scale international economics such as on the Ivory Coast have lost their forests because they were used as revenue to the country's expenses and high debt. Deforestation ruins the local water cycle, degrades the soil and disrupts the nutrient cycles. These three changes also negatively impact climate cycles which lead to global warming.

Destruction of the Amazon rainforest has a high negative impact on global warming and amounts of biodiversity. Unfortunately Brazil produces 20% of global greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. Raising beef cattle is the biggest problem and the one that has to be decreased as much as possible. A lot of land is needed for cattle ranching especially because the demand for beef for export is high which means that the amount of deforestation is large to make enough room. This has a negative impact on the indigenous peoples, biodiversity and the natural cycles that sustain life in Brazil's tropical forest.

Greenpeace (2009) explain the Brazilian government has formed economic alliances with three of the top global leather and beef traders in the cattle financial sector (6). In order to increase profits slavery is used in the slaughterhouses which prepare the cattle for meat us and processing of the leather. Greenpeace reports, for example that the ready-meal food sector is large in the UK, 40 percent of UK processed beef imports are from Brazil and 90 percent are imported from the top three traders of Brazilian cattle products. This example demonstrates the direct link between consumers and the Amazon rainforest destruction.

Global outlook on shrimp fishing predicted by the United Nation Environment Programme are not positive. The report links with the challenges to meeting Millennium Development Goals for food, health and clean water security. Shrimp are gathered in coastal ecosystems which are becoming highly degraded. The way shrimp are caught is bad for the ecosystem and unsustainable. The problematic practices include government subsidies which end up encouraging overfishing and the use of destructive fishing methods such as “ bottom trawler, dynamite and poison” (Water, 2009, 122). Trawling for fish is one of the worst methods in terms of ecosystem degradation. A decline “ marine trophic levels suggest large areas of marine shelf areas have been degraded by trawling” (Water, 2009, 137). Another problem is the use of shrimp aquaculture. Families depending on fishing or farming suffer from the consequences. Honduras is an example because as the use of shrimp aquaculture has increased communities do not have access to seasonal lagoons, mangroves, or estuaries. Ecosystems are

destroyed so biodiversity is decreasing. The water cycle is disrupted and water quality is degraded. Sustainable solutions are needed.

Overfishing is feeding the appetites of the West while the fishermen and their families are struggling to survive. Shanahan (n. d.) reports that although fish trawling only brings in 2 percent of the world's seafood, the trawling nets catch about 33 percent of the world's by-catch (1). By-catch is the part of the fishing net haul that is thrown back into the ocean because there is not market for the fish and other sea products. Throughout this essay one point has become clear that countries consuming the most food have a direct effect on the environment in the country where the food product is imported. Shanahan lists suggestions for consumer actions to help solve the problem instead of adding to the problem (a) learn about the problem, (b) talk to other people about the problem, (c) eat less shrimp or stop eating shrimp, (d) talk to the supermarket and restaurant managers, suggest they buy only shrimp caught with sustainable methods (those that cause no ecosystem harm or human rights abuses), and (e) sign the petition that Environmental Justice Foundation has on their web site (2). Consumers must start taking responsibility for the food choices they make. Not only will that benefit the environment, it will also help the families who are fishing for their living.

## **Works Cited**

Middleton, N. J. 'Tropical Deforestation' Chapter 3 The Global Casino.  
London, UK: Arnold, 1995, pp. 28-42.

Greenpeace. 'Slaughtering the Amazon Summary' Section B. State and

Trends of the Environment: 1987 - 2007. Executive Summary Amazon Report 2009. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: 2009 June, pp. 122 - 149.

Water. ' Excerpts on overfishing' Fourth Global Environment Outlook: Environment for development (GEO-4) assessment, United Nations Environment Programme, pp. 1-10

Shanahan, Mike. ' Appetite for Destruction' The Ecologist, 33(2), n. d., pp. 1-2.