

Clear up the issue, not our trees

[Business](#)



Six billion. That one number demonstrates the potential of ongoing destruction and challenges our morality. No, it doesn't refer to the current human population.

According to the 2005 report from Rainforest Action Network, six billion trees are cut down every year. Twenty-nine million each day. Deforestation is a real threat to this planet. We are stripping away the greenery, endangering innumerable ecosystems and inflicting on the quality of life of the organisms that inhabit them. Demand for wood based products and industries is stronger than ever.

The world's forests could potentially be eradicated at today's rate of deforestation. " Forests...cover about 30 percent of the world's land area, but swaths the size of Panama are lost each and every year" (National Geographic, N.

D.). All of this is done legally. Now add to this deprivation that occurs illegally, and you have a travesty. Uncontrolled logging without simultaneous reforestation and a concerted effort to preserve endangered species and ecosystems is unethical. It needs to be controlled especially in the developing nations where there is a lack of awareness, regulation, resources and willingness.

Combating this grave threat to the natural environment, economies and human society is an ethical issue that should inspire action. One of the most frequently cited examples of significant deforestation is of the largest and most species rich rainforest in the world; the Amazon rainforest: " During the past 40 years, close to 20 percent of the Amazon...has been cut down more

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than in the previous 450 years total since European colonization began” (Wallace, N.

D.). Unfortunately, the Amazon rainforest is only one of the thousands of forests that are being destroyed. The reasons driving this destruction have expanded beyond the original, while the mainstay is still industry-based profit. “ Furthermore, Amazonian forests are increasingly being cleared for cropland, not just for pastureland or timber harvesting, as the demand for energy drives expansion of soybean agriculture for biofuel” (Snyder, 2010). Trees are cut down for everyday paper products and other living essentials.

“ Logging operations...also cut countless trees each year. Loggers.

.. acting illegally, also build roads to access more and more remote forests which leads to further deforestation” (National Geographic, N. D.). These methods of deforestation damage the planet and quality of life.

Illegal logging is harvesting, processing, transporting, and buying timber while breaking the law in any point of the process. Some of the causes for this type of activity include corruption, unclear territory definition and governance issues. Moreover, governments often have difficulty catching and controlling illegal smuggling of timber. “ The World Bank states that the annual global market loses US \$10 billion annually from illegal logging, with governments losing an additional US \$5 billion in revenues” (WWF Global, 2011). That is adding steep insult to injury. The practice of hacking and slashing down trees is inhumane, and it should not be viewed as an acceptable cost of urbanization or development.

Supply and demand is always a factor, but the inherent driver is material profit. When analyzed from a moral perspective, it is an embarrassing justification. Trees are the basis of our planet. Trees make our air breathable. Trees provide shade and moist soil.

They support life for innumerable species. Trees naturally fuel life, not industries. It is obviously counter to any moral or ethical consideration that we ravage the very source of our sustenance. Cutting down trees is also accelerating climate change and throwing natural processes out of balance. “ Deforestation causes 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Of these, carbon dioxide emissions represent up to one-third of total carbon dioxide emissions released because of human causes” (WWF Global, N. D.). Climate change occurs because of a build up in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. “ More than 2. 4 million pounds of carbon dioxide [is] released into the air every second” (Carbon Dioxide, 2012).

Carbon dioxide is a harmful pollutant that traps heat in the atmosphere. It is a major factor in global warming; warming of the atmosphere will cause ice caps to melt and ocean levels to rise. Also, buildup of carbon dioxide can affect breathing systems, as well as marine life. For example, Papua, New Guinea, is the world’s third-largest tropical forest and home to one of the largest concentrations of biodiversity. “ As a small island nation, Papua New Guinea is particularly vulnerable to damage from sea level rise associated with climate change” (Republic, 2004). If we look deeper at the economic impacts, illegal logging results in loss of government annuities and these losses are serious.

According to the Illegal Logging Portal, Indonesia lost \$2 billion dollars in 2006 due to corruption in the forest sector, and Mozambique lost over \$20 million dollars due to unpaid taxes on exports to China. Havocscope (2010) predicted that this illegality in public lands causes losses in assets and revenue in more than \$10 billion dollars annually. Not only does this illegal trade of forest resources cause the loss of biodiversity but also compromises the rule of law. It undermines responsible forest management and international security, encourages corruption, money laundering and tax evasion and reduces the income of the producer countries. Naturally, this further limits the resources producer countries can invest in sustainable development.

It is affiliated with organized crime, human rights abuses and sometimes violent conflict. Illegal logging has serious economic and social implications for the poor and disadvantaged as seen where there is massive deforestation in sub Saharan Africa. Developing countries like Nigeria rely heavily on wood fuel. The impoverished do not have the funds for better farming. Poverty causes massive deforestation in situations like this. Although the challenges seem massive, there are still rays of hope.

Several countries have taken steps to prevent, control, and manage deforestation rates. The Union of Concerned Scientists' recent study analyzed the success of Brazil's efforts to reduce deforestation and lower the amount of heat-trapping emissions in the past five years. The international effort known as REDD+ has shown great success and enormous potential for reforestation and reducing emissions from forest degradation. " REDD+ was proposed by developing countries in 2005 as an international strategy by <https://assignbuster.com/clear-up-the-issue-not-our-trees/>

which tropical countries would reduce deforestation (which is responsible for about 15 percent of all global warming pollution)” (The Union, 2011). This strategy was later turned into a national law which stated that Brazil would reduce its deforestation rate 80 percent by 2020.

We must increase the pace of these corrective actions or else the impacts of this injustice against nature will become increasingly dramatic. The costs of delayed action would be irreversible in terms of lost species and lost aesthetics, the lost beauty and art of the forests. The costs of managing the impacts of climate change would be much higher than the cost of implementing preventive steps. Protecting forests needs to be a constant part of dialogue between governments and global activists. Successful regulations and laws need to be repeated in countries that haven't yet established them.

We need to raise awareness in schools and communities and more campaigns to reduce, reuse and recycle. We must use technology to spread awareness and promote recycled products not only as the ethical choice but the trendy choice, the choice of a discerning generation. Developing nations hungry for material success and a westernized consumption based lifestyle will burn through forests at an even faster pace. At the simplest level, anything illegal is illegal for a reason. Logging illegally is a felony, a crime, and a serious insult to the values which should bond us to the earth that sustains us. Beyond damages, it is a moral issue front and center.

It is like stealing from your mother's purse in your own home. It is an affront to our ability to discriminate right from wrong. Politicians, policies and tree

huggers across the world must unite and find innovative solutions to do what is beneficial for the world and for the environment. Students at creative programs like COSMOS in stellar universities like UCSD must lead the path to innovative Green Technology solutions of the future. Solutions that will create new industries of alternative materials to timber. Solutions that create new food sources for animals that will prevent deforestation for pastureland.

These will fuel jobs and grow economies where more of the world can thrive and fewer are driven to illegal activities. Innovation can be the answer to our moral imperative for protecting the environment. The environment is our world, after all. Works Cited “ Brazil’s Success in Reducing Deforestation.” Union of Concerned Scientists.

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