

Deforestation, Environment, and Sustainable Development: A Comparative Analysis

Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi

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According to available estimates, forests cover more than one quarter of the world's total area. About sixty percent of these forests are situated in tropical countries. However, these forests are disappearing at a very fast pace. Between 1980 and 1995, an area larger than Mexico had been deforested. This accelerated destruction of forests poses a serious threat to the environmental and economic well-being of the earth. Several studies have demonstrated that natural forests are the single most important repository of terrestrial biological diversity--of ecosystems, species, and genetic resources. Forests also act as major carbon sinks, absorbing massive quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Deforestation, according to these studies, is directly linked to adverse climate change, soil erosion, desertification, and water cycling. Until recently deforestation was deemed to be a local/national problem. However, increased awareness and scientific data have pointed out that the problem transcends national boundaries. Deforestation affects the entire earth's environment and economic development.

This collection of essays analyzes the forces responsible for deforestation, the governmental policies that effect this destruction and the roles multilateral aid agencies, NGOs, play in the environmental debate. The collection critically examines the principles and criteria suggested by forest-experts for a sustained economic growth vis-á-vis forest stewardship in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. An invaluable resource for scholars, students, researchers, and policymakers involved with environmental and public policy issues.



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