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The Root of the Problem: What's Driving Tropical Deforestation Today?

Resource
June 2011

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Summary

Deforestation and forest degradation have been occurring for thousands of years. Both deforestation, which completely removes the forest canopy, and degradation, which maintains the canopy but causes losses of carbon, are important sources of global warming pollution, as well as threats to biodiversity and to the livelihoods of forest peoples. Thus it is important to understand the causes of these changes—the "drivers" of deforestation. In this report, the Union of Concerned Scientists explains these drivers and shows that they have changed fundamentally in the twenty-first century. The report focuses on the economic agents that play a critical role in deforestation.

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