



India's Expanding Green Footprint

GFRA 2025 Ranks India 9th Globally in Total Forest Area, 3rd in Net Annual Forest Area Gain

FAO ranks India 5th among top global carbon sinks

24 October, 2025

Key Highlights

- India has moved up to **9th position** globally in terms of total forest area as per GFRA 2025.
- India continues to maintain **3rd position** worldwide in terms of **net annual forest area gain**.
- India ranked **5th among the top global carbon sinks**, with its forests removing **150 Mt of CO₂ per year** during 2021-2025.
- Total global forest area is **~4.14 billion hectares**, covering **~32%** of Earth's land area.
- The annual rate of net forest loss fell from **10.7 million ha (1990-2000)** to **4.12 million ha (2015-2025)**.

Introduction:

India has achieved a significant milestone in global forest statistics by advancing to the **9th position worldwide** in terms of total forest area, according to the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA) 2025** released on 22 October 2025. In the previous assessment, India was ranked 10th. India has also maintained its **3rd position globally** in the **annual net gain of forest area**.

FAO is a specialized agency of the **United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve sustainable management of natural resources, including forests. The **GFRA** is **FAO's periodic assessment of the state of the world's forests**, providing comprehensive data on forest area, change, management, and use.

GFRA 2025: India in Global Context

- **Global Forest Cover:** According to the latest **GFRA 2025** released by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, the world's total forest area stands at approximately **4.14 billion hectares**, accounting for about **32% of the total land area**, which is roughly **0.5 hectares of forest per person**.
- Globally **India accounts for approximately 72,739 thousand hectares** of forest area which is roughly **2 % of the world total**.
- **Europe** has the largest forest area, accounting for **25 percent** of the world's total. **South America** has the highest proportion of forest, at **49 percent** of the total land area.

- More than half (54 percent) of the world's forests is in only five countries – the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America and China

The Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA)

The Global Forest Resources Assessment is the only worldwide assessment based on official national data. FRA identifies two broad categories of forest: **naturally regenerating** and **planted**. Within these broad categories, it identifies **primary forests** – those with only native species – as a subcategory of naturally regenerating forests. Under the subcategories of planted forests, it identifies **plantation forests** (for example, rubber) and **other planted forests** (forests that are planted but do not satisfy the criteria of a plantation).

India's success in expanding planted forests

- **Bamboo Plantations:** The total bamboo resource globally is estimated at 30.1 million ha, of which 21.2 million ha (70 percent) is in Asia, with **India accounting for 11.8 million hectares**. The global area of bamboo forest increased by 8.05 million ha between 1990 and 2025, largely because of increases in China and India.
- **Rubber Plantations:** India ranks **5th globally** with **831 thousand hectares** of rubber plantations, contributing to a global total of **10.9 million ha**.

Agroforestry in India

- **Agroforestry Area:** India, along with Indonesia, accounts for nearly **100%** of Asia's agroforestry area, which totals approximately **39.3 million hectares**.
- **Global Contribution:** India and Indonesia together contribute around **70%** of the global agroforestry area, which is about **55.4 million hectares**.

Deforestation and Net Changes

- **India reported a net forest gain over 1990–2025**, with expansion outweighing losses due to afforestation efforts. This was the result of reduced deforestation in some countries and the expansion of forest area in some others.
- **India contributes 9% of global wood removals, ranking 2nd globally** as of 2023.

"Wood removals" are the amount of wood felled and removed from the forest. Removals can be for roundwood or fuelwood production.

Forest emissions and removals trends 1990–2025 (FAO Analytical brief)

Global Scenario

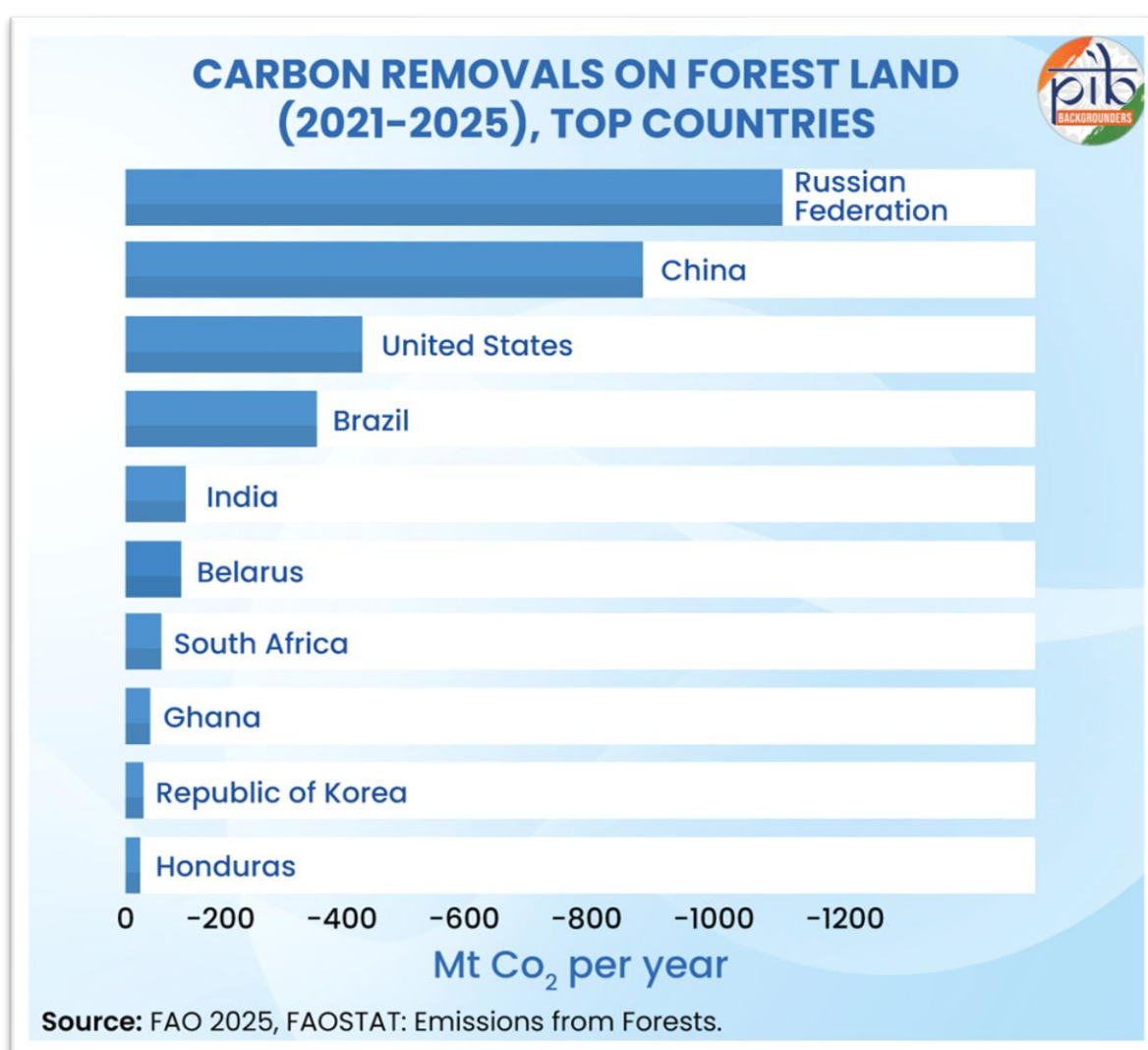
- As per 2025 Forest Resources Assessment, the world's forests acted as a net carbon sink during the 2021–2025 period, **sequestering 3.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (Gt CO₂) annually on forest land**.
- During the 2021–2025 period, **global emissions due to net forest conversion (a proxy of**

deforestation) amounted to 2.8 Gt CO₂, partially counterbalancing the forest sink effect.

- As a result, forest carbon stocks increased overall, removing 0.8 Gt CO₂ annually from the atmosphere during the 2021–2025 period. Such net removals were nearly twice as large (1.4 Gt CO₂) a decade earlier.
- Between 2021 and 2025, forest carbon sinks were strongest in Europe and Asia (removing 1.4 Gt CO₂ and 0.9 Gt CO₂ per year, respectively).

India's Achievements

- India ranked 5th among the top global carbon sinks, with its forests removing 150 Mt of CO₂ per year during 2021–2025.
- Asia, including India, saw forest carbon removals increase to 0.9 Gt CO₂ per year in 2021–2025, with deforestation emissions dropping significantly.



India's Forest Status & Changes

1. **Total Forest Cover:** As per the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, India's total forest cover is 7,15,343 sq km, which is 21.76% of the country's geographical area.
2. **Top States with largest forest cover:** Area wise top three states having largest forest cover are Madhya Pradesh (77,073 sq km) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (65,882 sq km) and Chhattisgarh

(55,812 sq km).

3. **Mangrove Cover:** India's mangrove cover stands at approximately 4,992 sq. km, concentrated mostly in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal.
4. **Biodiversity & Protected Areas:** India has 106 national parks, 573 wildlife sanctuaries, 115 conservation reserves, and 220 community reserves, protecting a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Key Initiatives by Government of India to Enhance Forest Cover

1. Budgetary Allocations

- **2025–26 Budget:** MoEFCC allocated ₹3,412.82 crore, a 9% increase from the revised estimate of ₹3,125.96 crore in 2024–25.
- **Revenue Expenditure:** ₹3,276.82 crore (96% of the total allocation), marking an 8% increase.

2. National Mission for a Green India (GIM)

- **Launch and Objective:** Launched in February 2014 under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), GIM seeks to expand forest and tree cover, restore ecosystems, and enhance biodiversity and carbon sinks.
- **Coverage Targets:** Aims to expand forest and tree cover by 5 million ha and improve the quality of cover on another 5 million ha of forest/non-forest lands.
- **Ecosystem and Livelihood Enhancement:** Focuses on enhancing ecosystem services such as biodiversity, water, and carbon storage, while also boosting the livelihood incomes of around 3 million forest-dependent families.

3. National Afforestation Programme

- **Objective:** regeneration of degraded forest and adjoining areas in the country.
- **Implementation:** implemented through three-tier institutional setup of State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) at State level, Forest Development agency (FDA) at Forest Division level and Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) at Village level

4. Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)

- **United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution:** Adopted a resolution on Sustainable Lifestyles, based on the precepts of Mission LiFE, (Lifestyle for Environment)
- **MeriLiFE Portal:** Launched to promote individual and collective action for sustainable living.
- **Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam Initiative:** An emotional call to encourage tree plantation by linking it to the love for one's mother or motherland.

The forest cover data shows that the world is making measurable progress through reduced deforestation in some countries and the expansion of forest area in some others. India's rise to 9th globally in total forest area, and its maintenance of 3rd place in net annual gain, shows what strong national commitment can achieve. India's consistent efforts in expanding forest cover, promoting sustainable forestry, and implementing missions like GIM underscores its commitment to environmental conservation and global climate action.

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