

India's Expanding Green Footprint

Mains: GS III - Environment

Why in News?

Recently, 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.

What is the status of India's green cover?

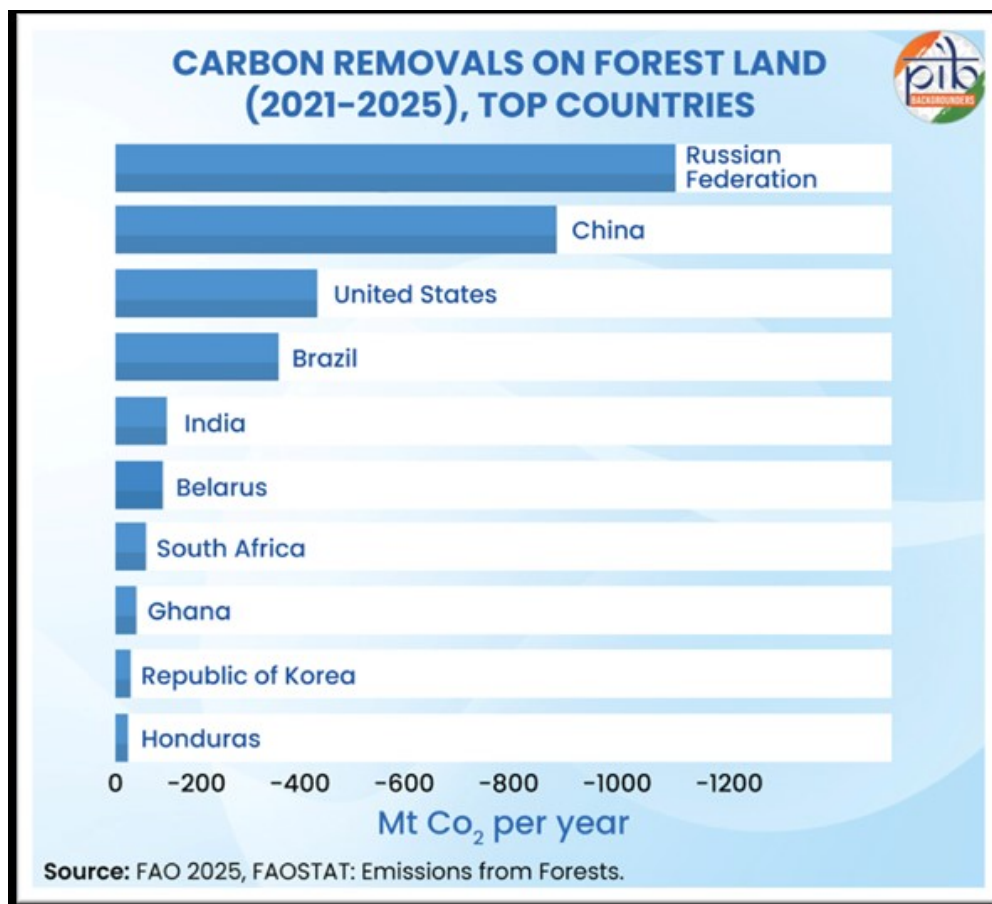
- **Total forest area** - India has moved up to 9th position globally in terms of total forest area as per GFRA 2025.
- In the previous assessment, India was ranked 10th
- **Net annual forest gain** - India continues to maintain 3rd position worldwide in terms of net annual forest area gain.
- **Global carbon sink** - India ranked 5th among the top global carbon sinks, with its forests removing 150 Mt of CO₂ per year during 2021-2025.
- **Net forest loss** - The annual rate of net forest loss fell from 10.7 million ha (1990-2000) to 4.12 million ha (2015-2025).
- What is GFRA 2025 and state of 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.
- **India's forest cover** - Globally India accounts for approximately 72,739 thousand hectares of forest area which is roughly 2 % of the world total.
- **Europe** - It has the largest forest area, accounting for 25% of the world's total.
- **South America** - It has the highest proportion of forest, at 49% of the total land area.
- More than half (54%) of the world's forests is in only five countries - the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America and China

What is the forest emissions and removals trends 1990-2025?

- **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.

- **Increase in forest carbon stock** - 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 achievement** - 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.



What is India's Forest Status & Changes?

- **Total Forest Cover** - As per the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, India's total forest cover is 7,15,343sq km, which is 21.76% of the country's geographical area.
- **Top States with largest forest cover** - Area wise top three states having largest forest cover are
 - Madhya Pradesh (77,073 sq km)
 - Arunachal Pradesh (65,882 sq km)
 - Chhattisgarh (55,812 sq km).
- **Mangrove Cover** - India's mangrove cover stands at approximately 4,992 sq. km, concentrated mostly in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal.
- **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.

- **Bamboo Plantations** - The total bamboo resource globally is estimated at 30.1 million ha, of which 21.2 million ha (70%) 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 Area** - India, along with Indonesia, accounts for nearly 100% of Asia's agroforestry area, which totals approximately 39.3 million hectares.
- **Contribution to Global forests** - India and Indonesia together contribute around 70% of the global agroforestry area, which is about 55.4 million hectares.
- **A net forest gain**- With expansion outweighing losses due to afforestation efforts, over 1990-2025
- This was the result of reduced deforestation in some countries and the expansion of forest area in some others.
- **Deforestation** - 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.

What are the Key Initiatives by Government of India to Enhance Forest Cover?

- **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.
- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM)** - 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.
- **National Afforestation Programme** - The main objective is regeneration of degraded forest and adjoining areas in the country.
- It is 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
- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** - The United Nations Environment Assembly 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.

What lies ahead?

- 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.

Quick facts

The Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA)

- **GFRA** – It is FAO's periodic assessment of the state of the world's forests, providing comprehensive data on forest area, change, management, and use.
- The Global Forest Resources Assessment is the only worldwide assessment based on official national data.
- **2 categories** – FRA identifies two broad categories of forest
 - Naturally regenerating
 - Planted.
- **Subcategory** – 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).

Reference

[PIB| India's Green Cover](#)