



CAN
TREE
PLANTING
SAVE OUR PLANET?

DIGITAL FORUM | 29 SEPTEMBER 2020

Photo by Hiron Wasanga/CIFOR

Digital Forum

Can tree planting save the planet?

Digital Forum to tackle the role of trees and forests in the climate crisis



Global
Landscapes
Forum

The context

The world is failing to stop the destruction of life-sustaining ecosystems and wildlife. Global wildlife populations have plunged by two-thirds between 1970 and 2016, according to the WWF and Zoological Society of London's [Living Planet Report 2020](#). Globally, about [25 percent](#) of the total land area has been degraded and [one million](#) plant and animal species are at risk of extinction.

Planting billions of trees is a critical solution to addressing the climate and land degradation crises, while supporting biodiversity and human wellbeing.

- Around [11% of all land on Earth](#), equivalent to the size of China and the US combined, could support new forests without encroaching on crop land or urban areas.

To get there, countries have pledged to restore forests and increase tree cover as part of initiatives such as the [Bonn Challenge](#), which seeks to restore 350 million hectares – an area bigger than India– by 2030; the NY Declaration on Forests, and AFR100.

However, tree planting must be [done appropriately](#) to avoid damaging ecosystems and to deliver on the climate, biodiversity and sustainable development goals. Particularly, as they concern Indigenous People, women and vulnerable groups.

How will the 'Digital Forum: Can tree planting save the planet?' address these global challenges and ensure that tree planting can contribute to tackling the climate crisis and help advance sustainable development?

- By convening leading scientists, investors and community leaders, the event will explore **how to get tree planting and growing right**: from approaches to tree growing, to the power of digital innovations and ways to boost investments in tree planting beyond government initiatives and philanthropic means.
- The Digital Forum will present real, evidence-based solutions. It will also **launch 'Resilient Landscapes', a venture created by CIFOR- ICRAF to facilitate private finance investment** in nature-based solutions.
- The event will take place ahead of the [UN Biodiversity Summit](#) 'Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development' on 30 September 2020 and GLF Biodiversity Digital Conference on 28-29 October 2020.

Experts



Robert Nasi, CIFOR Director General/ CIFOR-ICRAF Managing Director. His scientific work aims to integrate social and biological sciences for better management of tropical forests, more sustainable livelihoods and better designed forest policies.



Susan Chomba, social scientist leading ICRAF's Regreening Africa Initiative, whose primary objective is to reverse land degraded by scaling up proven and cost-effective technologies across eight countries in Africa.



Manuel Guarigata, CIFOR's Principal Scientist on tropical forest ecology and forest management for production and conservation.



Tom Crowther, researcher focused on how one trillion trees could restore a new world through carbon drawdown, and create a better world with more biodiversity, providing the roadmap to a greener and healthier planet.



Howard Shapiro, Senior Advisor, Private Sector, Resilient Landscapes. Senior Distinguished Fellow, ICRAF. Involved with sustainable agricultural and agroforestry systems, plant breeding, molecular biology and genetics for over 40 years.



Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, mayor of Freetown in Sierra Leone. Vocal supporter of the Global Green New Deal. In 2020, Freetown committed to planting 1 million trees to build resilience against flooding and absorb carbon dioxide.



Wanjira Mathai, Vice President and Regional Director for Africa at WRI. Has served in strategic and advocacy roles raising the prominence and visibility of global issues such as climate change, youth leadership, sustainable energy, and landscape restoration.



Jad Daley, 40th President & CEO of American Forests. Authored multiple pieces of federal legislation, design and implementation of strategies to advance Climate-Smart Cities through green infrastructure and helping to conserve thousands of acres of forestland across the United States.

More on the global conversation on tree planting:

- **Voices in the press:** UNEP, WWF, Zoological Society of London, UN Convention on Biological Diversity, CIFOR-ICRAF, FAO, universities (e.g.: ETH Zürich, Oxford, London), Wildlife Conservation Society, WEF, IPBES, etc.
- **Key terms:** forest landscapes, natural regeneration, ecosystem restoration, carbon storage, monoculture plantations, biodiversity, livelihoods, financing

- Key messages emerging from the global conversation:
 1. **Protecting and restoring forest landscapes is essential** to advancing global environmental and sustainable development goals. Especially, as the world seeks to 'build back better' in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.
 2. **Planting seedlings is not enough.** Restoring forest landscapes requires knowledge as to what species to plant where and when, and how to ensure their survival in the long term in the face of a changing climate.
 3. Turning tree planting pledges into action **calls for political will, technical expertise and funding.** Solutions must be pursued on all three fronts, including greater private sector financing and involvement.