

FORESTS

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has extensive tropical forests, which play a significant role in regulating regional weather patterns, stabilising global climate by storing carbon, and providing a range of ecosystem services such as clean water and protection from landslides.

ABUNDANT AND DIVERSE FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

PNG is one of the most floristically diverse countries in the world, due to the variety of habitats and its long isolation from other landmasses, with more than 10,000 known plant species.

FACTS

78% of the country is forested

14 major forest types

10,000 known plant species

These forests support a diverse range of animals, including species found nowhere else in the world, such as the Tenkile and Weimang tree kangaroos and the black-spotted cuscus, all of which are critically endangered.



Photo credit: Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program

76% of PNG's forests remain relatively undisturbed

However, forest clearing and degradation in PNG has been a matter of serious concern for decades, which PNG has committed to phasing out by 2030. This is part of its commitments to climate change action as well as to protecting biodiversity and landholders.

THE PEOPLE

Up to 97 percent of land is owned by customary land-owners, who have a key role in forest planning, management and loss.

Papua New Guinea has one of the most significant areas of intact tropical forest remaining globally.

Photo credits UNDP Flickr

Forests are vital to local communities, providing food, fibre and building materials. Some communities have engaged in small-scale logging and milling to bring cash and other services to their communities.

In many instances there has been lack of suitable engagement with customary landowners in the negotiation of logging and other forest clearance activities, often with a failure to obtain free, prior and informed consent.

Landowners receive a fraction of the benefits of the timber felled on their land – an average of around 6 percent of PNG's total log export revenues.

GOVERNANCE

The PNG Forest Authority is the lead agency responsible for planning and sustainable use of forestry resources.

There is now an effective Monitoring, Measurement, Reporting and Verification system to report changes in forest degradation and deforestation. However, there remains no effective system for traceability and verification of the legality of logging.

Across the country, there is a lack of trust in the transparency of forest resource allocation, accompanied by allegations of corruption in the timber industry.

LOGGING - THE THREATS



Illegal logging

Permits may be issued illegally or held by companies whose logging operations are breaking the law.



Special Agricultural Business Leases (SABLs)

Forest clearance permits were issued to log forests and convert mainly to oil palm plantations. Often the main reason was to log with no subsequent agriculture, and SABLs are the source of 28 percent of export logs (PNGi, 2022). A moratorium on issuing these leases is now in place, and some leases have been cancelled.



Agriculture

both commercial and subsistence – is the main driver for 99 percent of forest clearing.



Land alienation

Foreign ownership of many SABLs has disenfranchised many clans, who were not adequately informed of their rights when the leases were negotiated. This contributes to loss of cultural heritage and livelihoods.



Infrastructure and other development

Roads will open more remote areas to logging and subsequent habitat fragmentation and loss of biodiversity.



Invasive species and pathogens

Weeds invade disturbed forests and can choke out native species. Forest clearing is also associated with diseases of plants, animals and people.



LOGGING - THE FACTS

80% Logging is responsible for more than 80 percent of forest degradation and occurs mainly in low altitude (<500m) forest on plains, fans and uplands.

9% The forest industry contributes about 9 percent of GDP.

Forest loss contributes to loss of biodiversity (alters species composition and forest structure), erosion, sedimentation, soil damage and greater incidence of fire.

CURRENT FORESTRY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

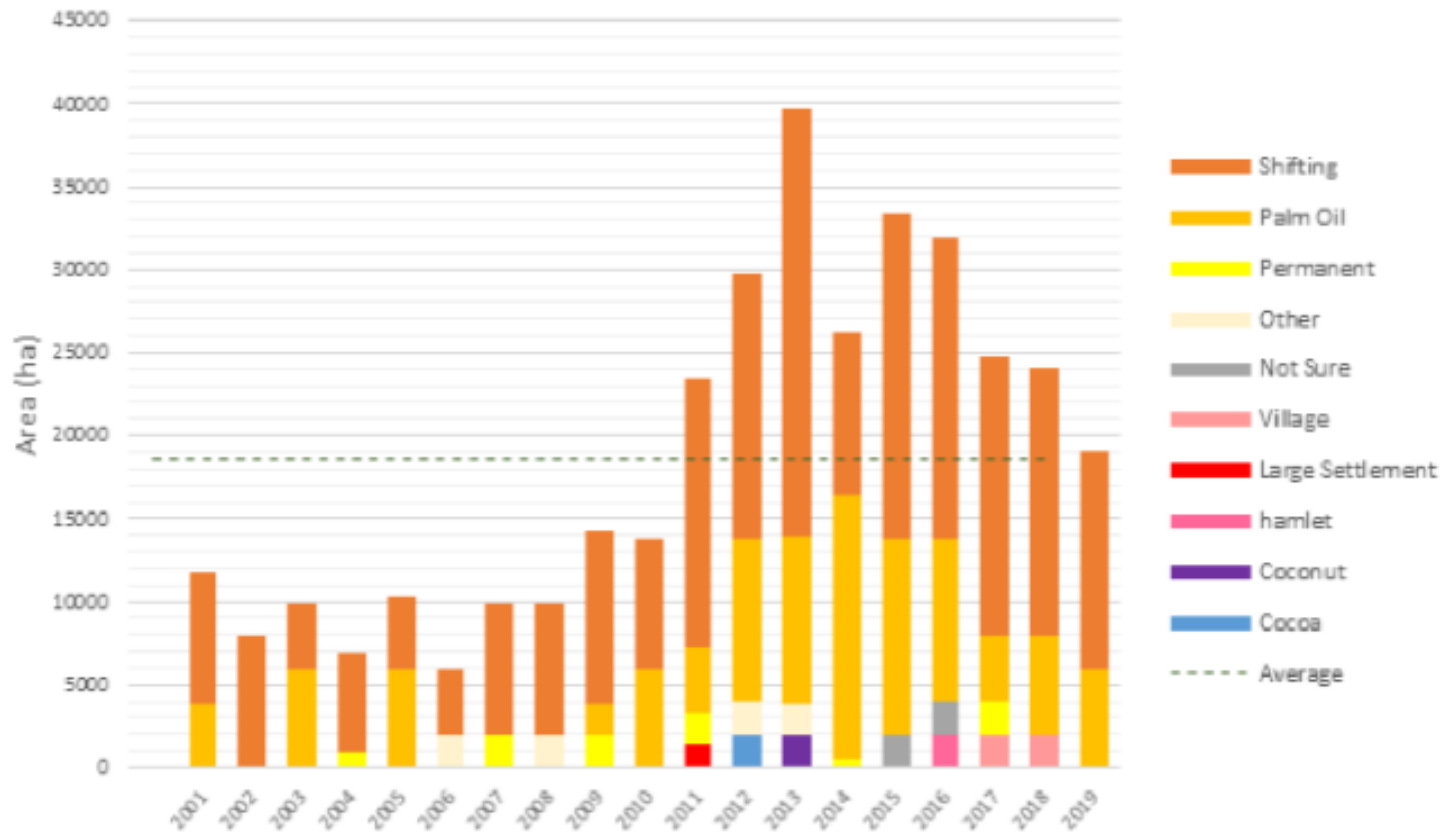
- **National REDD+ Strategy – consistent and repeatable approach to monitor changes in forest cover and address climate change and mitigation.**
- **National Forest Monitoring System for tracking and reporting changes in forest degradation and deforestation.**
- **Enabling community forestry (PNGFA and ACIAR) – developing tree-based livelihood systems.**
- **Our forests our future (EU) – data, governance, legislative frameworks, policy processes, outreach, financing.**

DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IS SLOWING

The rate of forest clearing and degradation has been slowing from the high in 2013, due largely to government initiatives including the cancelling of some large SABLs.

There is still work to be done to reduce forest loss to zero by 2030. Continued assistance from the international community will be needed to ensure that PNG is fairly supported in its determination to save its forests, which are of benefit to the whole world.

CURRENT FORESTRY PROJECTS



Estimated annual rates of deforestation in PNG (2001–2019)



This factsheet is a summary from the Environment and Climate Analysis for the 2022 Common Country Assessment and has been prepared by the United Nations Development Programme in Papua New Guinea. For more, see <https://environment-climate.png-nrmhub.org/>

WAYS FORWARD



Identify and protect priority forests - establish protected areas and protect important areas within production forests



Improve monitoring and surveillance of forests and logging practices, including through the National Forest Monitoring System and National Forest Inventory



Support implementation of ban on round log exports - increase on-shore processing and reduce illegal timber processing



Build capacity and access to knowledge for customary land-owners - ensure people are fully informed



Support local planning frameworks - collaboratively develop land use plans that recognise the value of forests.