

Deforestation in Malaysia



Malaysia is a country located in the South-east of Asia and includes the island of Borneo. Natural vegetation in Malaysia is tropical rainforest (67% of land).



Reasons for deforestation

1. Logging - Malaysia became the world's largest exporter of tropical wood in the 1980s.
2. Road Building - Machinery needs to be able to reach areas of logging and people
3. Mineral Extraction - Malaysia is the world's largest exporter of palm oil in the world.
4. Population Pressure - Between 1956 and 1980's about 15,000 ha of rainforest was felled for settlers.
5. Commercial Farming - Plantation owners receive 10-year tax incentives, so increasing amounts of land has been converted to plantations.
6. Subsistence Farming - Tribal people of the forest are often hunter gatherers but will also clear small areas of forest to grow crops and food.
7. Energy Development - In 2011 the controversial 205m Bakuna Dam started to generate electricity.

Biodiversity

- Deforestation destroys the ecosystem and many habitats in which exist on the ground.
- There are still many undiscovered plants and animals which could provide cures for diseases.
- There are over 600 species in the main range peninsular in Malaysia 25% of all species are in the highland forests.

Soil

- The roots of trees and plants bind the soil together but once they are gone it becomes loose and easily eroded.
- Soil takes thousands of years to form.
- Once trees are removed soil is left exposed to wind and rain and can be stripped bare in hours.

Climate Change

- The process of evaporation cools the air around where it occurs but if trees are cut down evaporation reduces and so it becomes warmer as this cooling doesn't happen.
- Trees absorb CO₂ and emit oxygen and so deforestation leads to global warming.
- Transpiration by trees gives off water and so deforestation leads to drier climates.

Economy

- Deforestation leads to both direct and indirect jobs creating money for an area.
- The number of tourists to the area will decrease as the forest is lost.
- Companies will pay taxes to the government which can be used to help the area develop.
- It will cost people money to adapt to living in a warmer climate.
- Hydro-electric power provides cheap and plentiful energy.

Management of deforestation

1. **Selective logging** – Introduced in 1977, chooses certain areas to be protects and others to be cut down, this strategy is completely sustainable.
2. **Conservation and Education** – To protect certain areas of the rainforest. Givaudan - aims to protect 148,000 hectares of rainforest.
3. **Ecotourism** – Local people and the government get any profits and benefits.
4. **International agreements** – FSC, to educate consumers about the need to buy sustainable hardwoods.
5. **Debt reduction** – reduced debt to stop unnecessary deforestation to pay back debts.