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# Afforestation: Meaning, Importance and Current Efforts

Source: [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

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Afforestation is the effort to plant trees in barren lands so as to create a forest. It is important because it helps check the over-use of natural resources by providing an alternative source pool. Learn more about the process here.

- **What is Afforestation?**

Afforestation is the [process of planting trees](#), or sowing seeds, in a barren land devoid of any trees to create a forest. The term should not be confused with reforestation, which is the process of specifically planting native trees into a forest that has decreasing numbers of trees. While reforestation is increasing the number of trees of an existing forest, afforestation is the creation of a 'new' forest.

Our Earth has been constantly trying to cope with the way in which human beings use natural resources, clear forest lands, cut trees, and contaminate the air, land, and water. Industrial revolution, population bursts, and pollution create permanent damage to the earth, and the result is global warming and climate change. In such situations, something

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that can help extend the life of the planet and its living organisms is the increase of natural resources and decrease of exploitation of these resources.

By planting trees and creating forests, many of the commercial needs of human beings are fulfilled, while not destroying what is left of the planet. Afforestation is, therefore, a practice that has been propagated by government and non-government agencies of many countries as a way to stop over-exploitation of nature.

### • Importance

The importance is immense in today's scenario because it is mainly done for commercial purposes. In a natural forest or woodland, the trees are heterogeneous. Owing to the sensitivity to over usage and slow growths, these forests cannot be used continuously for commercial purposes like wood products. The process of planting trees in empty lands helps promote the fast propagation of specific types of trees for the wood industry.

With the increasing demand for wood fuels and building materials, this process helps to meet these demands without cutting down the natural forests. Deforestation can lead to the depletion of trees in water catchments and riverside zones. Afforestation ensures trees and plants that hold the soil in these sensitive areas remain protected.

Many countries have introduced the practice of planting trees along with agricultural crops in croplands. The benefits of this practice, which is called agroforestry, are:

In terms of the environmental benefits, planting trees is always beneficial whether it takes place in a barren land or is used as a method to regenerate a depleted forest. Trees help check atmospheric carbon dioxide; large scale afforestation can curb the problems caused due to burning of fossil fuels, industrialization and so forth.

### • Current Efforts

In the central hardwood forest region of the US, increasing numbers of land owners are converting crop land marginally into a forest. This is being done to decrease the pressure on the use of existing hardwood species of the forest like black cherry, black walnut, and northern red oak.

In South Africa, about 0.5 percent of land is covered with indigenous forests, and 1.1 percent by forests formed by Total Commercial Afforestation (TCA) and containing trees like pine, gum trees, black wattle, and so forth. This has helped provide wood to be [used for charcoal](#), poles, mining timber, paper pulp, and other commercial applications.

The advantage of planting a tree species, like pine, is it helps check infections the tree is prone to in its native country and climate, thus producing higher production. Pursuant to

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better growth and higher yields due to afforesting of these alien species, South Africa can produce and export close to two million tons of wood and wood products.

In China, the government has earmarked a bulk amount equivalent to almost 300 billion US dollars that would be completely utilized for afforesting schemes the country is planning. To combat soil erosion in Central and West China, the government has already started the process of converting farmland back to woodland.

### • **Conclusion**

Afforesting is a positive effort in curbing the over-use and destruction of natural forests. If done with proper planning and at appropriate sites, it can become a commercially viable solution for many human needs without harming the balance of nature.

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