



Save the forests and they will save you

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Forests are a vital source of food and nutrition

Forest communities in the east and southeast of Afghanistan almost completely rely on forest products for their food security. Forest vegetables (spinach, rhubarb, and mallow), fruits (Pine Nuts, Pistachio, Almond, Jujube, and Bir), honey, mushrooms, and meat not only fulfill the needs of forest communities but are also sold in the national and international markets which as boosts our economy and livelihood. Pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts, and Almonds have a very huge market inside and outside the country. Forest honey or wild honey is a portion of good food for locals and is more nutritious than ordinary honey, having a much higher price in the market as well.

Forests are natural pharmacies

Around 50 000 plant species – many of which grow in the forests – have medicinal value. Ferule, cumin, hyssop, artemisia, and many other of Afghanistan’s wild plants are used as traditional, ayurveda, and modern medical science inside and outside the country. Forests act as natural filters and absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other pollutants from the air and provide fresh and clean air.

Healthy forests protect us from diseases

Forests have traditionally served as a natural barrier to disease transmission between animals and humans by removing pollutants from air and water, but as deforestation continues across the country, the risk of diseases spilling over from animals to people are rising. More than 30 percent of the new diseases reported since 1960 are attributed to land-use change, including deforestation.

Forests boost our mental and physical health

Spending time in forests increases positive emotions and decreases stress, blood pressure, depression, fatigue, anxiety, and tension. Trees in the cities also absorb pollutant gases from traffic and industries and filter fine particulates such as dust, dirt, and smoke, which help shield urban populations from respiratory diseases.

Forests protect and improve our lives and livelihoods

Forests maintain and slowly absorb rainwater and sustain surface and groundwater flow to our fields. Forests add fertile soil to the stream water and increase our agricultural yields. By controlling water flow, forests decrease flash flood intensity and prevent soil erosion. Afghanistan each year, more than USD 50 million are earned from forest nuts export and about USD 25 million from exporting medicinal plants and spices. By exporting Ferula alone, Afghanistan earned about USD 100 million in 2022.

Forests play a central role in combating the biggest threat facing humanity like the climate change

Healthy forests help keep global warming in check by absorbing Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) from the atmosphere and releasing fresh air oxygen for humans and animals. Forests contain 662 billion tonnes of carbon, which is more than half the global carbon stock in soils and vegetation. Forests and trees also help buffer exposure to heat and extreme weather events caused by climate change, which poses a major global health challenge. For example, trees properly placed around buildings cool the air and can cut air conditioning needs by up to 30 percent, also saving energy.

Forests are under threat and need our help

Afghanistan has lost more than 270 000 hectares of forest between 1978-2010 and its main cause is illegal logging of forest and wood. Forest fire is another reason for deforestation, which caused by local people and herders who burn a fire in the forest for cooking and do not put it out while leaving the area. Shifting forest lands into agricultural lands and the residential area also trigger deforestation.

Forests are upholding the natural ecosystem and conserving biodiversity, let us not harm forests and keep them flourishing!



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