Paper Production And Sustainable Forestry

The Facts

North American forests are a renewable natural resource that is continuously replenished through sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management is a dynamic and evolving concept which aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests for the benefit of present and future generations.[1] Sustainable forestry practices integrate management of the entire forest ecosystem, including trees and other plants, wildlife and habitat, soil and water. They also help protect forests from wildfire, pests and diseases, and preserve forests that are unique or special. Strong market demand for sustainably sourced paper products provides a significant financial incentive for landowners to manage their land responsibly and keep it forested instead of converting or selling it for non-forest uses.

State of North American Forests

Net forest area in the United State increased by approximately 18 million acres between 1990 and 2020.[1]

Canada's net forest area was quite stable between 1990 and 2020 at approximately 857 million acres.[1]

The total live-tree volume on U.S timberland exceeds 1 trillion cubic feet. That translates to nearly 9 billion stacked cords of wood. Of live-tree volume in the country, 88% is considered growing stock, and live-tree volume is nearly split in half between softwoods and hardwoods.[2]

Canada's forests contain about 45 billion cubic meters of wood. Wood volume is used along with other information to calculate forest biomass and determine how much carbon is stored in the living trees of Canada's forests.[3]

Each year, forests in North America grow significantly more wood than is harvested. In the U.S., the net average annual increase in growing stock on timberland is about 25 billion cubic feet. By comparison, removals in the U.S. average 13 billion cubic feet per year, or 1.3% of growing stock inventory. Therefore, the growth-to-removals ratio at the national scale is 1.92, or we annually grow nearly twice the volume we remove from forestland.[4]

While forestland in the United States is becoming more accessible to people and 67% of forestland is legally available for harvest activities, tree cutting and removal occurs on less than 2% of forest land each year. This compares with nearly 3% that is disturbed annually by natural events like insects, disease and fire.[2]

Leading Causes of Forest Disturbance in Canada[6]	Area (hectares)	% of Forest Area
Area affected by insects (2018)	16,391,000	4.7%
Area impacted by fire (2019)	1,843,000	0.5%
Area harvested (2018)	748,000	0.2%
Area deforested (2018)	34,000	0.01%

Natural Resources Canada, 2020

Harvesting occurs on only 0.2% of Canada's forestlands annually, while 4.5% is disturbed by insects and 0.7% is disturbed by fire.[3]

Forestland is the largest terrestrial carbon sink on earth. The accumulation of carbon in forest ecosystems is driven by tree growth resulting in sequestration of carbon dioxide in live biomass.[2]

In the United States, forests and associated harvested wood products uptake the equivalent of more than 14% of economy-wide carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions each year and store more than three decades of CO_2 emitted from fossil fuels.[5]

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Deforestation

Deforestation is the permanent conversion of forest to other land uses, whether caused by humans or not. The definition of deforestation specifically excludes areas where trees have been removed as a result of harvesting or logging because the forest is expected to regenerate naturally or with the aid of silvicultural [sustainable forestry] measures.[6]

Areas of the world with the least wood consumption have the greatest levels of deforestation.[1]

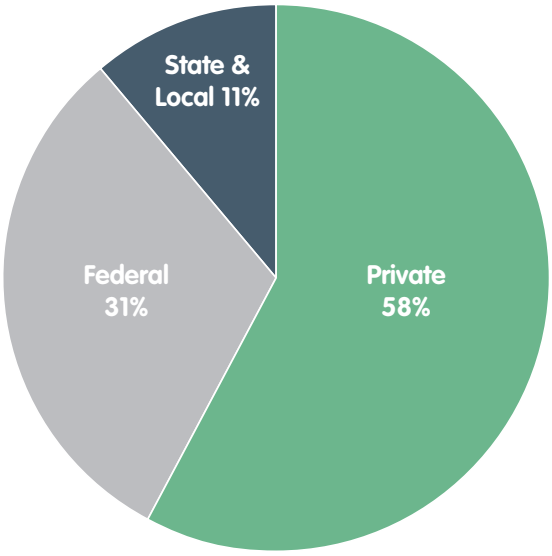
It is a myth that most trees are cut down for paper or wood. Globally, the biggest driver of deforestation is agriculture, particularly the clearing of forestland for crops to feed beef, pigs and chickens. In tropical and subtropical countries, agriculture has accounted for 73% of deforestation.[7]

In North America, sustainable forest practices, forest certification and government regulations require mandatory regeneration so that harvested areas continue to produce forests for the long term.[2,3]

Forest Ownership

Across the United States, 58% of forestland is privately owned. Approximately 11 million of these private landowners (families, individuals, trusts and estates) are collectively referred to as family forest owners. This group controls more forest (38%) than any other group.[2]

About 89% of wood harvested in the U.S. comes from private forests,[2] which provide most of the wood for domestically produced wood and paper products.



Forestland Ownership in the United States[2]

Over 90% of Canada's forestland is publicly owned and managed by provincial, territorial and federal governments. This means that all three jurisdictions together have the ability to create and enforce the laws, regulations and policies required to meet Canada's commitment to sustainable forest management across the country. Only 6% of Canada's forestland is privately owned and this land generates one-tenth of the timber harvested in Canada.[8]

Forest Certification and Sustainability Initiatives

The majority of certified forest area in 2019 was in North America and Europe. Canada had by far the most at 167 million hectares, followed by the Russian Federation (54.1 million hectares) and the United States (38.1 million hectares). These three countries together accounted for more than 60% of the world's certified forest area in 2019.[1]

> ***"Sustainable forest management is a dynamic and evolving concept which aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests, for the benefit of present and future generations."***
>
> *UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2020*

As a condition of membership, the few members of the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) that own forestland conform to credible forest management standards such as the Sustainable Forestry initiative (SFI), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification.[9]

American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) members adhere to sustainable fiber procurement principles, which assure that wood is received from suppliers committed to sustainable management and harvesting practices. In turn, members' adherence to these principles creates incentives and provides resources for forest owners to commit to sustainable forest management.[9]

In 2018, AF&PA members procured 99% of the total wood fiber used for products through a Certified Fiber Sourcing Program. Wood fiber that members sourced from third-party certified forestlands increased from 23% in 2005 to 28.1% in 2018.[9]

AF&PA member companies represent 85% of U.S. paper, paper-based packaging and wood products capacity.[10]

Since it emerged in the 1990s, forest certification has been adopted quickly across Canada, and now more than 75% of the country's managed forestland is certified. At the end of 2020, Canada had 164 million hectares (405 million acres) of independently certified forestland (to either Canadian Standards Association® (CSA®), SFI® or FSC®). That represents 36% of all certified forests worldwide, the largest area of third-party certified forests in any country.[11]

Economic Contributions of the North American Forest and Paper Industry

The U.S. paper and forest products industry manufactures approximately $300 billion in products annually, and accounts for around 4% of total U.S. manufacturing Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The industry is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 45 U.S. states and directly employs 950,000 people with an annual payroll of about $60 billion.[12]

One of Canada's largest employers, the Canadian forest products industry contributes $80 billion or 12% of the country's manufacturing Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The industry directly employs about 230,000 people in 600 communities.[13]

Sources

1. U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020
2. USDA Forest Service, 2019
3. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), 2020
4. USDA Forest Service, 2019
5. USDA Forest Service, 2022
6. U.N. FAO, 2020
7. World Wildlife Fund, 2022
8. NRCan, 2022
9. American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), 2020
10. AF&PA, 2022
11. NRCan, 2022
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