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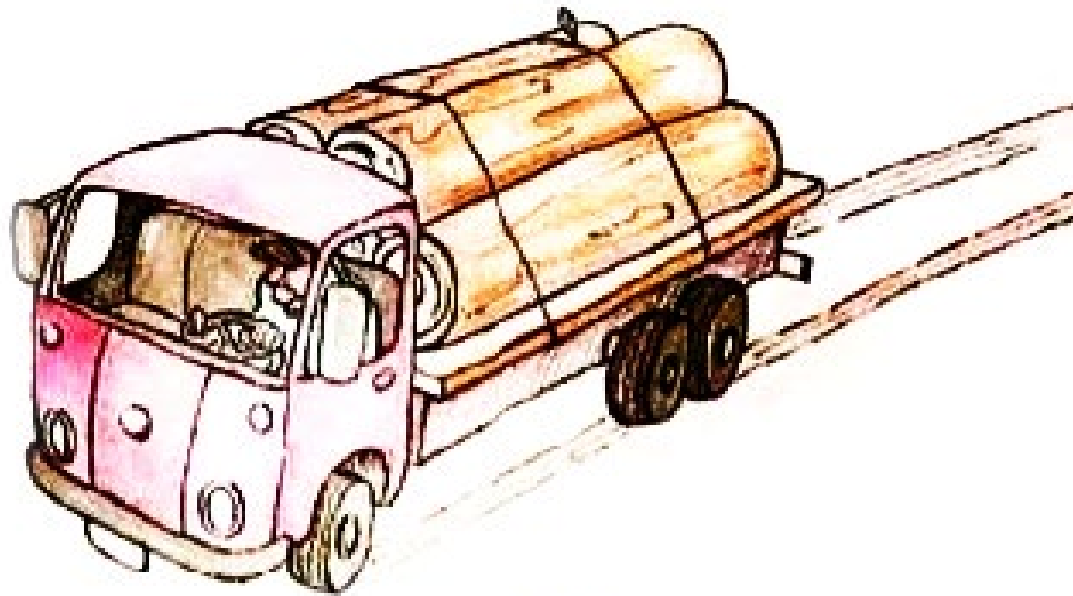
Understanding Deforestation in Zimbabwe's Context

Deforestation is the removal or clear large areas of forest lands and related ecosystems for non-forest use. These include clearing for farming purposes, ranching and urban use. In these cases, trees are never re-planted. Forests cover 31% of the land area on our planet. They produce vital gases and provide homes for people and wildlife. Many of the world's most threatened and endangered animals live in forest. 1.6 billion people rely on benefits forests offer, including food, fresh water, clothing, traditional medicine, and shelter. ***"The rate at which deforestation is occurring here will convert Zimbabwe into an outright desert in just 35 years if pragmatic solutions are not proffered urgently and also if people keep razing down trees for firewood without regulation,"*** Marilyn Smith; [an independent conservationist]. At least 6 million tons of timber are consumed annually for fuel, about 1.4 million tons more than Zimbabwe's forests can sustainably provide, according to Zimbabwe's Forestry Commission. That means Zimbabwe is losing 330,000 hectares (more than 815,000 acres) of forest i.e., over 60 million trees a year. The current planting rate is about 8 million a year.*

Causes of deforestation

Debate on these issues has identified several causes including.

- **Expansion of arable land:** Agricultural activities are one of the major factors affecting deforestation. Due to overgrowing demand for food products, huge amount of trees are cut down to clear space for growing crops and for cattle grazing.
- **Use as wood fuel:** demand for fuelwood especially in off grid areas.
- **Construction poles and timber; Tobacco curing; Urban expansion:** Overpopulation too has directly affected forest covers, as with the expansion of cities more land is needed to establish housing and settlements. Therefore, forest land is reclaimed; and,
- **Fires:** Another example would be forest blazes; hundreds of trees are lost each year due to forest fires in various parts of Zimbabwe, especially in hotter parts of the country. This happens due to extremely warm summers and milder winters. Fires, whether caused by man or nature results in huge loss of forest cover.



Effects of Deforestation

Climate impacts, Global warming (burning releases carbon dioxide/CO₂, which is a greenhouse gas responsible for global warming). Soil erosion river siltation (sedimentation resulting depletion of water sources). Loss of biodiversity, in that respect our nation will struggle to meet international commitments to protect endangered species and biodiversity, which also rely on thriving forests.



Solutions

To address the problem of deforestation, there is need to:

- Educate the public through media and other forms of awareness.
- Strong enforcement of the law against tree cutting.
- Promote a culture of tree planting in citizens.
- Provide substitute sources of energy, hence SuS Energetica biogas solutions are part of the winning strategy to the problem bedevilling our country and Africa. [SuSEnergctica, provide off-grid energy solutions through design, construction, and commissioning of bio-gas digesters. Biogas offers the following benefits amongst others: clean cooking, heating and lighting biogas; Easy agricultural waste management].
- Effective control of legal access, usage, and rehabilitation of the nation's timber land.

**The statistics are as of as year 2018, no updated information on the planting rate was found.*