

Edexcel Geography GCSE

8: Forests Under Threat Glossary of Definitions

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Glossary of Definitions - Forests Under Threat

Abiotic components - Non-living environmental factors that have influence over the ecosystem (e.g. climate, light exposure, soil type).

Acid rain - Rain with a pH of around 4, formed when chemicals from industrial processes react with water in clouds to form acids.

Adaptation - An evolved trait of an animal or plant that helps them to cope with environmental stresses.

Biodiversity - A large variety of animal and plant life living in the same ecosystem.

Biofuels - Fuels produced from biomass (i.e. organic matter).

Biomass - Total mass of organisms in a set area.

Biome - Also known as a global-scale ecosystem; a large, distinct region of the Earth with similar climate, soil, plants and animals.

Biotic components - Living organisms that interact with the environment and other organisms within an ecosystem.

Buttress roots - Large, thick tree roots that grow above the ground in tropical rainforests.

Camouflage - An animal adaptation where animals purposefully look like their surroundings to hide from predators.

Canopy - The layer of a tropical rainforest where the tops of trees touch, forming a dense area of vegetation.

Carbon sink - Something that absorbs more carbon dioxide than it emits, causing a net loss of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Cattle ranching - The rearing of cows on large areas of land, usually to produce meat to sell for a profit.

CITES - (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora) an international agreement that works to protect threatened wildlife from exploitation.

Clear felling - A form of logging where all trees in an area are cut down.

Climate change - A distinct change in global or regional patterns of climate, such as changes in temperature or precipitation patterns.

Commercial farming - Agriculture that is intended to create surplus produce to sell for a profit.



Conifers - Cone-bearing trees that are usually evergreen and have needle-shaped leaves, native to colder environments.

Conservation - Taking action to ensure a resource or environment is not depleted and over-exploited.

Consumers - Organisms that receive energy from consuming (i.e. eating) living organisms.

Debt-for-nature swaps - Agreements where one country reduces the amount of debt owed by another country in return for the owing country putting efforts into environmental conservation.

Decomposers - Organisms that break down organic material and release the nutrients back into the ecosystem.

Deforestation - The permanent (and usually large-scale) removal of trees.

Drip-tip - An adaptation of a leaf where the end of the leaf is tapered, allowing rainwater to drip off.

Drought - A sustained period of abnormally dry weather.

Ecosystem - A natural system in which a community of plants and animals interact with each other and their physical environment.

Ecotourism - Tourism that aims to have reduced environmental impact and supports conservation efforts, making it sustainable.

Epiphytes - Plants that live on the surface of other plants, receiving nutrients from these plants.

Food web - A representation of the interactions between multiple producers and consumers within a specific ecosystem, shown through a series of different food webs.

Forest fire - An uncontrolled fire that burns woodland and vegetation (also called a wildfire).

Fossil fuels - Fuels made up of the remains of organic material, such as oil, coal and gas.

Fuel wood - Wood that is burnt to provide energy.

Growing season - The time of the year when temperatures and precipitation levels are high enough that plants can grow.

Hibernation - An adaptation where animals sleep through the entire winter by entering a state of extremely reduced activity to conserve energy.

Hydroelectric power (HEP) - Energy harnessed from the movement of water.

Indigenous peoples - The earliest known settlers in an area.

Interdependence - The concept of multiple things depending on each other for survival.



Leaching - A process in soils where minerals are washed away by water (usually rainfall).

Lianas - Woody vines found in tropical rainforests; their roots grow on the forest floor, but the vines stretch high into the canopy.

Litter - Organic matter that falls onto a forest floor.

Logging - The process of cutting down trees for wood.

Migration - The seasonal movement of animals.

Nutrient cycling - The transfer of nutrients through an ecosystem, from the decay of organic material into the production and energy of living organisms.

Nutrients - Elements or compounds that support the growth of plants and animals, such as phosphates, potassium, magnesium, and nitrogen.

Open-cast mining - A mining technique where an area is cleared and resources are mined close to the surface, rather than underground (also called strip mining).

Plantations - Farms where crops are grown in large amounts with the intention to sell for a profit.

Producers - Organisms that convert energy from the environment (mainly sunlight) into sugars (glucose).

Productivity - A measure of new plant and animal growth in a given time, usually measured in grams per square metre per year.

Pulp and paper production - The process of making paper from softwood.

REDD - (Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) a group of United Nations-run schemes with the aim to reduce the environmental impact of poorly managed forests.

Replanting - Planting a tree after cutting down a tree, so that theoretically the environmental impact of deforestation is reduced.

Runoff - Rainwater that flows over the Earth's surface.

Selective logging - A form of logging where only certain trees are cut down to reduce the environmental effects of logging.

Slash-and-burn - A farming practice where plants and trees are cut down and then purposefully burnt to clear the area.

Subsistence farming - Agriculture that is intended to produce only enough food for the farmer and their family to eat.



Sustainability - The ability to continue with an activity or process far into the future at the same rate.

Sustainable forestry - Management strategies that work to reduce the environmental impacts of commercial forest use, allowing forestry to continue into the future at the same rate.

Taiga biome - A biome located at high latitudes, characterised by conifer trees and a cold climate.

Tar sands - An area with natural deposits of oil mixed with sediments and water.

Tropical rainforest biome - A biome located near the equator, characterised by very high precipitation and sustained warm temperatures.

Understory - The layer of a tropical rainforest that lies beneath the canopy but above the forest floor.

Weathering - The breakdown of soil and rock through chemical or physical processes.

Wilderness - An area that is untouched by humans, and therefore remains unaffected by human activity.

