

Sustainable Development Goal 15: Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainable Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss



What is Goal 15?

One of the key factors within sustainable development is environmental protection, for social and economic progress to occur in a sustainable manner we need to ensure that we are developing policies that are environmentally sound and will not push planetary boundaries farther than they have already been pushed. The conservation of ecosystems is incredibly important in ensuring that our planet's natural resources do not become a scarcity, something already beginning to occur. Biodiversity has three essential elements that make up an ecosystem: genetic diversity, ecosystem diversity, and species diversity; all three equally important. Ecosystems such as oceans and forests are homes to thousands of different creatures and animals that all play a role within their natural habitats. Unfortunately, humans are the main cause of biodiversity loss as we often destroy habitats for economic gains as well as contributing to polluting and global warming with our actions.

Goal 15 is concerned with not only halting current ecosystem degradation throughout the world, but also strives to reduce much of the damage already done. Despite the targets of Goal 15 focusing on forests, mountains, and deserts we know that through the inclusivity factor within the Sustainable Development Goals that all ecosystems in the most vulnerable of situations will be given priority and the care they need. Biodiversity and terrestrial ecosystems are essential for providing services and benefits to communities that support different proportions of human wellbeing, as examined by the International Council on Science (ICSU).

What are the Targets?

- By 2030, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements
- By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
- By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world
- By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development
- Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
- Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed
- Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products
- By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
- By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts

Means of Implementation

- Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems
- Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation
- Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities



Is this Possible?

Goal 15 of the Sustainable Development Goals is not an impossible task to accomplish. States will need to utilize public-private partnerships to ensure that businesses are adopting practices that are environmentally sound. It is also important for corporations who have done damage in the past to contribute financial resources to reversing the damage done to these ecosystems. Going forward industries must adopt and develop green technologies and implement them in their business practices. If the business sector is unable to atone for their mistreatment of the planet, it will be impossible to achieve land and biodiversity preservation. Human beings rely on genetic diversity within species to protect themselves from pests and for food security.^[1] It is also important for the public to hold businesses accountable for their actions ensuring that promises are followed through and steps are taken to preserve ecosystems that are most vulnerable. Goal 15 is a quite complicated task to complete as there still are many things we do not know about our planet, but with motivation and resources it is absolutely possible to restore our planet to its natural glory.

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