

As cities boom, forests key to meeting demands for water, food and energy – UN

With two-thirds of the world's population expected to live in urban areas by 2050, forests are critical part of the solution to the unprecedented demand for water, food and energy that these cities will face, senior United Nations officials said Wednesday, on the International Day of Forests.

“How we manage forests [will determine how we meet this demand](#),” said Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS).

He noted that growth and shifts in population, changes in climate, and innovation in knowledge and technology will undoubtedly impact future forests. “One thing I am certain of, investing in forests is essential for securing a sustainable future for communities the world over,” he added.

In his video message for the Day, José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), said that “[well-managed forests and trees](#) in and around cities provide habitats, food and protection for many plants and animals, helping to maintain and increase biodiversity.”

This year, the [International Day](#), observed annually on 21 March, will focus on the interlinkages between the sustainable management of forest and sustainable cities.



Source: FAO

The theme provides an opportunity to highlight the benefits forests and trees provide to urban communities.

It is estimated that by 2050, more than half of the world's population will face water stress. Given that forested catchments provide three-quarters of all freshwater used worldwide, safeguarding the water-providing capacity of forests is even more urgent.

Trees in cities help regulate climate, store carbon, and reduce flooding and storm water runoff. Sustainable forest management and sustainable forest products offers some of the most effective and cost-competitive natural carbon capture and storage options available.

Forests are home to over 80 per cent of biodiversity on land, and urban forests and city parks can provide important habitat for migratory birds and other fauna and flora.

[Sustainable Development Goal 15](#) of the 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by world leaders, calls for action to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” by 2030.

[The UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030](#) envisions “a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations.”

At UN Headquarters in New York, the Day is being celebrated with a [special event](#) featuring speeches by prominent officials, including Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Social and Economic Affairs.