

# [We can stop global deforestation, says UN official at start of conference on protecting forests](#)

A future with zero net global deforestation is possible with the right mix of policies, social action and political will, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said as a major international conference on sustainable forest management kicked off this week in Rome.

[“We have the knowledge and tools to stop global deforestation](#) [...] but it calls for ambitious, concerted action across all agricultural sectors and beyond, underpinned by political and societal will,” said Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General for Climate and Natural Resources, at the conference’s opening on Tuesday.

With rapid population growth driving global demand for forest products and services – timber, fibre, fuel, food, fodder and medicine – institutional, governance and policy innovations are vital to address those interlinkages.

Such efforts are all the more critical in tropical and low-income countries, where one of the major causes of deforestation is the demand for agricultural production, and converting forests to arable land.

Noting that over the past 25 years, the global deforestation rate has slowed by more than 50 per cent, Manoel Sobral Filho, the head of the UN [Forum on Forests](#) said that if the trends continue and forest restoration and plantation efforts continue, a future with zero net global deforestation “can go from being an aspiration to reality.”

Hosted by FAO, the three-day conference will promote dialogue across sectors and stakeholder groups on how to collectively achieve the global development targets, including under the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of halting deforestation and increasing forest cover.

The outcomes of the event will be submitted to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – the UN body for all matters relating to sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs.

In addition to Government officials, civil society, cooperatives and private sector, the conference will also see the participation of indigenous peoples associations.