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• PERSPECTIVE

Beyond Deforestation: Restoring Forests and Ecosystem Services on Degraded Lands

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ABSTRACT

Despite continued forest conversion and degradation, forest cover is increasing in countries across the globe. New forests are regenerating on former agricultural land, and forest plantations are being established for commercial and restoration purposes. Plantations and restored forests can improve ecosystem services and enhance biodiversity conservation, but will not match the composition and structure of the original forest cover. Approaches to restoring forest ecosystems depend strongly on levels of forest and soil degradation, residual vegetation, and desired restoration outcomes. Opportunities abound to combine ambitious forest restoration and regeneration goals with sustainable rural livelihoods and community participation. New forests will require adaptive management as dynamic, resilient systems that can withstand stresses of climate change, habitat fragmentation, and other anthropogenic effects.

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