

Status of forests is 'dire' as world marks Earth Day

By Ann M. Simmons, Los Angeles Times

They cover a third of the world's landmass, help to regulate the atmosphere, and offer shelter, sustenance and survival to millions of people, plants and animals.

But despite some progress, the planet's woodlands continue to disappear on a dramatic scale.

Since 1990 the world has lost the equivalent of 1,000 football fields of forests every hour, according to World Bank development indicators from last year. That's 1.3 million square kilometers of forest, an area larger than South Africa, according to the international financial institution.

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