



## tropical forests

**Did you know that chewing gum originally came from the latex or "gum" of a tree found in Central America?**



surveying the forests of West Africa

**The rainforests are the most famous of all tropical forests. They are found where the climate is very hot and it rains a lot.**

### **Why are tropical forests important?**

Forests cover almost one-third of the earth's land surface and play a major role in sustaining life. They are home to most of the world's biodiversity and provide us with many important products - lumber, panels, furniture, paper, poles, food, and medicines.

Can you think of 5 things to eat and drink that you have at home that come from tropical forests

Forests also provide us with many important services:

- stop soil erosion by wind and water,
- control river and stream flows,
- refresh the air we breathe
- home to most of world's plants and animals
- control the local and global climate

**How many levels are there in the rainforest?**



**smoking ruins of a tropical forest**

**There are about 500 million people in the world who live in or on the edges of the tropical forests. That's 1 person in every 12!**

## **Deforestation**

The tropical forests are disappearing very fast. In the last 15 years, 200 million hectares of forests were lost - an area about the same size as Mexico! In the dryer tropical zones, desertification is affecting about one-sixth of the world's population in an area twice the size of the tropical forest. Without a doubt, the threat has become a global one.

Forests are cut down:

- by poor farmers to grow their food,
- by commercial farmers make plantations,
- by ranchers to make new pastures,
- by loggers to remove valuable timbers,
- by woodcutters to collect firewood,
- by engineers to build dams and mines.

Actually, the forests are being cut down by all of us who use the products they produces. It is important to know if the tropical forest products you use come from a sustainably managed forest or not. By sustainable we mean that the forests are carefully managed so that they will keep giving us those same products in the future and that the other plants and animals are not destroyed.

### **causes of deforestation**

- rapidly growing population
- not enough farming land
- expansion of cattle ranching
- no other job opportunities
- over cutting firewood
- bad logging practices
- building dams and mines

### **consequences of deforestation**

- more soil erosion;
- continued poverty
- loss of valuable forest products
- loss of fuelwood;
- loss of biodiversity;
- flooding in cut-over watersheds
- local and global climate change.

These are from <http://www.rcfa-cfan.org>