

# *Reforestation Policies by Certain Nations Ease Damage to Nature*

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*By Gerwin Jones*

A recent report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the FAO, states that our planet has lost one hundred and twenty nine million hectares of forests in the past twenty five years, although it notes that the rate of deforestation has dropped due to remedial policies adopted by certain nations.

Reforestation is the natural or intentional restocking of existing forests and woodlands that have been depleted. Reforestation can be used to improve the quality of human life by soaking up pollution and dust from the air. Forests remove around 30 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels. Therefore, an increase in the overall forest cover around the world would tend to mitigate global warming, rebuild natural habitats and ecosystems, and provide the harvesting for resources, particularly timber.

Reforestation, if several native species are used, can provide other benefits in addition to financial returns, including restoration of the soil, rejuvenation of local flora and

fauna, and the capturing and sequestering of 38 tons of carbon dioxide per hectare per year.

Such is the case of Cuba, a country that had less than 15% of its area covered by forests in 1959, but has pushed up the total to 30%, following the rigorous application of successful reforestation policies.

The Cuban authorities are well aware of the importance of forests, a source of a wide range of material goods to the society and to the economy, and, in addition, contributing to the improvement and sustainability of the environment.

The strategy implemented by the Government of Cuba in favour of the protection of the forests is included in the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policies of the Party and the Revolution, approved in 2011. The Guidelines call for the upkeep, conservation and fostering of wooded areas as essential objectives of national development, being an important item in the nation's natural resources.

In this connection, the nation's scientific institutions are assuming an active role in the prevention of diseases and in the mitigation of the adverse effects of climate change on the nation's forests and wooded areas. Also, in the application of science and technology to the conservation and improvement of vegetable species, and to the wide dissemination of information on the need to protect the nations forests and wooded areas.

To this end, the Government of Cuba, through its concerned agencies and ministries, is disseminating knowledge at all levels, including to young school children, about the vital importance of protecting forests both to the nation and to the world as a whole.

Currently, the severe drought that Cuba is experiencing is a factor in the spreading of forest fires, either through natural causes, such as lightening, or the intransigence of human beings, who set fires or drop burning cigarettes in wooded areas.

For some years now, Cuba has been planting twice the number of trees being felled. The challenge, however, is to allow those seedlings to grow and reach maturity, without being destroyed by carelessness or neglect.

To protect and preserve the nation\*s forests and wooded areas is a task that the current generations must develop with a view to the future of today's children and youngsters.

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