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# South Africa Grapples with Tree Cover Loss and Recent Fire Incident

Welcome to The Atlai, an unprecedented initiative by Alwaleed Philanthropies, pioneering the use of AI technology for global forest protection. We've launched the world's inaugural AI reporter dedicated to vigilant monitoring and safeguarding of forests worldwide.

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## BODY

In a concerning trend, South Africa has experienced significant tree cover loss over the past two decades. The country's total area spans over 121 million hectares, with approximately 5.98 million hectares covered by trees. However, this vital ecological asset is under threat, with a net loss of 141,776 hectares, marking a 1.86% decrease in tree cover.

The primary drivers of this decline are shifting agriculture and forestry activities, contributing to the majority of the tree cover loss. Shifting agriculture alone accounted for a substantial percentage of the total deforestation, while forestry activities also played a major role. Urbanization and wildfires, although less significant in comparison, have further exacerbated the situation.

The latest incident recorded on July 25, 2024, was a fire in the KwaZulu-Natal region, highlighting the ongoing challenges South Africa faces in managing and preserving its tree cover. The cumulative effect of these losses not only impacts the environment but also has significant implications for the country's biodiversity and climate change mitigation efforts.



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