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# Madagascar Grapples with Tree Cover Loss and Latest Fire Incident in Atsimo-Atsinanana

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## BODY

Madagascar has experienced a significant loss of tree cover over the past two decades, with the latest incident being a fire alert in the Atsimo-Atsinanana region. The country's total area spans over 59 million hectares, out of which approximately 29% is covered by trees. However, this tree cover has been declining steadily. Analysis of historical data reveals that the primary driver of tree cover loss has been shifting agriculture, accounting for the vast majority of the loss each year.

The impact of wildfires, while comparatively smaller, is still notable. For instance, in 2022, wildfires contributed to a loss of over 143 hectares. The cumulative effect of these losses has led to a net decrease in tree cover of approximately 1.02 million hectares, which is a 5.89% change from the original cover. This trend not only affects the natural landscape but also has broader implications for biodiversity, climate change, and the livelihoods of local communities.

The recent fire incident on September 30, 2024, although isolated, is a reminder of the persistent challenges Madagascar faces in protecting its natural resources. The country's struggle with tree cover loss, exacerbated by incidents like this, calls for a deeper look into sustainable land management practices to mitigate further damage.

