

Date:  
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# South Africa Witnesses Significant Tree Cover Loss and Fire Incidents

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

South Africa has experienced a notable decline in tree cover over the past two decades, with a recent fire incident reported in the Eastern Cape on October 5, 2024, underscoring ongoing environmental challenges. The country's tree cover extent, which stands at approximately 5.98 million hectares, has seen a net loss of around 141,776 hectares, equating to a 1.86% decrease. This loss is primarily driven by activities such as shifting agriculture and forestry, which together account for the majority of the tree cover loss. Shifting agriculture alone has resulted in a loss of over 12,000 hectares in the latest recorded year, while forestry activities have led to a loss of over 27,000 hectares. Wildfires and urbanization also contribute to the decline, albeit to a lesser extent. The cumulative impact of these drivers not only affects the landscape but also has significant implications for carbon emissions and biodiversity.



