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Angola Grapples with Escalating Tree Cover Loss and Recent Fire Incident in Huila Province

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In a concerning environmental trend, Angola has experienced significant tree cover loss over the past two decades. The most recent incident, a fire alert in Huila Province on October 29, 2024, adds to the country's environmental challenges. Analysis of historical data reveals that shifting agriculture is the predominant driver of tree cover loss, accounting for a staggering majority of the deforestation activities.

The country's tree cover extent, which spans over 55 million hectares, has seen a net change in tree cover with a loss of approximately 3.40 million hectares and a gain of around 1.20 million hectares. This equates to a net loss of over 2.10 million hectares, translating to a 4.40% decrease in tree cover. Notably, incidents of wildfires have also contributed to this loss, though to a lesser extent than agricultural practices.

The pattern of tree cover loss in Angola points to a persistent issue that has both immediate and long-term ecological implications. The loss of tree cover not only affects biodiversity and habitat but also has a significant impact on carbon emissions, with millions of metric tons of CO2 equivalent released into the atmosphere as a result of these activities.

The latest fire incident in Huila Province, albeit small in scale, is a reminder of the ongoing environmental stressors that Angola faces. It underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to address the causes of tree cover loss and to mitigate the effects of such incidents on the country's rich natural heritage.

