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Zambia Grapples with Surge in Tree Cover Loss and Escalating Wildfire Incidents

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Zambia is facing a significant environmental challenge as recent data reveals a surge in tree cover loss, primarily due to shifting agriculture, with a notable rise in wildfire incidents. Over the past two decades, the country has experienced a net loss of 2,872,110 hectares of tree cover, which is a 7.30% decrease from its previous extent. Shifting agriculture remains the predominant driver, accounting for the vast majority of the tree cover loss each year.

The impact of urbanization, although less pronounced, has consistently contributed to the loss, with a gradual increase in its share over the years. Wildfires, while not the leading cause, have been a persistent threat, causing both loss of tree cover and emissions of greenhouse gases. The latest incident from November 5, 2024, in the Southern Province of Zambia, is a stark reminder of the ongoing threat that wildfires pose to the region's ecosystem.

The loss of tree cover has significant implications for carbon emissions, biodiversity, and the livelihoods of local communities. The data underscores the urgency for strategies that balance agricultural practices with environmental conservation to mitigate further loss and promote recovery of affected areas.

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