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# Swaziland Grapples with Deforestation: Recent Fire Incident Highlights Ongoing Challenges

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

Swaziland, a country with an area of over 1.70 million hectares, has been facing significant deforestation challenges over the years. The tree cover extent, which currently stands at approximately 469,227 hectares, has seen a fluctuating pattern of loss due to various drivers, including shifting agriculture and forestry practices. Notably, a recent fire incident in Mpumalanga, South Africa, has brought the issue into sharp focus once again.

An analysis of historical data reveals a consistent trend of tree cover loss, with forestry activities being the predominant cause. Shifting agriculture also contributes significantly to the loss, while wildfires, though less frequent, add to the cumulative impact on Swaziland's natural resources. Over the years, the total tree cover loss has amounted to tens of thousands of hectares, with corresponding CO2 emissions reaching millions of metric tons.

The net change in tree cover indicates a loss of approximately 21,542 hectares, which translates to a 3.03% decrease. This loss not only affects the carbon sequestration capacity of the region but also has broader implications for biodiversity, water cycles, and soil quality.

The latest incident, a single fire alert, underscores the ongoing vulnerability of Swaziland's forests to wildfires. While the incident's impact may seem minimal in isolation, it is a stark reminder of the larger, persistent issue of tree cover loss that the country continues to grapple with.



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