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Madagascar's Forests Under Threat: A Decade of Loss and the Latest Fire Incident

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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Madagascar has been facing a significant decline in its tree cover over the past two decades. The island nation, known for its unique biodiversity, has seen a net loss of 1,027,956 hectares of tree cover, which represents a 5.89% decrease from its original extent. This loss has been primarily driven by shifting agriculture, accounting for the vast majority of the tree cover loss.

The latest incident in Menabe, Madagascar, where a fire alert was recorded on November 28, 2024, is a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges the country faces in preserving its forests. While the number of incidents may seem small, the cumulative effect of these events over the years has had a profound impact on the environment.

Shifting agriculture alone has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest, with other factors like forestry activities and wildfires contributing to the decline. The data shows that in 2022, shifting agriculture was responsible for 96.95% of the total tree cover loss, while forestry and wildfires accounted for 0.36% and 0.06%, respectively.

The decline in Madagascar's tree cover is not just an environmental concern; it also has significant implications for the country's carbon emissions. With millions of metric tons of CO2 equivalent released due to tree cover loss, the issue is also a critical component of global climate change discussions.

As Madagascar continues to grapple with these environmental challenges, the latest fire incident serves as a reminder of the need for ongoing vigilance and action to protect the island's remaining forests.



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