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Central African Republic Grapples with Shifting Agriculture Impact on Forests

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

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been facing significant challenges with tree cover loss, primarily due to shifting agriculture practices. Over two decades, the country has seen a net decrease in tree cover of approximately 1.32%, with a total loss of over 1.20 million hectares, despite some gains and natural disturbances. The most recent incident, a fire alert in the Mbomou region, underscores the ongoing threats to the country's forests.

Shifting agriculture has been the predominant driver of tree cover loss, accounting for the vast majority of the hectares lost and associated CO2 emissions. The impact of this practice on the country's tree cover has been profound, with the highest recorded loss in 2021, where over 67,000 hectares were affected. The cumulative effect of these losses has not only altered the landscape but has also contributed to significant CO2 emissions, with recent years showing emissions well over 25 million metric tons.

The CAR's forests, which cover a substantial portion of the country's land area, are a critical resource for both the environment and the local populations that depend on them. The loss of tree cover has implications for biodiversity, climate regulation, and the livelihoods of communities. The data indicates a pressing need for sustainable land management practices that can reconcile agricultural needs with forest conservation.

As the Central African Republic continues to navigate these environmental challenges, the latest fire alert serves as a reminder of the fragility of its forest ecosystems. The country's experience highlights the complex interplay between human activity and environmental stewardship, a balance that is crucial for the health of the planet and the well-being of future generations.