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# Benin's Tree Cover at Risk: Recent Fire Incident Highlights Ongoing Environmental Challenge

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## BODY

A recent fire incident in the Atakora Department of Benin has cast a spotlight on the country's environmental challenges. Over the past two decades, Benin has experienced a significant shift in its landscape, with a net loss of 7.12% in tree cover. This loss equates to approximately 358,091 hectares, a substantial decline considering the country's total area of over 11.50 million hectares.

The primary driver of tree cover loss in Benin has been identified as shifting agriculture, accounting for the majority of the lost hectares and associated CO2 emissions. Urbanization, while contributing to a lesser extent, has also played a role in the reduction of tree cover. The data reveals a concerning trend, with the highest losses occurring in years such as 2009, with nearly 4,929 hectares lost, and 2007, with around 4,660 hectares.

Despite these losses, there have been gains in tree cover amounting to 181,408 hectares, which indicates some positive developments. However, these gains are overshadowed by the larger scale of tree cover disturbance and loss over the years.

The latest fire alert is a reminder of the ongoing environmental pressures facing Benin. With shifting agriculture as a significant factor, the need for sustainable land management practices is evident. The incident in Atakora Department underscores the importance of addressing these environmental challenges to preserve Benin's natural heritage and mitigate the impact of climate change.



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