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Cameroon Grapples with Sustained Tree Cover Loss and Recent 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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BODY

Cameroon has been experiencing a significant decline in its tree cover over the past two decades. The country, known for its diverse ecosystems, has seen a net change in tree cover characterized by a loss of approximately 976,902 hectares, despite a gain of around 351,063 hectares. This represents a net loss of about 625,839 hectares, equating to a 1.71% decrease in tree cover.

Shifting agriculture has been the predominant driver of tree cover loss, contributing to the vast majority of the hectares lost. This practice, along with urbanization, has led to a considerable release of carbon emissions, exacerbating climate change concerns. The impact of forestry activities, although present, is relatively minimal in comparison to the effects of agricultural expansion and urban development.

The latest incident in the East Region of Cameroon, recorded on January 17, 2025, with one fire alert, is a stark reminder of the ongoing environmental challenges the country faces. While the data on wildfires show minimal tree cover loss in hectares, the presence of fire incidents can have a profound impact on the already fragile ecosystems and the biodiversity they support.

The trend over the years has shown a fluctuating but generally increasing pattern of tree cover loss, with the most significant loss recorded in 2014. The subsequent years have seen varying degrees of loss, highlighting the need for sustainable land management practices to mitigate the impact on Cameroon's forests and the global environment.

As the country continues to grapple with these environmental challenges, the recent fire incident serves as a call to action to address the underlying causes of tree cover loss and to implement strategies that promote conservation and sustainable land use.