The Reasons Why Deforestation is Bad

SSWG7 The student will describe the interaction of physical and human systems that have shaped contemporary Latin America.

g. Analyze the impact of deforestation on Latin America and explain actions being taken

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Loss of Food Products from Trees  Some trees produce nuts or fruits which are an important source of food for local people in developing countries. Once that tree is removed, all future food harvest from that tree is lost. This can negatively impact human health and nutrition, since nuts provide a valuable source of protein and fruits provide many vitamins and minerals.  Loss of Other Plants and Animals  Many plants and animal species require forest conditions for survival. Without the protected cover of the forest trees other plants may die. These plants may have been used for food or medicine and are then lost as a resource. Animals that lived in the forest must move to other forested regions to survive. If these animals were used for food by hunters, this food source will be gone. If there is no forest habitat remaining nearby, the animals will simply die. The loss of large tracts of forest can lead to extinction of animal species.  Erosion and Flooding  Soil erosion can become a serious problem once deforestation has occurred. When the trees are removed, there are no longer leaves or branches of trees to intercept the rain and break the fall of raindrops. These raindrops hit the ground with such force that they can cause the top layer of the soil to compact (become hardened). This creates a hard surface on the top of the soil, similar to pavement. When rain water hits this ground, it does not soak readily into the soil but quickly runs off like a little stream on the surface of the soil. When trees and roots are removed, it also takes away small pores and channels in the soil that the water would use to help infiltrate into the ground.  As a result, streams of rainwater wash away the top layer of soil, and in some cases can cause severe flooding. The top layer of soil contains the most nutrients. When the topsoil is washed away, the land is much poorer in nutrients and crop yields will be decreased. Less food produced means that people remain hungry and they must find new land to grow more food. Finding new land can often involve clearing forest to make more land available for agriculture. Deforestation can lead to more deforestations in order to meet basic needs.  Drought  As a result of the erosion and flooding, the soil and crops may experience longer periods/extensive drought conditions. As flooding and erosion increases, the amount of rain infiltrating into the soil decreases, and the soil can become very dry. This reduced moisture in the soil can significantly decrease crop yields as the crops are not able to support the drought conditions. Fewer yields mean less food for families.  Reduced Air Quality  Trees play a very important role in performing photosynthesis which releases oxygen into the air. Without trees and other plants there would be no method to recycle the carbon dioxide that humans and other animals exhale, into oxygen.  Loss of Shade  Tree are very important in providing shade. This is especially important in tropical countries where temperature can regularly be over 86 degrees Fahrenheit. In farming communities, the shade of a tree is a very welcoming place for lunch or a break to get away from the burning and dehydrating effects of the sun. Loss of shade can have negative health effects on people, contributing to heat exhaustion and other fatigue.  Loss of Wood for Human Use  Trees are harvested and the wood is used by humans in many ways. Trees provide lumber for building and firewood for cooking. As deforestation occurs, trees become scarcer and it can be difficult to collect enough wood. In some developing countries, women must walk long distances to collect wood that will be used as firewood for cooking. As deforestation occurs, women must walk longer distances to find wood. This takes a lot of time, so other responsibilities that the women have may not be fulfilled. This can have many impacts on the health and well-being of the family. For example, the vegetable garden may not be planted or watered, because there is not time to prepare the land or to walk and get water. This would result in less food and a less healthy diet for the family. Poorer nutrition can contribute to increased chance of illness which can have long-lasting and severe impacts on the family. |  |