



The earth is 70% water and 30% land. Tropical rainforest covers 7% of the world's landmass, representing 1.7% of the earth's surface. The tropical rainforest contains more than half the flora and fauna in the world and is an important factor in the conversion of carbon dioxide to oxygen.

Tropical rainforest is not alone in assuring the globe's environmental balance: boreal and temperature forest are no less important and so are the world's oceans.

while the tropical rainforest can be found in 85 countries around the world (FAO), 90% of these forests are concentrated in 15 countries, which have more than 10 million hectares each.

According to FAO estimates, the extent of the world's forest decreased by some 180 million hectares between 1980 and 1985.

This represents an annual loss of 12 million hectares. This is due essentially to the growing needs of local inhabitants of food, fuel, industrial and mineral products. The rate of deforestation is indirectly in proportion to the rate of population expansion and the poverty of the country. Of the annual production of timber from tropical forests, 85% is for fuel: 10% is for local timber needs and 5% for export (FAO).

The link between the exports of tropical timber and deforestation in the tropics is much less than generally known. Moreover, because of better economic value, tropical forests providing timber for export tend to be better managed.