



Canada's forest sector

Canada's forests are a national treasure, rich in diversity, vast in size, and vital to our environment, economy, and identity. These forests support thousands of rural and Indigenous communities and contribute to global climate solutions. Guided by community and industry consultation and the latest science and technologies, Canada's forest sector is adapting to climate change and global trade shifts while building long-term resilience.

At a glance

Forest coverage: 40% of land, 3rd most forested country in the world (by area).

Ownership: 90%+ of forests are publicly owned (known as Crown land), managed by provinces and territories.

Deforestation: <0.01% of forest area is permanently converted to other land uses each year.

Disturbances: an average of 5.6% of forests were impacted by insects or fires annually between 2021 and 2025.

Harvesting: <0.2% of forests are harvested each year.

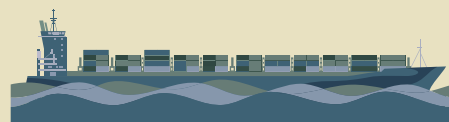
GDP: \$30.7 billion contribution to economy (2024).

Exports: \$37.2 billion, including lumber, pulp and paper, and wood pellets (2024).

Employment: ~200,000 direct jobs in harvesting, sawmills, and manufacturing (2024).

Forest certification: ~40% of the world's certified forests.

Did you know?



In 2024, Canada remained the world's leading exporter of softwood lumber, northern bleached softwood kraft pulp, oriented strand board and newsprint.



Canada is working toward a circular forest bioeconomy by using leftover wood from forests to make things like bioplastics, fabrics, and clean fuels.

Sustainable forest management

Robust legal frameworks: Canada, through its provinces and territories, has a multi-tier system of laws and regulations in place to govern forest management. Responsibility for forest management falls under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial governments, who regulate and monitor forest planning, harvesting, regeneration, and silvicultural requirements in collaboration with Indigenous communities, the forest sector, and the public.

Provinces and territories grants rights and authorizations to companies. Before any harvesting occurs, planning teams develop forest management plans that define sustainable levels of harvest while retaining non-timber values such as ecosystem and biological diversity, and soil and water quality.

Since 1990, Canada has consistently harvested within sustainable levels.

Forest management planning and forestry practices: Forest professionals manage and care for landscapes with future generations in mind, using planning horizons that can extend up to 200 years. Long-term planning is layered with interim goals and short-term detailed operational plans specifying where and how activities like road building, harvesting, natural regeneration, tree planting.

Canadian forestry practices include a range of harvesting and regeneration practices, including partial cut harvesting and clearcutting. These can involve removing part or all of a forest stand to allow natural seeding from remaining trees or nearby stands, planting seedlings, or a combination of both approaches. Clearcutting mimics natural disturbances such as fire and supports tree species that need full sunlight to regenerate.

Canada does not convert natural forests to plantations or grow monocultures. Forests are regrown to reflect the types of forests and ecosystems that existed before harvesting.

Forests are allowed to regenerate naturally or are supported through replanting with native tree species. When tree planting, efforts are made to source seeds from the same area where the seedlings are planted.

Forest health and recovery: Canada's forests are all part of a dynamic landscape, one that has always been in a state of change. Fire, insects and disease are part of the natural dynamics of Canada's forests. Forest fires are natural and necessary for regenerating ecosystems, renewing forest landscapes, and shaping forest composition, structure, and biodiversity over time.

Maintaining biodiversity includes initiatives such as habitat conservation and ecosystem-based planning. Sensitive species benefit from sustainable forest practices which mitigate pressures from invasive species, habitat loss, and climate-related disturbances.

Climate adaptation: Management strategies help forests adapt to climate change, as shifting temperatures and precipitation patterns affect the growth and survival of some tree species. One approach to strengthen forest resilience is assisted migration, which involves planting trees in locations where future climate conditions are expected to be more suitable.



Canada's forests are managed to support native ecosystems.

Forest certification

Canada has comprehensive legal frameworks with the federal, provincial, and local level policies and legislations in place to advance sustainable forest management.

—University of British Columbia study comparing Canada with eight jurisdictions under the Montréal Process

Even with strong rules in place, many forestry companies choose to obtain certification from independent, non-profit international organizations such as the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Their corresponding chain-of-custody certification ensures traceability from forest to final product.

**~Two-thirds
of Canada's managed
Crown forest land is
third-party certified.**

Indigenous communities

More than 300 Indigenous communities rely on forests for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Their interests and values are integrated into forest management decisions, and Indigenous entrepreneurship in the forestry sector is growing in all provinces and territories. Formal agreements in which forest management plans are led by Indigenous Peoples are in place in certain regions in Canada.



Canada's native tree species have known medical or pharmaceutical uses and are used in materials such as rayon, cellophane, glue, and turpentine.

Forest products, carbon and circularity

Harvested wood continues to store carbon, while new tree growth absorbs more. Wood-based construction materials, such as lumber and mass timber, store carbon for the life of the product. Wood fibre fuels, such as pellets and biofuels, are renewable energy options.

The cascading use principle is central to Canada's approach to forestry and manufacturing, prioritizing how resources are used from forest to final product. Higher-value, long-lived wood products such as lumber, panels, mass timber, finishing products, and furniture are made first. Low-grade or remaining fibre residues and forest residuals can be made into bioenergy and advanced biochemicals.

**11,000+
Indigenous jobs
6%
of the
forest sector
workforce.**



Measuring and reporting for transparency

Canada is committed to transparent and open dialogue about its forest practices.

Canadian federal, provincial, and territorial governments use the Montréal Process criteria and indicators and the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' criteria and indicators to define, measure, track and report on sustainable forest management. Provinces and territories have subsets of criteria and indicators specific to local forest and ecosystem characteristics.

Canada publishes forest data both domestically and internationally through its annual State of Canada's Forests report and the United Nations' Global Forest Resources Assessment, including statistics on forest inventory, natural disturbances, sustainable forest management and carbon inventory, as well as economic and trade data.

For more information

State of Canada's Forests Annual Report 2025
natural-resources.canada.ca/sites/admin/files/documents/2026-01/2025-EN-FINAL-SoF-2025.pdf

Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Criteria & Indicators Framework
ccfm.org/releases/framework-of-criteria-and-indicators-of-sustainable-forest-management-in-canada

Canada's National Forest Inventory
nfi.nfis.org/en/

Global Forest Resources Assessment
fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/en

Certification Canada
fpac.ca/forest-management-certifications

The state of Canada's forests: A global comparison of the performance on Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators
sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1389934119304964



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The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) are federal, provincial, and territorial governments working in partnership to ensure Canada remains a world leader in sustainable forest management while supporting a competitive forest sector.

Visit ccfm.org to learn more.