

# Paper Clip: the Earth has Turned Greener

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While the news coming out of forests is often dominated by deforestation and habitat loss, research published in *Nature Climate Change* ('Recent reversal in loss of global terrestrial biomass') shows that the world has actually got greener over the past decade.

Despite ongoing deforestation in South America and Southeast Asia, the researchers found that the decline in these regions has been offset by recovering forests outside the tropics, and new growth in the drier savannas and shrublands of Africa and Australia.

They developed a new technique to map changes in vegetation biomass using satellite measurements of changes in the radio-frequency radiation emitted from the Earth's surface. For the period 2003-12, the total amount of vegetation above the ground has increased by about 4 billion tonnes of carbon.

Global analysis shows losses of vegetation in many regions, particularly at the frontiers of deforestation in the tropics of South America and Southeast Asia. However, these rainforest losses had been offset by increases in biomass in other parts of the world.

For example, forests have spontaneously regrown on farmland abandoned after the fall of communism in Russia and neighbouring countries, while large-scale tree planting projects in China have measurably added to the global biomass.

*(Adapted from Abstract and article by the authors in The Conversation)*

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