

What is afforestation

Afforestation is the process of planting completely new forests where there was no tree cover at all.

The planted forest can create new habitats for wildlife, create jobs and economic benefits to local communities and also increase the planet's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide. Afforestation takes three forms ie natural regeneration, commercial silviculture and agroforestry.

Forms of afforestation

Natural regeneration. This is where forests are planted and left alone for very long periods of time. These are the most effective forests at absorbing carbon and creating new habitats due to a variety of species which results into a dense canopy and increased ability to capture sunlight.

Commercial silviculture. This is where forests are planted but for specific products like timber or for paper production. These are also effective at absorbing carbon but they are eventually harvested.

Agroforestry. This is the growing of trees together with crops and rearing of animals. This is an important source of food and income to local communities but sometimes leads to deforestation when trees are cut to create land for crop production.

Risks and challenges

Large scale tree planting can result into land use change which further results into competition for land and increases on food prices.

Selecting the right form of afforestation is important to ensure that local communities benefit.

Trees need to be cared for after planting to ensure their survival and this also includes protecting the trees from illegal logging.