



Forest landscape restoration in Ghana

Ghana's forests have declined rapidly, threatening biodiversity, water and food security, and the livelihoods of communities that depend on forest and agricultural ecosystems. Forest and landscape restoration (FLR) is critical to tackling deforestation and land degradation issues.

A grant scheme funded by the European Union, implemented by the European Forest Institute, is supporting FLR in Ghana's High Forest and Savanna zones. The scheme supports efforts to restore 5,000 hectares of forest and develop capacity of 20,000 farmers and rural people.

Drivers and responses to deforestation

Deforestation in Ghana arises from a mix of factors, including agricultural expansion, logging, illegal mining (galamsey), wildfires, charcoal production, and livestock grazing. These issues are exacerbated by insecure land tenure, weak governance, and rising demand for agricultural products.

Forest and landscape restoration offers hope by rehabilitating degraded land, improving soil fertility, and supporting sustainable agriculture and water resources. However, progress is hampered by high costs, limited funding, unresolved tree tenure, the ongoing threat of illegal mining, poor infrastructure, and a disconnect between restoration efforts and local livelihoods.

Institutional and policy context

Recognising the urgency of these challenges, Ghana has built a robust institutional and policy framework to promote and guide FLR, led by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Forestry Commission and others, including:

- Forest and Wildlife Policy of 2012
- Forest Plantation Strategy (expanded into the broader Landscape Restoration Strategy)
- Forestry Development Master Plan (2016–2036)
- African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100)
- “Tree for Life” Initiative to plant 30 million trees

Partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector support restoration efforts and progress, highlighting Ghana’s practical commitment to rehabilitating degraded landscapes and fostering sustainable development. CSOs are providing training, empowering local communities, and facilitating policy dialogue to strengthen restoration efforts at the grassroots level, while the private sector is investing in social and environmental responsibility initiatives.

The following are key forest restoration models and approaches implemented in Ghana:

- **Agroforestry** - planting and nurturing trees on farmlands to improve productivity and diversify incomes.
- **Farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR)** - encouraging natural tree growth instead of planting new ones for cost-effective restoration.
- **Integrated landscape management** - combining agroforestry, FMNR, and climate-smart agriculture across multi-functional landscapes.
- **Tree planting** - increasing tree cover through woodlots, parklands, wildlife corridors, and plantations, using timber, non-timber, and/or fruit tree species.
- **Governance innovations** - supporting CREMAs, Landscape Management Boards, and benefit-sharing models among others to empower communities.

Best practices

The following best practices, based on Ghana's restoration efforts and case studies, can help guide effective and sustainable restoration.

Technical and ecological

- Match tree species to site conditions and restoration objectives.
- Employ enrichment planting and maintenance activities such as weeding, pruning, and thinning to improve plantation quality and survival.
- Interplant trees with food crops to support both restoration and local livelihoods.
- Develop long-term strategies for restoration, based on past lessons to prevent degradation and sustain community and environmental benefits.

Community engagement and social

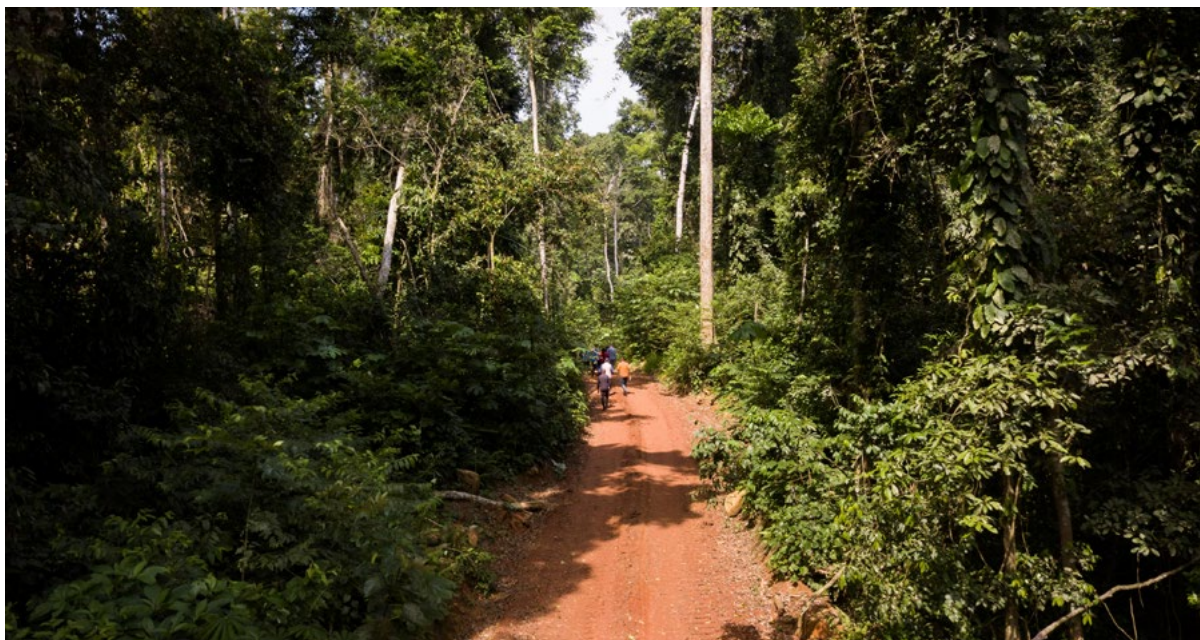
- Actively involve local communities in restoration planning and implementation offering incentives like share of timber and crop revenues.
- Design restoration projects to create jobs, improve food security, and offer new income streams.
- Encourage the cultivation of shade-tolerant crops under restored tree cover to sustain livelihoods after canopy closure.

Governance and institutional

- Build partnerships amongst government agencies, private sector, traditional authorities, and local communities to leverage resources and expertise.
- Ensure land and tree tenure arrangements are clear and secure to motivate investment and participation.
- Establish formal agreements for benefit sharing amongst stakeholders (e.g. Forestry Commission, private sector, traditional authorities, communities).
- Ensure transparency in managing funds and carrying out projects to foster trust and sustain engagement.
- Monitor and address funding challenges, including delays and inadequate financing, to maintain project momentum.
- Ensure gender equality in restoration by addressing biases and enabling both women and men to participate in decision-making and benefit sharing.

Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management

- Establish clear baselines and use measurable indicators such as area restored, survival rates, and livelihood outcomes to assess impact.
- Regularly monitor restoration progress and adjust strategies based on results and feedback from monitoring.



Community members walking through a forest to access a restoration project site. © EFI

Cover photo: Close-up of a field worker planting. © Freepik

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