Wednesday 20th May 2020

To form arguments about deforestation

This year, we have been exploring how our actions have an impact locally and globally. We looked at the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and discussed the devastating effects of forest fires and deforestation on the wildlife of the Amazon. Your task today is to decide whether you think deforestation is good or bad. You can either have a debate with a member of the family and share your point of view with them or write a short paragraph explaining what you have decided.

Task 1: Read the information below to give you a better understanding of what deforestation is.

What is deforestation?

Deforestation is the cutting, clearing and removal of the rainforest (and their related ecosystems) to create less diverse ecosystems such as land for crops, pastures for animals or plantations.

Ecosystem: a community of living things and their physical environment (where they live)

Why do people need deforestation?

Logging: Logging is when companies cut down trees for their wood which is sold to countries across the world. This wood can be used for hundreds of purposes, for example building fences, creating roofs, making furniture. However, the process of logging can create a lot of long-lasting effects:

- The heavy machinery that is use damages the soil (making it hard to replant new trees).
- When the soil is damaged, it becomes silt (a soil that is similar to sand and clay). Silt can causes landslides which are extremely dangerous.
- Because of the cleared land, more people want to live in that area, which means more trees get cut down to make room for homes.

Farming: Land is cleared and planted with crops such as avocados and palm oil. The things that are planted are used to feed people around the world and sometimes can't be planted in other places (for example, England does not have the right weather to grow avocados so we cannot do that here). Other times, the farmland is used for animals like cows to graze (eat) on the grass.

This is necessary to create food products, however, when animals or plants use up the minerals in the ground after a few years, the ground becomes infertile (meaning it has run out of important minerals). That means nothing can grow there anymore, so the people who run the farms must cut down more land and move their crops and animals to land that is fertile (has lots of minerals for things to grow). This means they have to cut down new patches of land is 3-5 years.

Mining: Mining in the Amazon rainforest is illegal but many people still do it because of the large wealth of gold mineral in the land. Land is completely deforested. Soil is often removed with high-pressure hoses and poisonous chemicals are used. These chemicals run into the local rivers and pollutes them, killing the fish and damaging the health of anyone using the water.

Road building: Loggers and miners build roads to get their materials out. People use the roads to enter the forest and build new settlements and set up industries. The Trans-Amazonian Highway in South America is 5,300 km long and has opened up some remote parts of Brazil to development.

Settlement: Land is being cleared for new homes and settlements. There is more need for these in countries with increasing populations, especially around large overcrowded cities.

Dam building: Hydro-electric dams provide clean energy which is much better for the environment than using fossil fuels like oil. However, it results in deforestation and other issues such as flooding, people losing their homes or having to move and landslides.

Problems with deforestation

- Less plant and animal species
- Loss of habitats - places for animals to live.
- Loss of sources of medicine that come from natural resources in the Amazon.
- Soil damage.
- Silt damaging the rivers.
- Flooding.
- Chemicals damaging the local rivers and wildlife.
- Global warming and rising sea levels - burning trees releases greenhouse gases which add to global warming. Trees take in carbon dioxide and reduce the effects of global warming.

What can be done to protect tropical forests?

- Selective logging - only some trees cut down.
- Using elephants, horses or helicopters to drag or fly selected logs out so you do not need to create roads.
- Replanting trees in areas where the soil is undamaged.
- Environmental laws which make logging illegal and ensure that those who are mining illegally are imprisoned or receive a fine to stop them doing it again.
- Setting up national parks and nature reserves to protect areas of trees and wildlife.
- Encouraging ecotourism – make more people aware of what is happening and how they can help.
- Encourage people to stop buying tropical hardwood. Create furniture and resources that use other materials.
- Helping poorer countries develop - so they don't have to use rainforest resources unsustainably.

Task 2:

Sort the following statements into the table below to help you decide where you stand.

- Deforestation provides us with essential products such as paper and toilet paper.
- If deforestation continues at this rate, there will be no rainforests on this planet in 100 years' time.
- In 2050, it is estimated that there will 10 billion people on the planet. We need more space to home these people and deforestation provides that.
- Deforestation makes room for crops and we need food to survive.
- There will be a negative impact on the environment because we need trees to get rid of carbon dioxide in the air. Trees also help create oxygen that we breathe.
- It provides jobs for people, especially in undeveloped countries.
- People who live in the rainforests will lose their homes.
- New roads can be built which will make it easier for people to get to work. This is good for the economy of the country.
- Trees are a limited resource. If we don't plant any trees to replace the ones we have lost, we will run out.

You can also add any of your own points from the information you have read or discussions you have had.

Deforestation is good	Deforestation is bad

Now that you have completed the table, what do you think about deforestation?

It is positive because…

It is negative because…

Overall, I believe that it is mostly…