

Major milestone reached in forest monitoring from space

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Thanks to a major effort to ensure full satellite coverage of the world's forests, all countries now have the necessary data for annual forest monitoring for the first time ever.

The space agencies operating the world's largest civil Earth observing satellite programmes have declared a major milestone in assuring essential imagery coverage of the world's forests in 2017. CEOS (the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites) has been coordinating space agency support to the data needs of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) since 2011. This involves ensuring coordinated and complementary systematic acquisition strategies for a suite of relevant Earth observation satellites to provide all countries with the data necessary for annual monitoring of their forests. Complete forest cover data is crucial for countries to be able to report on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in support of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Deforestation and forest degradation is the 2nd leading source of carbon emissions globally, and must be reduced significantly in order to meet global climate targets.

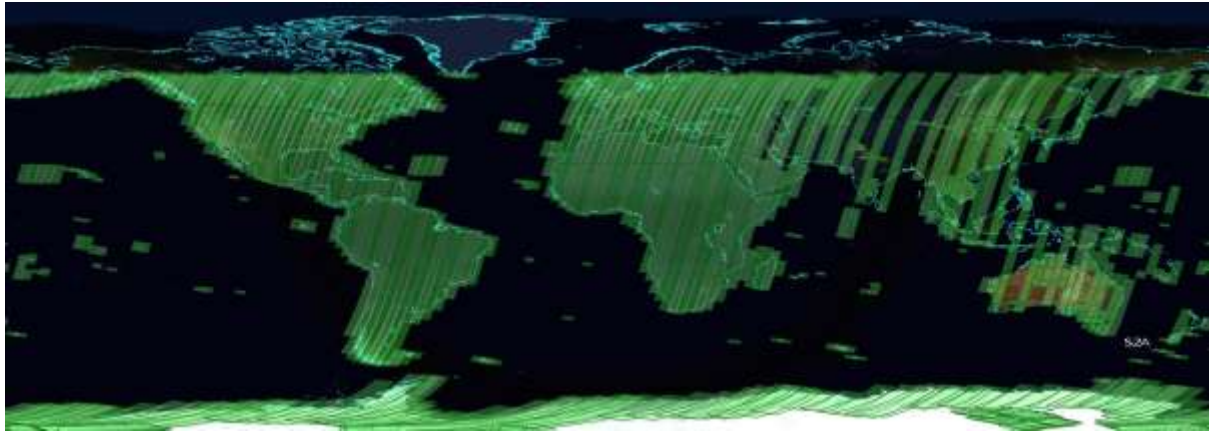
Full and open forest data is now available for all countries as a result of the open data policies and collaboration of a variety of national space agencies and coordinating bodies. The core data streams underpinning this coordinated multi-annual global coverage of forests are the optical sensors on the Landsat series (USGS), and from the European Union Copernicus programme the Sentinel-1 radar series (EU/ESA) and the optical Sentinel-2 series (EU/ESA). Further data contributions are provided by the space agencies of Japan (JAXA), Brazil (INPE), China (CRESDA), France (CNES), Italy (ASI), Canada (CSA), and Germany (DLR). Further useful datasets are anticipated next year from the space agencies of the UK (NovaSAR mission) and Argentina (SAOCOM mission).

Global coverage of forests through this collaboration will continue from 2017 until at least 2030, allowing countries to confidently apply satellite data in their national forest monitoring and reporting systems.

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CEOS: The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites ensures international coordination of civil space-based Earth observation programs and promotes exchange of data to optimize societal benefit and inform decision-making for securing a prosperous and sustainable future for humankind. Its 60 Member and Associate Agencies include the space agencies sponsoring all the world's major civil Earth observing satellite programmes. www.ceos.org

GFOI: The Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) is a voluntary partnership of countries and institutions who are collaboratively assisting developing countries to improve their forest monitoring and greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting capabilities for the purposes of establishing baselines and tracking progress in reducing GHG emissions from forests. Through collaborative action, GFOI partners seek to provide a larger and more streamlined package of assistance to developing countries than any one partner could provide alone. This includes supporting the sustained acquisition, availability, accessibility and capacity for countries to use Earth observation data and tools for forest monitoring purposes. GFOI is a flagship of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). For more information please see www.gfoi.org.



Sentinel-2A mission – part of the winter 2016 acquisition plan contributing to the global coverage