



# Land clearing



Land is being cleared to provide more food for the world's increasing population. Is this a bad thing? What are some of the arguments against ongoing land clearing?

In many parts of Australia land clearing is the main cause of salinity and loss of soil. It makes droughts more severe.

Land clearing is a direct threat to wildlife—it destroys their habitat, shelter and food sources. Millions of birds and animals die each year from reduced habitat. Australia has over 200 animals listed as endangered. This includes birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, as well as over 140 plant species, many of which are food for native animals.

The 'wheat belt' which runs down the centre of much of the east coast of Australia retains only tiny scraps of mature woodland, often in national parks. The rest is fields and pastures. Every year thousands of hectares of bushland are bulldozed or poisoned to 'improve' land for agriculture. Land clearing continues to be high—over 400 000 hectares a year, and the remnants of native bush continue to suffer. This is the greatest single threat to biodiversity in the nation.

Replanting cannot replace the diversity of plants and animals lost through clearing. Replanted vegetation is a poor substitute for the natural complexity of the vegetation cleared and there is a loss in vegetation quality.

