
[Destruction of the few remaining forests continues in El Salvador](#)

During the decade of 1970 the destruction of natural forests in El Salvador was accompanied by the set up of coffee plantations under forest cover and some tree plantations. Nowadays coffee plantations under cover, conifers and broad-leaved forest areas are rapidly decreasing as a consequence of urbanization, while mangroves in the south-western coast are being destroyed by shrimp farming and tourism activities.

The Forestry Law approved in 1973 failed in its intention to stop deforestation and promote a reasonable use of the land by considering the function of forests in relation to hydrologic resources. A revision of the forestry policy started in the '90s and focused on tree plantations and agroforestry, was not effective either, since there are not available lands for plantations and agroforestry –a more sustainable activity both from the environmental and the social points of view- was not actually promoted.

The metropolitan area of San Salvador, capital of the country, is a paradigmatic example of environmental degradation. The so-called Gran San Salvador includes several municipalities, as Mejicanos, Apopa, and Soyapango. Only a few forested areas and parks survive in the city that is being invaded by urbanizations built disregarding the environment. Even the area of the Quezaltepeque volcano is being invaded by catholic urbanization.

A big controversy has arisen at El Espino, a woodland area in the suburbs of San Salvador. El Espino captures more than 16 million cubic meters of water to feed the aquifer that provides the city with water. It is also shelter for several bird species, some of them menaced with extinction. Coffee production companies, real estate agencies and the municipalities fought for the administration of the area. Finally, El Espino was divided and several infrastructures for the “development” of the area were built causing severe environmental degradation. Civil society organizations took the case to court and the Supreme Court of Justice ordered the halting of the works. Nevertheless the authority reconsidered this measure and a permission was given for developing works in some parts of El Espino, what would lead to the destruction of the remaining coffee plantations under forest canopy.

Sources: Nestor Martinez based on information provided by Carlos R. Ramirez Sosa; Segura Olman et al. (ed.), *Políticas forestales en Centro America: analisis de las restricciones para el desarrollo del sector forestal*, IICA-Holanda, El Salvador, 1997.