

Cuba has 30.6% Forest Coverage Due to Reforestation Program

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Forests in Cuba now make up 30.6 percent of the country's land area, thanks to a government reforestation initiative, according to a report.

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Titled, "Environmental Outlook: Cuba 2015," from the National Officer of Statistics and Information, the report details recent improvement in Cuba's forests, up from 27.6 percent in 2010.

Cuba started the reforestation program in 1998 and is part of a select group of developing countries that have been able to maintain sustained forest growth.

A report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2011, said that Cuba has the highest proportion of its forest designated for protective functions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The province of Pinar del Rio had the highest reforestation, with 47 percent, closely followed by Guantanamo with 46.7 percent. Other provinces with healthy

coverage included: Matanzas, 39.1 percent; Holguin, 38.3 percent; Santiago de Cuba, 33 percent; and Granman, 26.7 percent.

The Isle of Youth Special Municipality had the highest rate of forest coverage area with 65.2 percent and Las Tunas had the lowest at 19 percent.

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Before Spanish colonization of the island, Cuba was estimated to have forest coverage of 90 percent of its total land area. At the time of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, only 14 percent of Cuba was thought to be covered in forest. Both the foreign-owned timber and sugarcane industries played significant roles in destroying much of Cuba's lush forest areas.

Increased forest coverage has been proven to help fight against pollution, improve air quality and health for humans and animals. Deforestation is a major contributor to increased greenhouse gas emissions
