Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO Remote Sensing Survey reveals

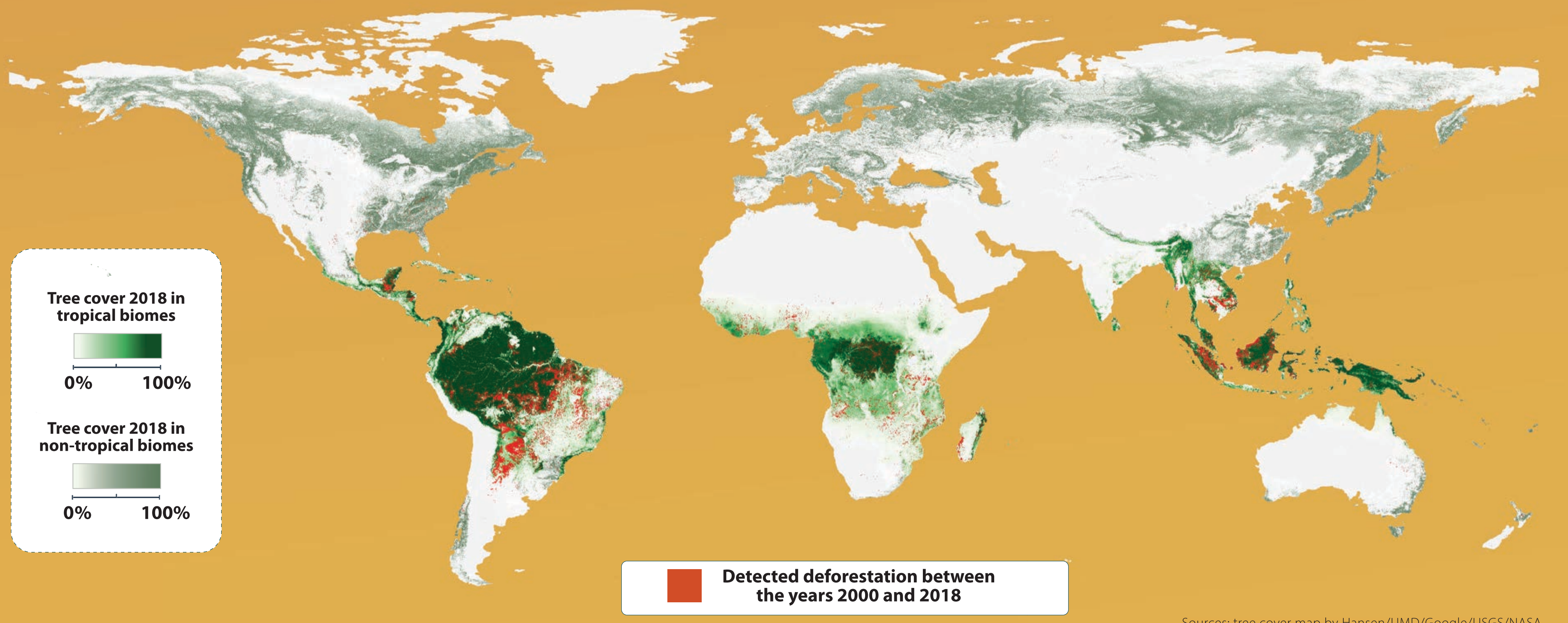
Tropical rainforests under pressure as agricultural expansion drives global deforestation

88.1%

FAO’s new global Remote Sensing Survey confirms a slowdown in global deforestation and shows that the impact of agricultural expansion on forests is even greater than previously thought, driving almost 90 percent of global deforestation. The results are based on satellite data interpreted in close collaboration with FAO Members.

TROPICAL RAINFORESTS ARE UNDER HIGH PRESSURE DESPITE SLOWDOWN IN DEFORESTATION

Detected deforestation from 2000 to 2018



Sources: tree cover map by Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA, Global Ecological Zones FAO, detected deforestation FAO

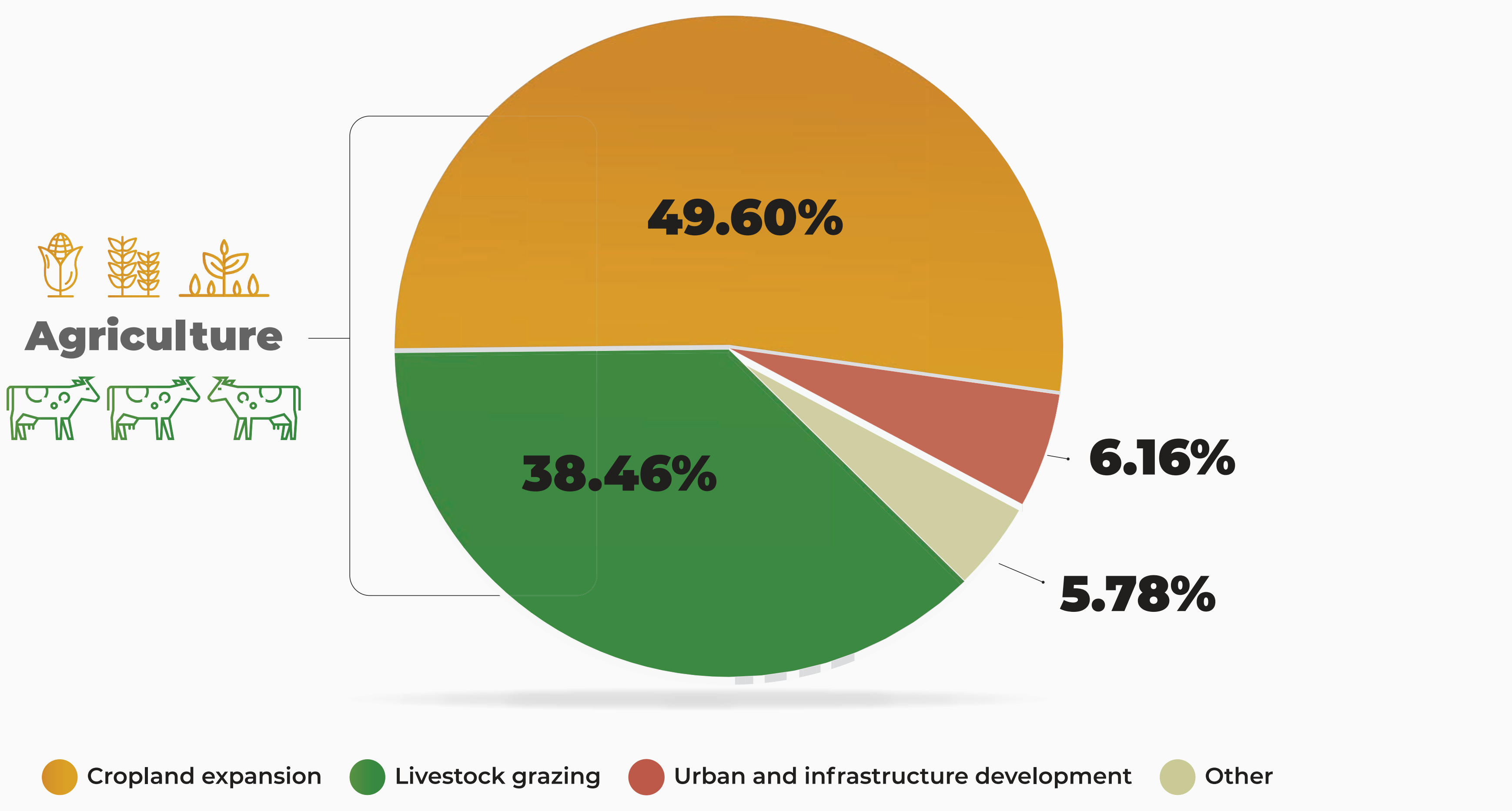
The study:

- found that in 2000-2018, the vast majority of deforestation took place in the tropical biomes;
- confirmed the slowdown in global deforestation reported by the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020;
- revealed that the slowdown occurs even in South America and South and Southeast Asia, albeit tropical rainforests in these regions still record the highest deforestation rates of all biomes.

ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF DEFORESTATION WORLDWIDE IS DUE TO AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION

Deforestation is the conversion of forest to other land uses, such as agriculture, mining areas, urban areas and infrastructure

Global causes of deforestation 2000-2018

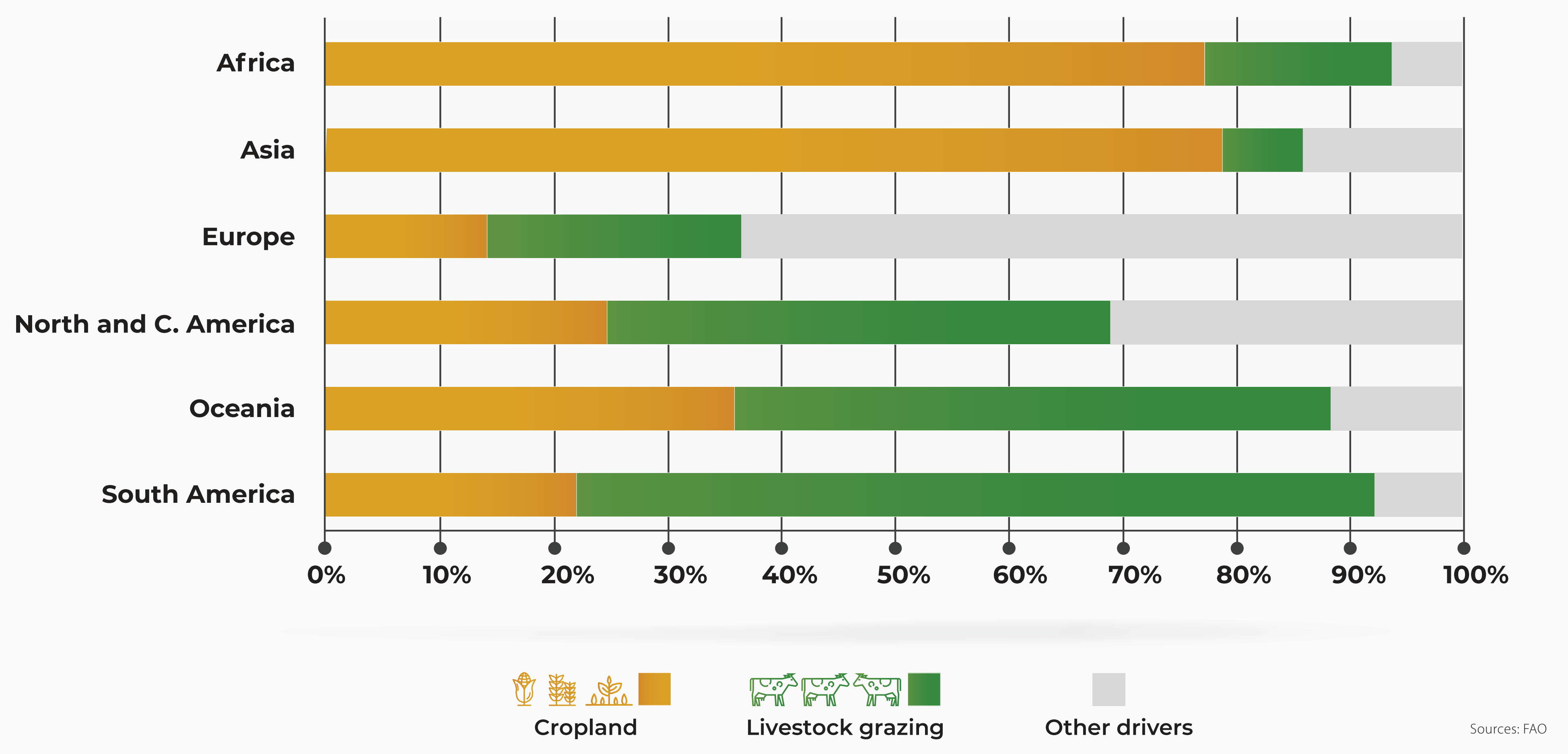


Sources: FAO

- conversion of forest to cropland or grassland for livestock grazing are the major causes of deforestation;
- worldwide, half of forest loss is due to conversion of forest into cropland;
- livestock grazing was responsible for about 40 percent of forest loss.

MAIN DEFORESTATION DRIVERS DIFFER ACROSS THE WORLD’S REGIONS

Regional differences in deforestation drivers - 2000-2018



Sources: FAO

- agriculture is the main driver of deforestation in all regions except for Europe, the combined impact of other drivers is higher;
- conversion to cropland dominates forest loss in Africa and Asia, with over 75 percent of the forest area lost converted to cropland;
- in South America almost three quarters of deforestation was due to livestock grazing.

RESULTS OBTAINED USING FREELY AVAILABLE DATA AND INNOVATIVE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

A participatory effort conducted in close collaboration with the countries to produce novel remote-sensing based information about land use change dynamics and their key drivers at **global, regional and biome levels**.

400 000
samples analyzed

using
Collect Earth Online

A network of more than
800

national experts from
126
countries

A methodology focused on land use changes and empowering capacities at national level

The Remote Sensing Survey was part of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020

For more information: www.fao.org/forest-resources-assessment/remote-sensing/fra-2020-remote-sensing-survey

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