

AstraZeneca's AZ Forest initiative: Pledging six million trees in Kenya

Within the framework of its prominent AZ Forest programme, AstraZeneca has committed to planting a potential six million trees in western Kenya. This latest endeavour, unveiled during Cop28, extends AstraZeneca's ongoing African reforestation efforts, which have recently been broadened to include initiatives in Ghana and Rwanda.



Source: Supplied.

AZ Forest Africa is part of AstraZeneca's broader commitment to plant and maintain more than 200 million trees across six continents by 2030, in recognition of the strong connection between human and planetary health.

The reforestation in Kenya will span six counties in the west of the country, adjacent to the Rift Valley, covering more than 3,500ha of land. The project will be among the first to use an advanced AI deep learning model to analyse drone footage and satellite imagery to monitor tree growth and health, while also quantifying levels of carbon sequestration.

Designed using a science-based approach and harnessing new technological innovations, the programme aims to promote long-term tree health, increase biodiversity of flora and fauna, and generate an economic boost for local communities.

The role nature-based solutions can play in addressing the climate-health crisis is a top agenda item at Cop28, with the climate summit placing a focus on the progress made since the Glasgow Declaration of Cop26 to end deforestation.

Scientific leadership in reforestation

New research has underlined the impact that reforestation and the protection of existing trees can have in tackling climate change, potentially sequestering up to 226 gigatonnes of carbon.

Juliette White, vice president of global sustainability at AstraZeneca, said: “The link between planetary and human health is clear. Investing in our natural world through tree planting and conservation, and limiting deforestation, are some of the most effective preventative health steps we can take.

“By expanding AZ Forest to Kenya, we are progressing our commitment to deliver reforestation at scale, with a science-led approach that benefits both the environment and local communities.”

AstraZeneca is working with world-leading experts to design and deliver its AZ Forest programme including with Earthbanc and the Green Planet Initiative 2050 Foundation (GPI2050) for its Kenya project.

Indigenous and productive tree species will improve soil health and local crop yields, while produce including leaves and honey will benefit the local agroecology.

More than 5,000 local farmers and local community members will be engaged in the project, which also aims to support a groundbreaking reforestation ambition from the Kenyan government.



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High-level endorsements

Her Excellency Rachel Ruto, First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, said: “Climate change affects us all and tackling it requires concerted action from governments, individuals, and business.

“We welcome AstraZeneca’s approach to reforestation: working with local communities to ensure economic benefits for people that match the positive impact on the planet. This initiative will contribute towards Kenya’s goal to plant 15 billion trees over the next decade.”

“ *Get to know more about reforestation and how we work with farmers to scale up [#naturebasedsolutions](#) [#carbon](#) and [#circular](#) [#bioeconomy](#) projects. Visit <https://t.co/yziHRTLvgJ> (3/3) [#climateimpact](#) [#treeplanting](#) [#onetrilliontrees](#) [#reforestation](#)— Earthbanc (@earthbanc) [June 20, 2023](#)* ”

Tom Duncan, chief executive officer of Earthbanc, said: “This land regeneration project in Kenya is a very exciting opportunity that we are pleased to support in collaboration with our partners.

“Earthbanc is committed to bringing private-sector climate finance to accelerate and scale reforestation to meet the challenge of climate change. The AZ Forest initiative brings significant co-benefits with its focus on circular bioeconomy, sustainable communities, ecosystem health and sustainable markets.

“We are looking forward to this project launch and demonstrating that we can all play a part in the global effort towards planetary regeneration.”

Aside from Kenya, AZ Forest’s global programme which aims to span 100,000 hectares worldwide continues apace. In

Ghana, almost three million trees have been planted this year taking the total to over four million since the project began in 2021.

The project has engaged 1,200 farmers across 23 communities. Meanwhile, in Rwanda, 6,000 farming-households are signed up to the project, with 16 community nurseries established to grow a range of indigenous and fruit-tree species.

Planting is set to start in the coming months with a target to plant around 5.8 million trees across 21,000 hectares, in what is one of the largest forest restoration initiatives in Rwanda.

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