

# The deforestation debate

Humans are the biggest threat to the world's rainforests. Large areas are cut down every minute to provide fuel, wood or paper, or cleared so that the land can be used for farming, mining or cattle ranching. Here are some of the arguments for and against deforestation (the cutting down of rainforest trees). Colour the statements 'for' deforestation in one colour and the statements 'against' in another. Which do you think is the most powerful argument for each side?

About a quarter of our medicines come from plants. But, there are many undiscovered species in the rainforest that might one day provide a cure for deadly diseases.

The logging industry provides work for millions of people and governments in poor countries depend on the money it creates.

Rainforests are destroyed by nature – flooding, hurricanes, and so on – so we're better off making use of their products than seeing them wasted.

Many of the areas that have been cleared have been replanted with new trees.

Deforestation is destroying the habitats of animals, many of which are becoming extinct. It is also destroying land belonging to the native human population.

Many people rely on rainforest wood for building, as well as meat and crops from farmed rainforest land.

With no trees to anchor it down, soil is eroded by heavy rain. Silt from the soil is washed into rivers, polluting them.

We get a lot of our food from the rainforest – for example bananas, coffee, rice, potatoes, nuts, oranges and figs.

Deforestation adds to the greenhouse effect, as rainforest trees help to control the climate. The machinery used also adds to carbon emissions.

Even if trees are replanted, they take years to grow back.