Forests are a key part of the global carbon cycle. The trees within them absorb carbon as they grow and emit it as they age or are cut down. Deforestation and forest degradation are the largest sources of CO2 emissions after the combined emissions from all cars, trucks, trains, planes and ships in the world.

If current trends continue over the next 15 years, 11 of the world’s most ecologically important forest landscapes will be lost.

We will not be able to close the emissions gap or address climate change if we do not include forests in the Paris agreement. Agricultural practices also must be included, as most of the world’s deforestation is caused by expanding agriculture.

Adequate and predictable finance for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries (REDD+) is needed in the agreement if we want to achieve the broader mitigation and sustainable development goals.

Money is needed for a variety of approaches, such as properly managing protected areas, increasing enforcement to prevent illegal logging and strengthening forest governance.

Funding for all forest conservation initiatives, including REDD+, must be allocated and used in a way that safeguards the rights of indigenous people and local communities to their land and way of life.

The public sector plays a leading role in reducing deforestation and degradation. But this sector cannot solve the issue alone, especially at the pace that is needed.

Companies in the private sector must also play a role by bringing their “deforestation-free” commitments – most of which are about improving the way they produce and source food and commodities – to life in a fair and effective manner.

Forest conservation strategies created and implemented by national governments via REDD+ can lay the foundation for the private sector to meet its commitments.