

Open 'DEAL' initiative of Africa

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In news

Under the Africa Open DEAL project, **Africa has become the first continent** in the world to complete the gathering of accurate, comprehensive, and harmonized digital land use and land use change data.

About Open DEAL project

- **DEAL stands for Data for the Environment, Agriculture and Land Initiative.**
- This initiative **is led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union Commission (AUC).**
- The initiative that **covered the period between 2018 and 2020**, disclosed more forests and arable lands than were previously detected.
- The survey covered **100 parameters** on each sampling point of about 0.5 hectares and **included tree counts, farmlands, wildfires and existing infrastructure.**
- The **data was analysed to highlight land use change over the past 20 years** and the potential for restoration at the national level for every country in the African continent.
- This initiative showed that science and innovation could provide real solutions and that collaboration and pooling experience led to the best results.

Collect Earth software for the survey

- **A free and open source software** called Collect Earth, **developed by FAO**, was used to collect data through Google Earth.

- It is part of the set of tools called Open Foris and was developed in 2017 **in collaboration with Google Earth, Bing Maps and Google Earth Engine.**

Key findings

- As per the open data, there are around seven billion trees outside forests in Africa, the continent-wide survey revealed.
- It also disclosed more arable lands in Africa than before.
- The initiative also revealed that 350 million hectares of cropland are cultivated in Africa.
- This is an increase by 25 per cent over the crop land in the continent. In 2018, 279 million hectares of crop land was cultivated in the continent.

Significance

The information received from the Africa Open Deal could help in the fight against hunger in the continent.