

## Criterion summary

### Criterion goals

Sustainable management Criterion 5 focuses on the protective functions of forests. Forests, by their very presence and operation, protect the natural resources within them, especially the soils and water which are the foundation of their functioning. Thus, the land protection of forests protects by definition the functions of the ecosystem. The protection level provided by forests is even clearer when they are used to protect human interests (protection of people, infrastructures, crops, etc.) against natural risks (avalanche, erosion, falling blocks, landslides, etc.). Criterion 5 focuses on all the protective functions provided by forests.

### Analysis

Some forests set protection as a priority management objective. This is true of forests with surface areas stated in Indicator **5.1**. Given the non-availability of all potentially relevant data, Table 5.1.a includes only forests governed by special protection status (protection forests, forests in nature or coastal areas covered by protection agencies, forests within the drinking water catchment or mountain restoration perimeters).

The 350,000 hectares of forests dedicated to protection are therefore estimated by default: for example, no surface area of non-State-owned forests within a drinking water catchment perimeter is counted despite falling directly under this Indicator. In addition, a certain number of forests have a protection management objective without having a special legal status, but no statistics are available on this topic. For example, some State-owned forests outside mountain land restoration perimeters also play a major protective role. Then, without it being a priority management objective, forests all help to protect ecosystem functions by their very nature (recycling of minerals, absorption of carbonic gas, protection of the water quality, carbon storage, etc.) and to protect against natural risks (soil erosion through runoff, leaching, desertification, etc.).

### Outlook

It could be interesting to acquire some information which could potentially feed new indicators: forest areas sensitive to fires and affected by the forest defenses against fire (raging or repeated fires which damage soils and ecosystems), forest areas with soils especially vulnerable to erosion, link between the forest canopy and the quality of water courses, etc.

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