

In a nutshell

What is the state of the natural asset base of Uzbekistan's economy and what can policy makers do to protect it?

- **Improve forest management, afforestation and monitoring systems to increase forest cover and sustainable tree stock growth.** Forests make up around 8% of total land area, an increase of more than 30% from 2014. Despite this progress, the coverage remains below the European and Central Asia (ECA) regional average of around 40% and world average of around 30%.
- **Modernise irrigation systems and scale-up water-saving practices to decrease water intensity in agriculture.** Uzbekistan is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world. The stress level has significantly increased in the last 20 years from 50% to almost 70%, seven times higher than the OECD average of 11%. The agriculture sector uses over 90% of the freshwater withdrawn.
- **Invest in sustainable agriculture and land conservation.** Land degradation due to inappropriate irrigation, poor pastureland and manure management is a major challenge in Uzbekistan. Land area is predominantly agricultural, making up 60% of total surface area. Land degradation is estimated to cost close to 5% of annual GDP due to loss of agriculture productivity, increased soil erosion, reduced water availability and loss of carbon sequestration and ecosystem services.
- **Expand protected national parks and wildlife sanctuaries to safeguard ecosystems and habitats for threatened species.** Uzbekistan increased its protected natural areas by more than 300% in the last ten years, now making up 8% of the total land area (the OECD average is 16%). However, over the same period, nearly 20 threatened animal and plant species were added to the national Red Book. The heightened risk is due to climate change (and resulting temperature increase), unchecked overgrazing, indiscriminate hunting and poaching.

Environmental challenges in Uzbekistan

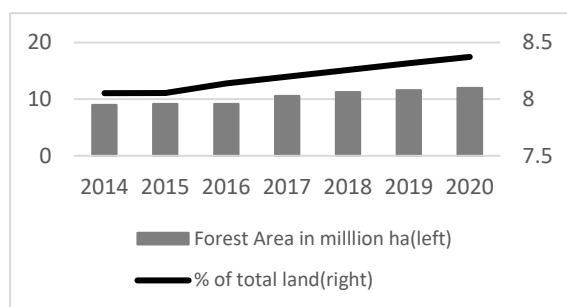
Water Stress: Uzbekistan faces severe water stress, with over 90% of freshwater used in agriculture. Efficient irrigation and water-saving technologies are crucial.

Land Degradation: Inappropriate irrigation, poor pastureland, and manure management contribute to land degradation, costing about 5% of GDP per year. Sustainable agriculture and conservation are essential.

Protected Areas: Uzbekistan expanded protected natural areas but still falls behind the OECD average. Threatened species and ecosystems face risks from climate change, overgrazing, hunting, and poaching.

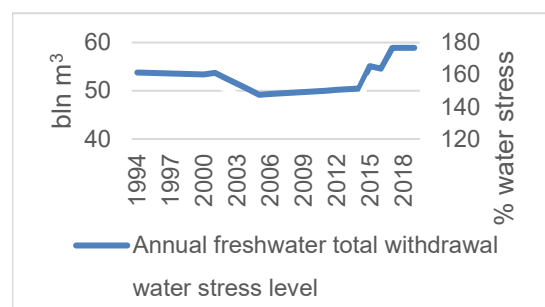
Addressing these challenges will require concerted efforts across all levels of government to increase uptake of sustainable practices, conservation and environmental awareness

Forest area



Source: Statistics Agency, 2023

Water stress



Source: Statistics Agency, 2023 and World Bank, 2023

Background & Acknowledgements

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) green growth indicators track progress in greening the economy. They have been applied for the first time in Uzbekistan in 2023 to assess the country's paths towards a green transition and help policymakers take informed decisions to accelerate it. The findings of the study are presented in the report [Greening the Economy in Uzbekistan: State of Play in 2023](#). This nutshell highlights selected findings and develops policy messages, focusing on one of four areas of green growth, namely the natural asset base dimension.

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Disclaimers

Data presented in this nutshell come from the report [Greening the Economy in Uzbekistan: State of Play in 2023](#). All sources are available and acknowledged in the report.

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