



Environment and Conservation

Short-answer questions: Costa Rica's forest payments | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Why might landowners cut down trees?
2. Should people be paid to protect forests?
3. What benefits do forests provide besides wood?
4. How can a country encourage conservation?

Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. How does Costa Rica's payment programme support forests?

Costa Rica's Forest Payments

Costa Rica is often mentioned in discussions about forest conservation. One reason is its Payment for Environmental Services programme, known as PES. The programme began in 1997 and is managed by the National Forestry Financing Fund, usually called FONAFIFO. It was created after a period when large areas of forest had been cleared for farming and cattle.

The idea is that forests provide services that are valuable to everyone, even when no one is cutting timber. Trees can store carbon, protect water sources, support biodiversity and preserve beautiful landscapes. Under the programme, landowners can receive payments for looking after forests that provide these environmental services. This gives forest protection a financial value.

This changed the way conservation was viewed. Instead of treating forest protection only as a cost, the programme recognised it as work that benefits society. A landowner who might otherwise clear land for farming could be encouraged to keep forest standing. In some cases, the payment can make conservation a realistic choice rather than a loss of income.

The programme supports different activities. Some payments are for protecting existing forest. Others can support reforestation, where trees are planted again on land that has been cleared. There are also projects connected to sustainable forest management, where forest resources are used carefully instead of being destroyed quickly.

Funding has come from different sources, including a fuel tax and agreements with organisations that benefit from clean water or carbon storage. This helps connect people who use environmental services with the land where those services begin. For example, a city that depends on clean water has an interest in protecting the forests around rivers and watersheds.

The programme is also linked to monitoring. Landowners do not simply receive money for saying they will protect forest. Projects need to be registered, and the land is checked so that payments are connected to real environmental work. This is important because conservation programmes can lose public trust if people think money is being paid without clear results.

Another reason the programme is studied internationally is that it connects the economy with nature. A forest may not produce an immediate profit if it is left standing, but it can still reduce erosion, protect wildlife and support tourism. PES tries to make these benefits more visible in financial decisions. This is especially important in rural areas, where families may have to choose between short-term income and long-term protection of land. If conservation brings some income, keeping trees can become a more realistic option.

Costa Rica's experience is not a simple miracle story. Forest recovery also depends on laws, tourism, farming choices and public attitudes. Some farmers may still earn more from other land uses, and payments must be managed fairly. However, the programme is a clear example of a country trying to give economic value to conservation and to reward people for protecting natural resources.

3. Strategy focus

Scan across the text

For a three-detail question, scan the whole article. Do not take all three answers from one sentence if the text gives better details elsewhere.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. What had large areas of forest been cleared for before the programme was created? [1]

2. Who manages the programme? [1]

3. What did the programme recognise forest protection as? [1]

4. What activity involves planting trees again on cleared land? [1]

5. What kind of areas may help provide clean water for a city? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three factors besides the payment programme that can affect forest recovery? [3]

5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Should landowners be paid to protect nature?

2. Summary: Summarise the programme in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write a slogan for a forest protection campaign.

4. Research: Find one conservation project in another country.

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4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. farming and cattle
2. the National Forestry Financing Fund / FONAFIFO
3. work that benefits society
4. reforestation
5. forests around rivers and watersheds
6. Any three from: laws; tourism; farming choices; public attitudes.

Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.