

# Saudi Gazette

## Saudi Arabia unveils road map for 10 billion tree target

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**RIYADH** — In a significant move towards achieving its ambitious environmental goals, Saudi Arabia announced a comprehensive road map on Monday to realize its commitment to plant 10 billion trees under the Saudi Green Initiative.

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Spearheaded by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman, chairman of the Higher Committee for the Saudi Green Initiative, this initiative aims not only to address environmental challenges but also to enhance the quality of life for citizens through long-term economic and social benefits.

The unveiling took place at the second annual MENA Climate Week, the first hosted in Saudi Arabia from Oct. 8 to 12, 2023, in Riyadh. The strategic road map outlines a plan for Saudi Arabia's habitat zones, emphasizing the need for maximum potential vegetation cover.

The plan also considers urban areas, highways, and greenbelts to ensure that trees are strategically planted, delivering essential ecosystem services to benefit the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly those in urban areas.

City centers are expected to experience improved air quality and reduced temperatures by at least 2.2°C, addressing prevalent environmental hazards like extreme heat and ambient air pollution.

The initiative anticipates a decrease in CO2 levels as a result of increased tree plantation and green spaces in cities.

As the implementation progresses, the initiative is set to create jobs nationwide, covering various aspects such as tree growing, seed collection, landscape preparation and maintenance, development of urban water reuse networks, creation of parks and protected areas, and pioneering sustainability innovations.

Saudi Arabia's tree planting target is recognized as one of the most ambitious globally, considering the challenging natural conditions faced by the Kingdom, with rainfall, arable land mass, and forest area below the global average.

Originally announced as rehabilitating 40 million hectares, the target has been revised to rehabilitating 74.8 million hectares of land.

Planting 10 billion trees contributes to 1% of the global greening target and 20% of the Middle East Green Initiative's afforestation target of planting 50 billion trees across the Middle East. Notably, the road map announcement follows the successful planting of 41 million trees in Saudi Arabia between 2017 and 2023.

The road map is the culmination of a two-year in-depth feasibility study conducted by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) and the National Center for Vegetation Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC), in collaboration with renowned global and local experts. The study aimed not only to make the 10 billion target achievable but also to incorporate sustainable irrigation methods and ensure that the selected trees and shrubs are well-suited to the Kingdom's native varieties and environmental conditions.

Implemented in two phases, the first phase (2024-2030) focuses on the environmental domain, employing a nature-based approach.

The second phase, starting from 2030 onwards, incorporates a comprehensive approach with increased human intervention.

With over 2,000 species of flora across various habitat zones, Saudi Arabia aims to plant over 600 million trees by 2030, rehabilitating 3.8 million hectares of land.

The initiative underscores the importance of restoring and protecting the Kingdom's rich biodiversity in achieving the 10 billion tree target.

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