

Cocoons for baby trees could help regrow forests in even the harshest climates

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Ecosystem degradation affects the well-being of 3.2 billion people and costs the world about 10 per cent of its annual gross product.

Rubber plantation in Kerala | Wikimedia commons

Ecosystem degradation is both a huge problem and a big opportunity.



It affects the well-being of 3.2 billion people and costs the world about 10% of its annual gross product, according to the United Nations. But natural regeneration of overexploited ecosystems, for example by planting trees and plants, could have a wide-reaching impact on both people and the planet.

At the 2014 United Nations Climate

Summit, nations committed to restore 150 million hectares of forest by this year and 350 million hectares by 2030. So far, progress has been slow, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. But many projects and initiatives across the globe are working to change that. And among them is Dutch start-up the Land Life Company.

Tree incubators

Globally, 2 billion hectares of land is degraded, according to Land Life Company co-founder and CEO Jurriaan Ruys – that's an area the size of the United States and China combined. "This is a result of fires, or intense deforestation and abandoned agricultural land," he says. Ruys wants to help restore these 2 billion hectares by establishing sustainable forests that, alongside helping to reverse the effects of climate change, provide a livelihood for local people. How? With a pod that cocoons young trees and helps them grow.

The 100% biodegradable tree incubators hold 25 litres of water to irrigate the plants in the critical first few months as they grow. The cocoon prevents evaporation and stops weeds stifling the trees' growth.

It also has a protective shield that stops animals and birds eating the young plants and shelters them from harsh heat and dry winds. The company selects tree species that are both hardy and suited to the locations where they are planted. Within six to 12 months, it says, the young trees are ready to thrive independently and push their roots down to sub-surface soil moisture to sustain them.

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