

THREE NEW WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIPS AWARDED BY THE UN DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION IN 2026

October 2026

In August 2026 the UN awarded three new World Restoration Flagships in Brazil, the Sahel region, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The initiatives are strengthening landscape productivity by restoring degraded ecosystems in regions facing drought, desertification, and climate change. The awards are made under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and presented during a high-level event at the 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17). By committing to restore almost 5 million hectares by 2030, the three flagships contribute to global efforts to restore a total of one billion hectares by 2030.

The World Restoration Flagship awards, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), spotlight some of the most ambitious and promising large-scale restoration efforts to halt land degradation and ensure healthier, more resilient agrifood systems.



The three new flagships recognised in 2026 comprise the following restoration initiatives:

Restoring Brazil's Cerrado Savannah.

Brazil's Cerrado is the world's most biodiverse tropical savannah. The Araticum Initiative Restoring Brazil's Cerrado Savannah brings together over 180 organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, farmers, researchers, and government institutions to support restoration projects across nine Brazilian states. This is done through natural regeneration, direct seeding, restoration, and agroforestry with native species. As of June 2026, over 27,000 hectares have been placed under restoration, while seeds from more than 150 native plant species have been collected and used in restoration activities. The initiative aims to bring 2 million hectares under restoration by 2030.



Saudi Arabia's restoration of arid landscapes.

Saudi Arabia's National Greening Program aims to transform degraded landscapes across rangelands, forests, deserts, urban areas, and coastal ecosystems, including mangroves. With a target of restoring 2.5 million hectares and planting 215 million trees by 2030, as well as generating up to 187,000 jobs and improving urban air quality, it contributes to the Kingdom's national goal of restoring 40 million hectares and planting 10 billion trees by 2100. Led by the National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification, by June 2026 the programme had brought 1 million hectares of degraded land under restoration and planted 159 million trees. Restoration activities include reforestation, natural regeneration, controlled grazing, reintroduction of native wildlife species, including Arabian oryx, gazelles and ibex, rainwater harvesting, and the use of treated wastewater to support restoration in water-scarce landscapes.



[Sahel Integrated Resilience Initiative.](#)

Across the Sahel, conflict, land degradation, drought, food insecurity, and climate change are placing mounting pressure on ecosystems and communities. The Sahel Integrated Resilience Initiative, implemented across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, is restoring degraded land while strengthening livelihoods and food systems. This includes support for cross-border refugees from war-torn Sudan. Led by the UN [World Food Programme](#), the Initiative had restored more than 335,000 hectares of degraded land by June 2026 and aims to restore 470,000 hectares by 2030. Combining land rehabilitation techniques, soil and water management, livelihood support, and school feeding programmes, [the initiative has benefitted more than 4 million people across the region.](#)

The three new [World Restoration Flagships](#) join a growing network of 27 restoration initiatives recognised under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The awarded initiatives showcase the best examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration in any country or region.

The World Restoration Flagship awards are part of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#) led by UNEP and FAO, which aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. Countries have already promised to restore [1 billion hectares](#) as part of their commitments to the [Paris agreement](#), the [Aichi targets](#) for biodiversity, the [Land Degradation Neutrality](#) targets, and the [Bonn Challenge](#). The World Restoration Flagships awards track notable initiatives that support these global commitments by 2030. World Restoration Flagships are chosen as the best examples of ongoing, large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration by a group of experts from the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration's network. Selection follows a process based on 15 criteria that embody the [10 Restoration Principles of the UN Decade](#).

To know more

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