

Biodiversity in the Context of Economy, Society, and Sustainability

Think of all the scenery you'll miss posting on Instagram, all the stories you won't get to upload, all the likes and comments. Think of everything that gives life its vitality. Now, think of the world without its biodiversity. The harmony by which Earth's creatures have evolved, has taken a name for its own, "Biodiversity". Defined, it is a measure of the relative diversity among organisms present in different ecosystems. From the eyes and perception of a human such as myself or yours the view of biodiversity may be clouded by our egocentrism. And why should you care about biodiversity? I mean beyond the typical science class and the occasional "#thoughts_and_prayers" for the Amazon. What if there is more to do? Perhaps we aren't as aware of the gravity and the multitude of the situation. Biodiversity holds in its folds social, economic and cultural implications on human life.

First and foremost, our societies and communities have grown to adapt around what biodiversity offered and has been molded by it. From things we see every day and take for granted: food, clothes, mannerisms and even basic traditions.

Biodiversity played a major role in sculpting our traditions and generations have adapted and understood the resources around. Our culture is in a dynamic entity that co-evolves with its surrounding environment and resources available. Things as major as timing are altered because humans want to make the best of what nature offers, case and point “daylight savings time”. European and north American countries apply (DST), while most African and Asian do not. This inevitably causes a change in culture and perception towards harvest seasons or even calendar seasons from one country to the other. The shift occurs because those countries are fundamentally different with regards to the biological diversity their ecosystems have to offer and how they accommodate their needs accordingly. On a much more anecdotal note, just imagine this, this communal effort and family bonding experience that goes into the harvest of olives in many villages in the Mediterranean mountains in Lebanon, Spain, Italy, Palestine. This harvesting-family bonding experience is being practiced in the same way and holding the same values and meaning in different Mediterranean villages that are miles away. If you observe closely, you’ll see the elders sharing experience and knowledge of how they coped with their Mediterranean environment and how their practices that they have developed for their own well-being and survival, has changed and evolved new adaptations due to climate change, immigration, shift in precipitation calendar.

Moreover, biodiversity does not take into consideration any borders between countries and any imbalance that occurs won’t require a visa to affect you in your country wherever it may be. Think as biodiversity as a fingerprint where it marks at all inspirational, spiritual, aesthetic and educational aspects.



The Mediterranean basin, being famous for its biodiversity richness where it only covers 0.7% of the world's ocean area, is one of the major reservoirs of marine and coastal biodiversity, with 28% of endemic species and 7.5% of the world's marine fauna and 18% of its marine flora. Without the conservation and sustainable use of the resources and without the adaptation of responsible agricultural systems, thousands of food varieties and medicinal plants would vanish and become extinct in a few years. Biodiversity has enabled the farming systems and agricultural sector to evolve and thrive. However, irresponsible agriculture has affected biodiversity and its richness at an alarming rate, putting the sustainability of the ecosystem on the edge. Biodiversity is essential for food security and human survival, so in order to keep on enjoying all the diversified flavors we must maintain and conserve all these varieties.

Ever since human's existence, we depended on what nature offered and as we grew into communities and economies. The exponential growth of humanity and its needs has not weathered biodiversity well. Entire species are disappearing and food chains altered. Ecosystems exist in a fragile connection and balance with animals, plants, and different organisms which depend on each other for survival. We can't afford losing more resources since with every resource we lose, a whole chain of production and economy will collapse making it less able to support life. So, if we can't conserve biodiversity and sustain what we have today, most job opportunities and industries will vanish leaving us with less money to survive with and with more poverty rate. Environment and biodiversity support millions of human lives throughout all the world: agriculture, eco-tourism, forestry, herbal medicines, fisheries and many more industries that might not be available for you in the future.



And one of the main reasons why we should encourage young generations to fight against depriving the ecosystem, is climate change and global warming. When we think of climate change, we always tend to prospect it in the far future, but we've already crossed the threshold. So, in order to mitigate this situation, we have to have diversified organisms that interact and adapt differently with each environmental change. Biodiversity is like a web made of interrelating chains, and the more specialized constituents we have, the web will be stronger and more resilient. Then conserving biodiversity and building a sustainable ecosystem allows better defense against temperature variation, drought, water scarcity, and deforestation.

Biodiversity is an essential part of our daily lives that supports our livelihoods, and the constituents and resources on which families, communities and future generations rely on. Moreover, biodiversity contributes to human well-being and health in terms of social, cultural identity, economic and environmental aspects. We should perceive things in a more personal way and think about the destiny that awaits in the future with all the economic and environmental challenges they have to overcome. But one of the most important battles we have to fight, is to preserve our rights in accessing resources present now. Conserving biodiversity leads to more sustainable livelihoods, and sustainability is security.

