

Japan's cultivated farmland area declined gradually from 6.09 million hectares in 1961 to 4.67 million hectares in 2006. In one-year period of 2006, 8,680 hectares were newly developed for farmland, whereas 29,000 hectares of farmland were converted to other uses. Among the reasons for conversion, the farmers abandoning cultivation was most common (about 39 percent), followed by conversion of land to factory sites or residential land (approximately 31 percent).

Forestry

Japan maintains some 25.1 million hectares of forest (about 70 percent of the nation's entire surface area). Natural forests account for 50 percent of this total, and planted forests, which consist mostly of conifers, for 40 percent. Meanwhile, Japan's growing stock of forest is 4.0 billion cubic meters, of which 2.3 billion cubic meters is planted forest. Forests which were planted after World War II are now finally ready for use. The functions that forests play in soil conservation and the prevention of global warming need to be exercised in a sustainable manner by smoothly following the cycle of cutting, planting and tending planted forests.

Table 5.5
Forest Land Area and Forest Resources (2002)

Item	Total	National forest	Non-national forest		
			Municipal	Private	Others
Forest land area (1,000 ha)	25,121	7,838	2,796	14,440	46
Forest growing stock (1 mil. m ³)	4,040	1,011	433	2,590	5
Planted forests					
Land area (1,000 ha)	10,361	2,411	1,232	6,705	12
Growing stock (1 mil. m ³)	2,338	368	255	1,712	3
Natural forests					
Land area (1,000 ha)	13,349	4,770	1,426	7,126	27
Growing stock (1 mil. m ³)	1,701	642	178	878	3

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.