

A diverse world

B Why is biodiversity important?

Without realising it, we benefit daily from biodiversity. It provides us with the basis for our food, clothes, housing and medicines and gives us pleasure.

Food

About 7,000 plant species have been used as food in the [course](#) of human history. From time to time, useful plants and animals are back-crossed with their original [relatives](#) so that they will [retain](#) or even [improve](#) their excellent qualities.

Clothes

We wear clothes made from plant [fibres](#) like cotton or [linen](#), pullovers made from wool, jackets and shoes made from leather, to name just a few examples. Do you know others?

Housing

Wood from many different kinds of trees is used for building houses and [furniture](#) as well as for heating. Wool and straw can be used to [insulate](#) walls.

Medicines

Plants are used for [medication](#) and to produce [drugs](#). Nine out of ten of the most [commonly](#) sold drugs are based on plant [raw](#) materials.

Pleasure

Biodiversity is also responsible for the beauty of nature. It makes our world colourful and [varied](#). Imagine the world without flowers, trees, grass, birds and butterflies. Without biodiversity there would be no pets like dogs, cats, [guinea pigs](#) or [budgies](#) and our world would look like the moon.

Ecosystems

The diversity of ecosystems has many functions like filtering air, cleaning water, creating [fertility](#) of the [soil](#), keeping [diseases](#) under control and [ensuring](#) that the earth's climate makes human life possible.

Species diversity helps keep the different ecosystems in balance. More species diversity in an ecosystem often makes it more productive and more stable.

Costs

It is [estimated](#) that the destruction of the planet's wildlife and habitats costs about 4.5 [billion](#) Swiss francs each year.

