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## UN agency calls for more integrated approach to fire prevention



27 July 2009 – The increasing threat posed by fires around the world means policy-makers must take a more integrated approach to preventing, monitoring and responding to such blazes, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said today. Government policies should balance not just fire prevention, but also early warning mechanisms, monitoring and assessment processes, fire preparedness activities, fire suppression and restoration programmes following fires, according to a press release issued by [FAO](#) in Rome.

Every year blazes known as bushfires or wildfires can affect as much as 350 million hectares of land worldwide, damaging property and livelihoods and also causing major loss of life.

They affect countries rich and poor, with more than 400,000 separate fires recorded in Ethiopia in the eight years to last year, and a series of bushfires in Australia in February killing 173 people and leaving 7,500 others homeless.

FAO said the risk keeps increasing, in part because many homes and settlements are being built in areas prone to fires. Illegal land clearing, arson and careless use of fire in agriculture also contribute to the problem.

The frequency and severity of fires also appears to be on the rise, the agency reported, noting that just recently major blazes have broken out in western Canada, Greece, Spain, southern France and the Italian island of Sardinia.

The agency stresses the need for such measures as cutting back bush and scrub located near human dwellings, the greater involvement of local communities in fire management projects and more use of data from satellites to track and monitor fires.

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