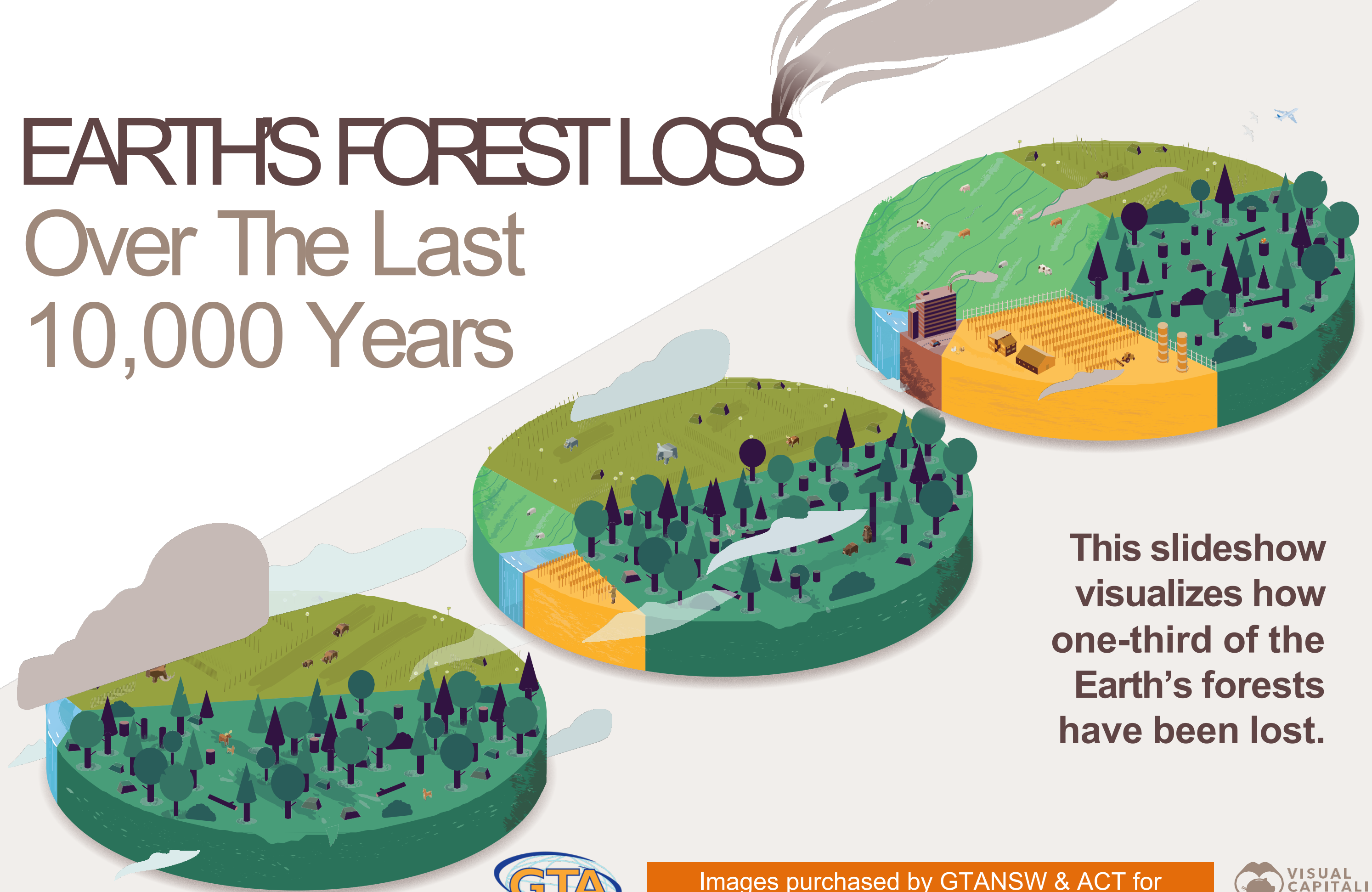


EARTH'S FOREST LOSS Over The Last 10,000 Years



**This slideshow
visualizes how
one-third of the
Earth's forests
have been lost.**

Earth's Surface by Type

Earth's surface by type in hectares

The vast majority of the Earth's surface is made up of uninhabitable ocean, glaciers, and barren land.

Ocean
71% | 36.1B

Glaciers
3% | 1.5B
The vast majority is concentrated in Antarctica.

Habitable
21% | 10.6B

Before looking at forest loss, it's important to consider the Earth's surface as a whole:

Barren
6% | 2.8B

Includes deserts, salt flats, exposed rocks, and dunes.

Let's look at how the planet's habitable land has evolved over the last 10,000 years.



*Figures add up to 101 due to rounding.
The Geography Teachers Association
of NSW & ACT Inc.



Source: Our World in Data

10,000
Years ago

Breakdown
of Habitable
land in hectares

10,000
years ago

Present

Grassland
42% | 4.6B
Wild grassland and shrubs.

Freshwater
1% | ~150M
Lakes and rivers.

Forest
57% | 6.0B
Includes tropical,
temperate, and
boreal forests.

5,000
Years ago

Breakdown
of Habitable
land in hectares



Grassland
44% | 4.8B



With only three major civilizations in **Egypt**, **Mesopotamia**, and the **Indus Valley**, most of the world's land remained unused.

Grazing

<1% | .01M

Freshwater

1% | ~150M

Urban

<1% | .004M

Crops

<1% | 1M



Forest
55% | 5.8B

The first major human civilizations were formed in river valleys suitable for early agriculture around 5000–8000 years ago.



1700

Breakdown of
Habitable land
in hectares

Grazing

6% | 668M

Grasses and wild
vegetation for
livestock grazing.

Freshwater

1% | ~150M

Urban

<1% | 41M

Crops

3% | 318M Includes human food,
cash crops, and animal feed.

10,000
years ago

Grassland

38% | 4.2B

1700

Present

The spread of civilizations and
repurposing of land for
agriculture becomes apparent
on a macro scale.

Forest

52% | 5.5B



1800

Breakdown of
Habitable land
in hectares

The rise of
industrialization
and mass
agriculture
begins.

10,000
years ago

Present
1800

Grassland
36% | 3.9B
Initially, most of the land
used for grazing and crops
came from grasslands.

Grazing

9% | 917M

Freshwater

1% | ~150M

Urban

<1% | 35M

Crops

4% | 424M

Forest

50% | 5.3B



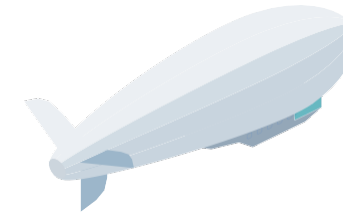
1900

Breakdown of
Habitable land
in hectares

10,000
years ago

Present
1900

Grassland
27% | 3.0B



As easily accessible grassland became
used up, forests (which have very
fertile soil) were also cleared to make
room for crops and livestock.

Grazing

16% | 1.7B



Freshwater

1% | ~150M

Urban

<1% | 70M

Despite an estimated population of
1.6 billion people in 1900, humanity's
urban footprint is still miniscule.

Crops

8% | 844M

Forest
48% | 5.1B



1950

Breakdown of
Habitable land
in hectares

Grazing

3% | 3.3B

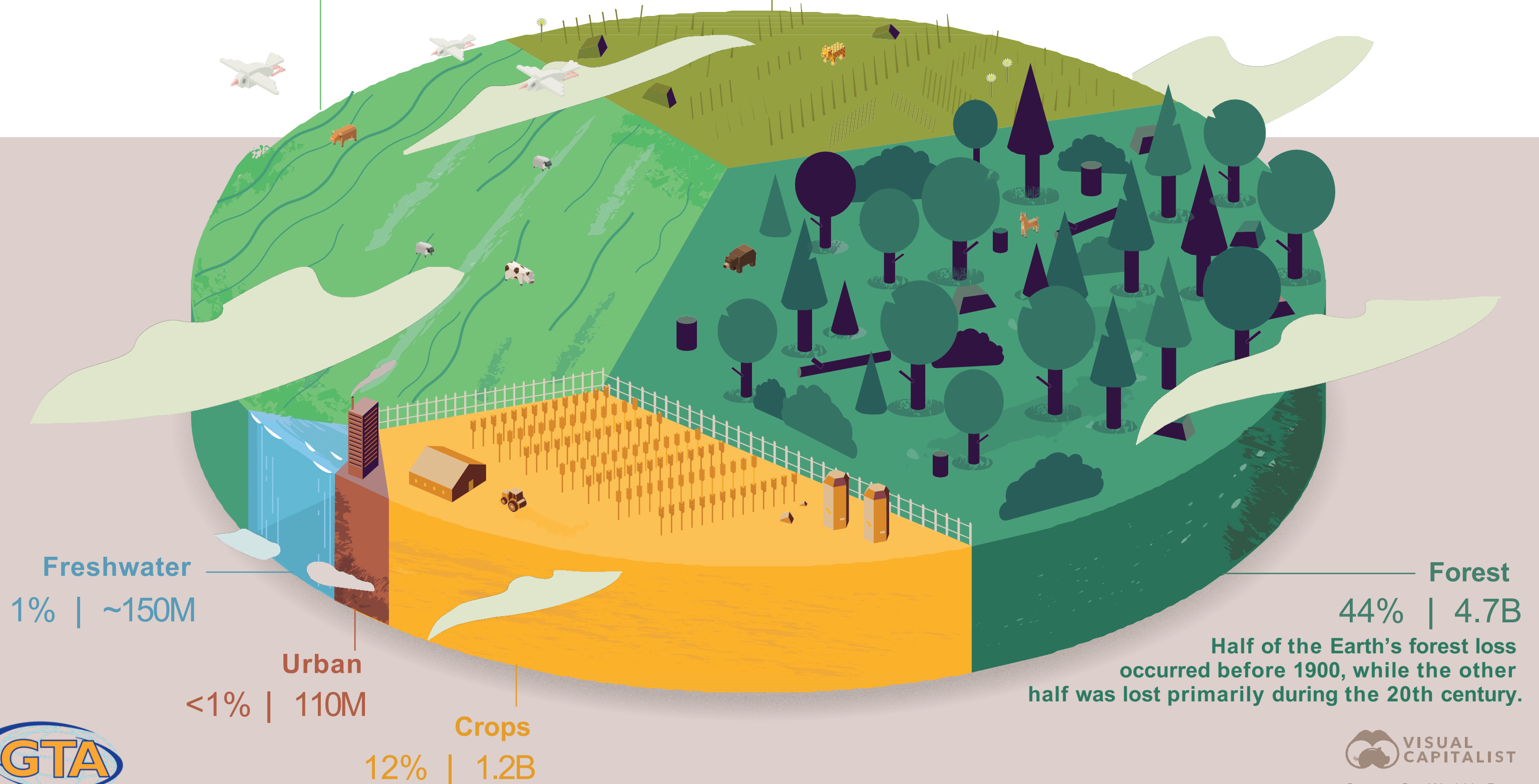
Almost 1 billion hectares of
grassland were lost from
1900–1950, mainly for grazing.

Grassland

12% | 1.4B

10,000
years ago

Present
1950



2018

Breakdown of
Habitable land
in hectares

10,000
years ago

Present
2018

Grassland
14% | 1.7B

Over time, used up
agriculture and forestry
land becomes grassland.

Grazing
31% | 3.2B

Freshwater
1% | ~150M

Urban
1% | 150M

Includes settlements
and infrastructure.

Crops
15% | 1.6B

Forest
38% | 4.0B

Since the last ice age,
one-third of the world's
forests have been lost.

