Supplementary Information for

A global map of root biomass across the world's forests

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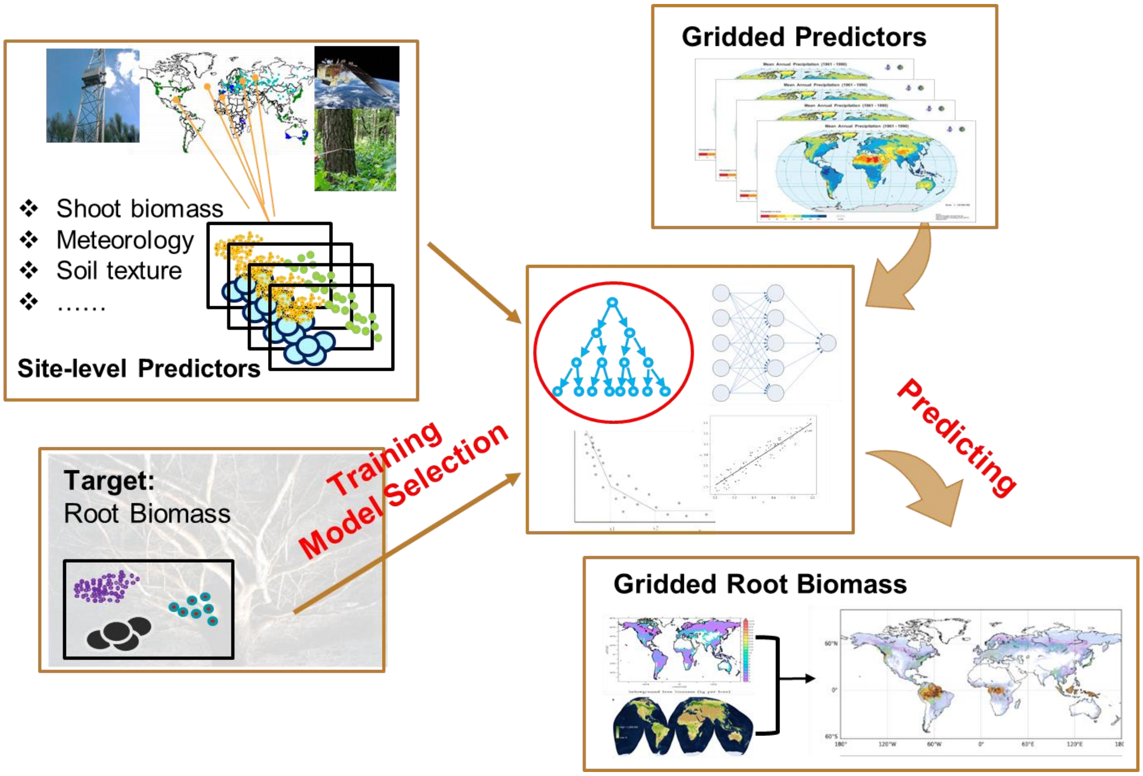
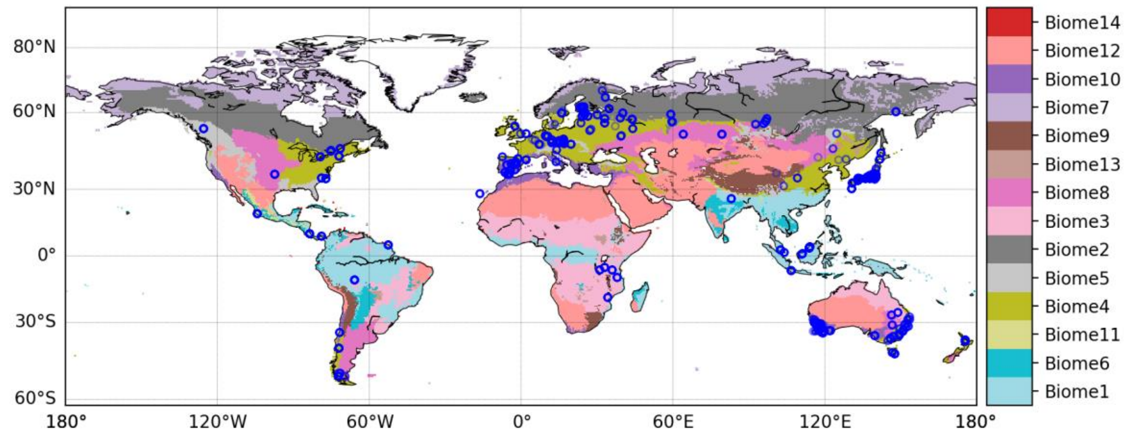
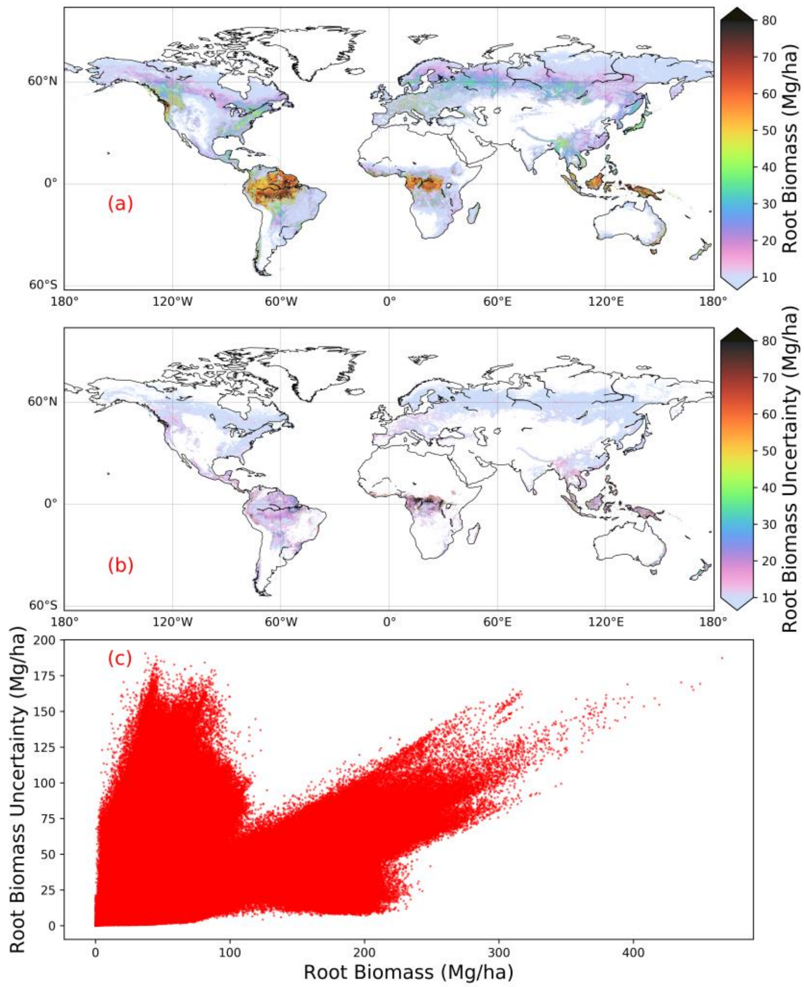
Supplementary Figures and Tables



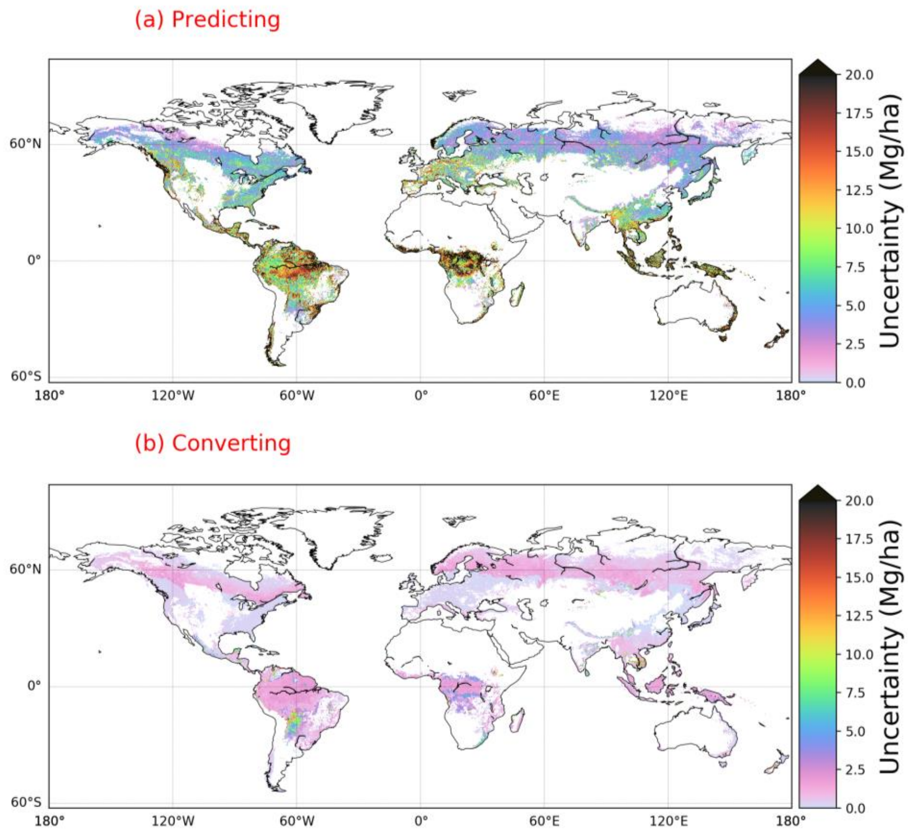
Supplementary Figure 1. Procedures of root biomass mapping at the 1-km resolution. Root biomass mapping is performed in 3 major steps. Step 1: compile field measurements and prepare global gridded predictors; Step 2: train the model with data from Step 1 and select the model with best performance; and Step 3, map root biomass with selected model from Step 2 and gridded predictors from Step 1. We split the data into 3 size categories and selected among 47 predictors through 4 modeling methods (the allometric equation, the random forest, the artificial neural networks and multiple adaptive regression splines). The final root biomass map with a unit of weight per area is created through combining the prediction results (in unit of weight per individual tree) with the tree density (number of trees per area).



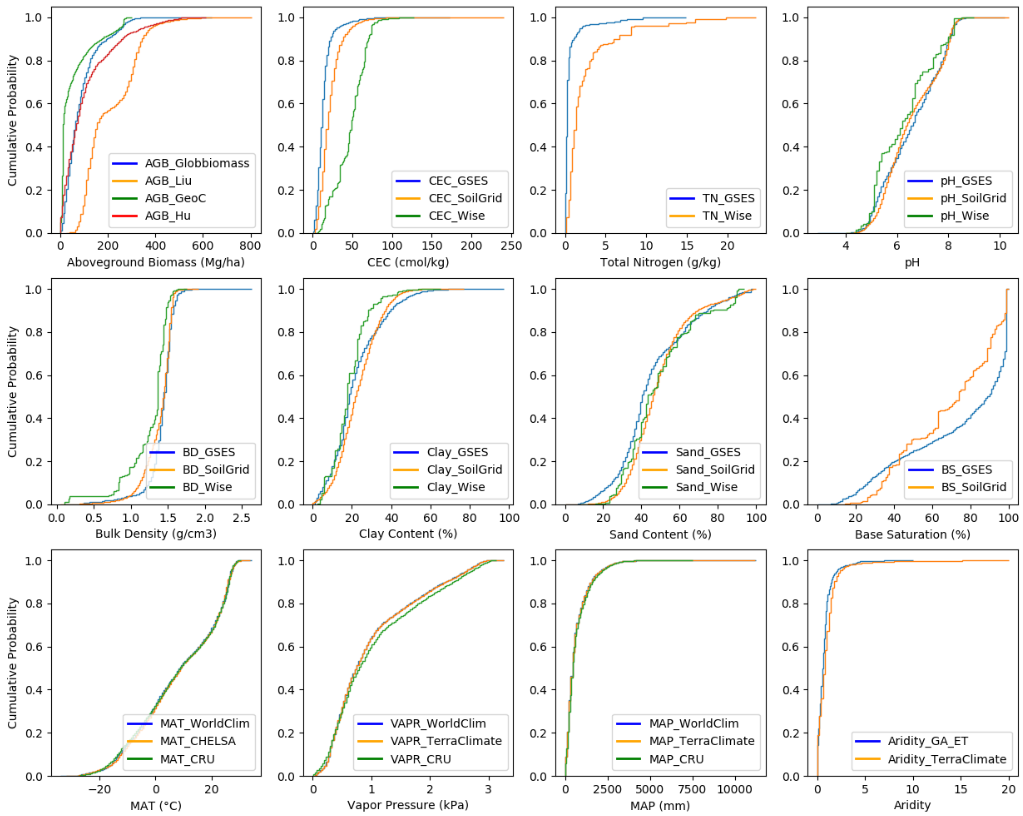
Supplementary Figure 2. Geographical distribution of observation sites (blue circles) and biome classes from The Nature Conservancy[1]. Numbers after Biome from the legend are ordered incrementally by decreasing forest area of each biome (Table 3). Biome 1: tropical moist forests; Biome 2:boreal and taiga forests; Biome 3: tropical and subtropical grasslands, savannas and shrublands; Biome 4: temperate broadleaf and mixed forests; Biome 5: temperate coniferous forests; Biome 6: tropical dry forests; Biome 7: tundra; Biome 8: temperate grasslands, savannas and shrublands; Biome 9: montane grasslands and shrublands; Biome 10: Mediterranean forests, woodlands and scrubs; Biome 11: tropical and subtropical coniferous forests; Biome 12: deserts and xeric shrubland; Biome 13: flooded grasslands, savannas; and Biome 14: mangroves.



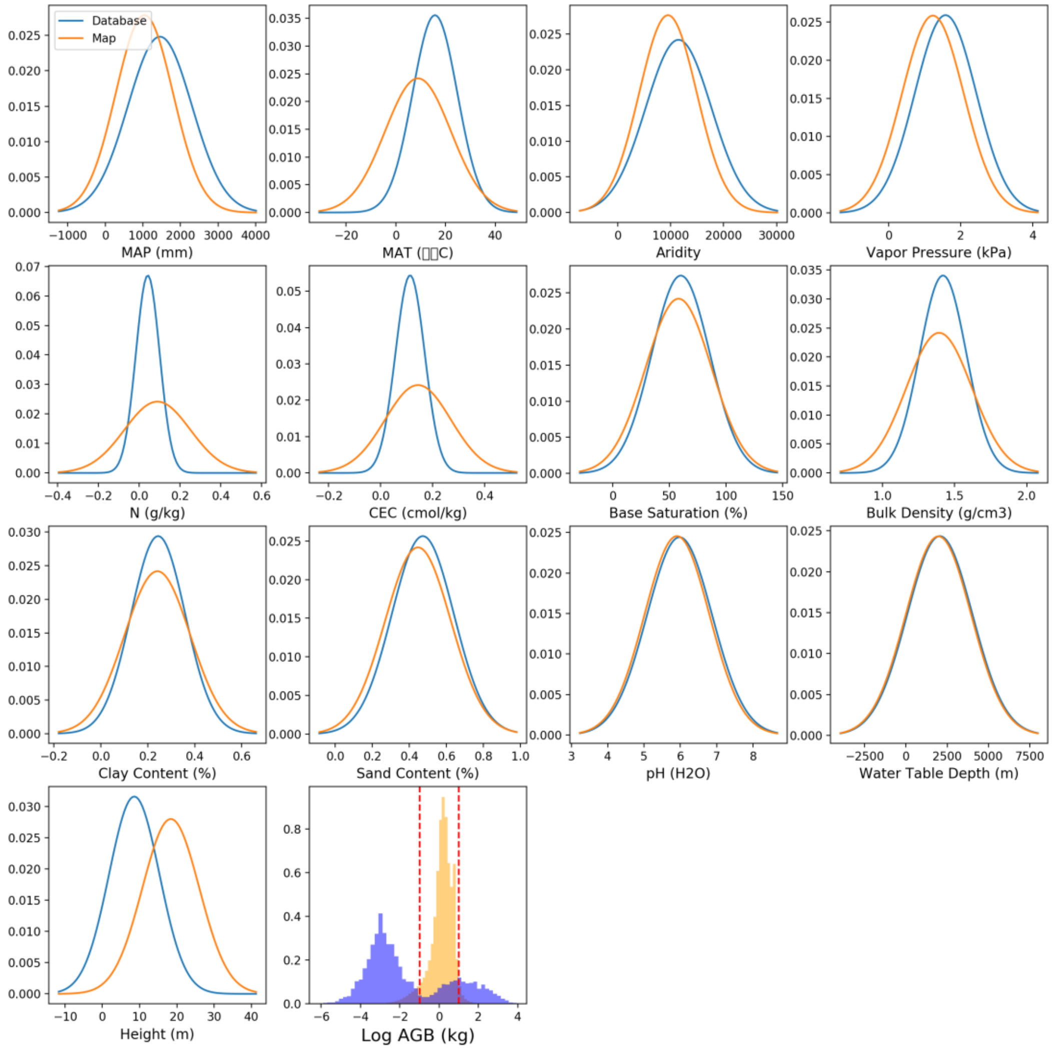
Supplementary Figure 3. Spatial distribution of (a) root biomass and (b) mapping uncertainty (standard deviation) at 1 km spatial resolution, and (c) the scatter plot of root biomass vs. mapping uncertainty.



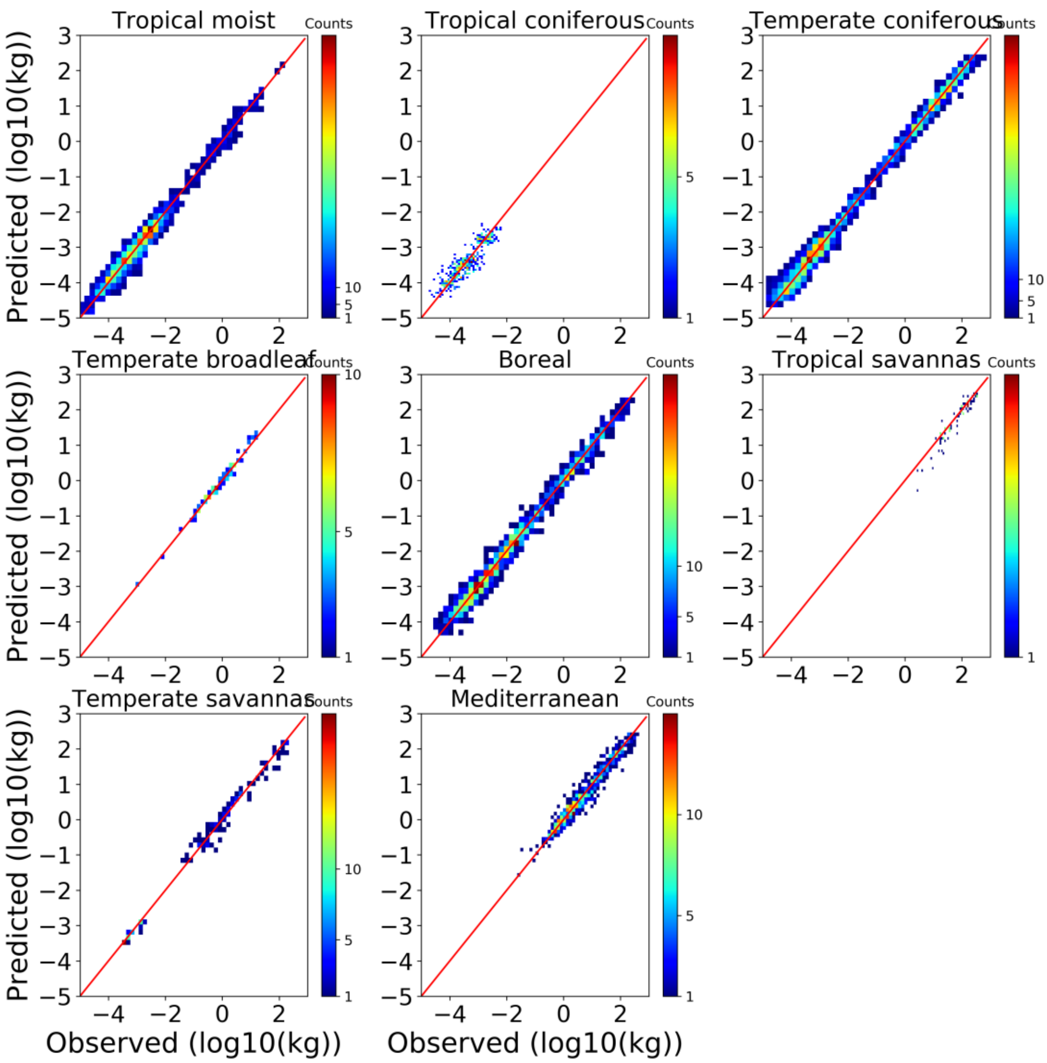
Supplementary Figure 4. Standard deviations in root biomass mapping due to (a) random forest prediction (a) and (b) unit converting.



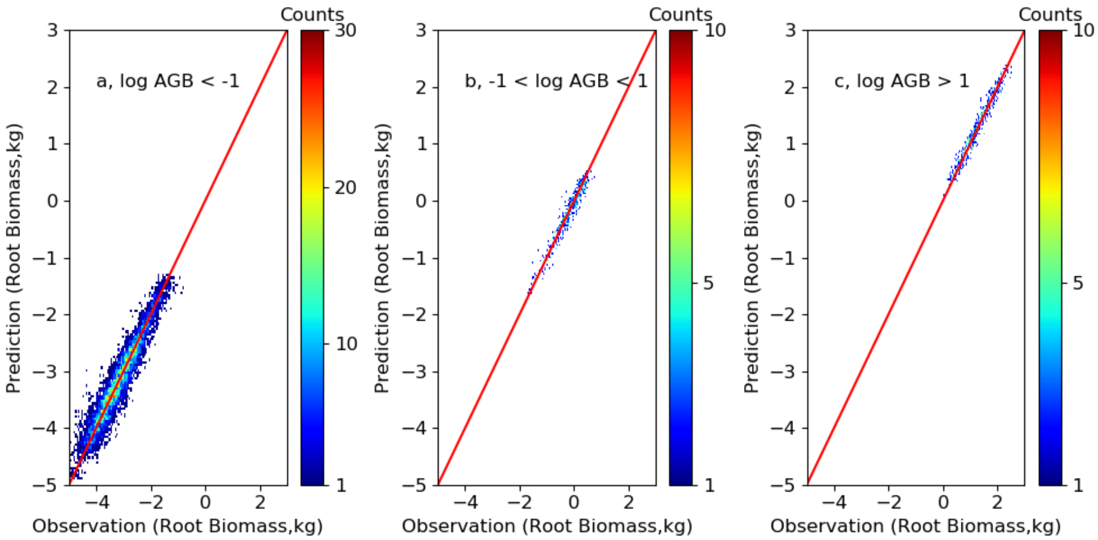
Supplementary Figure 5. Cumulative distributions of predictors. Each panel corresponds to one predictor used in quantifying the contribution of random forest prediction uncertainty in root biomass mapping (Supplementary Figure 4a). Different colors indicate different sources for each predictor. Detailed information of data sources is provided in Tables 1, 2.



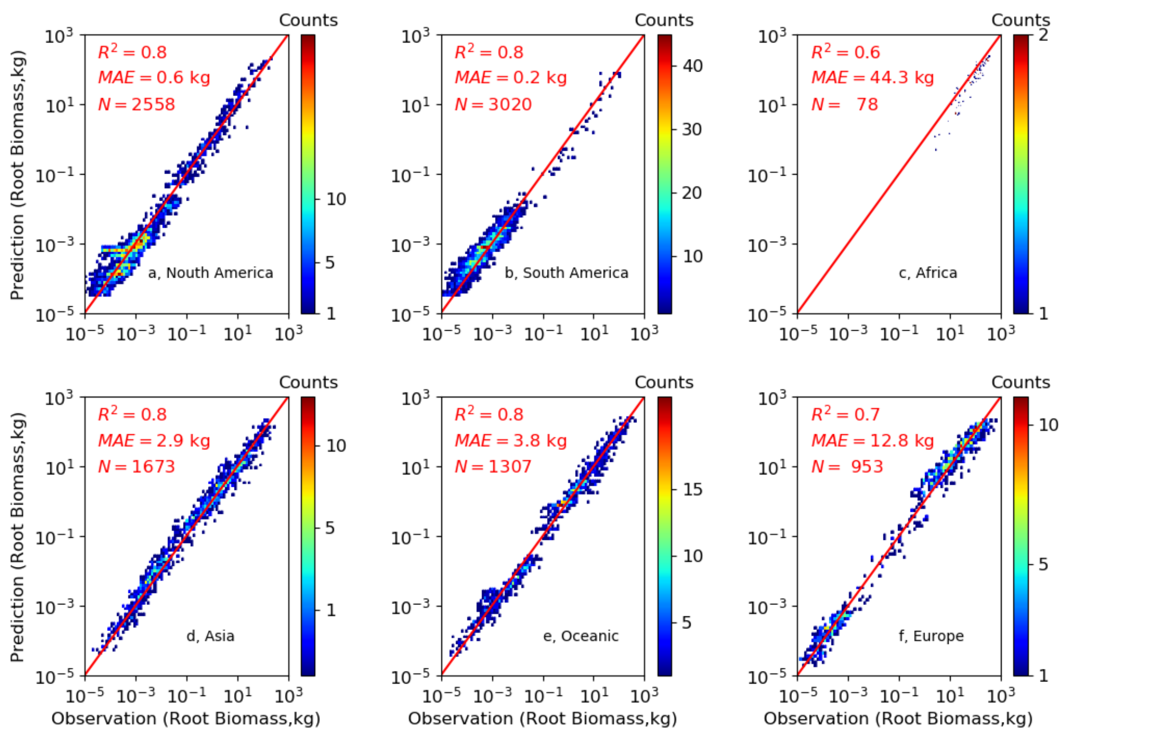
Supplementary Figure 6. Distributions of the predictors in the training dataset (blue) and in the global dataset (orange) used to derive the global map. Red dotted lines indicate breakpoints where we separated the datasets for random forest model training and prediction.



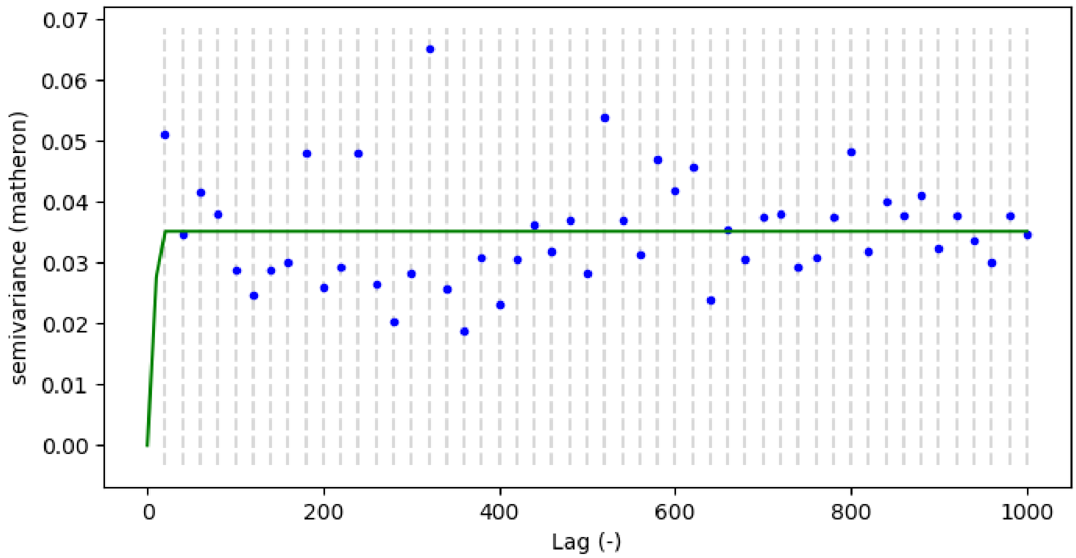
Supplementary Figure 7. Heat plots of predicted root biomass vs. observation at the biome level. Biome classification is from The Nature Conservancy[1] and is shown in Supplementary Figure 2. The red line is the 1:1 line.



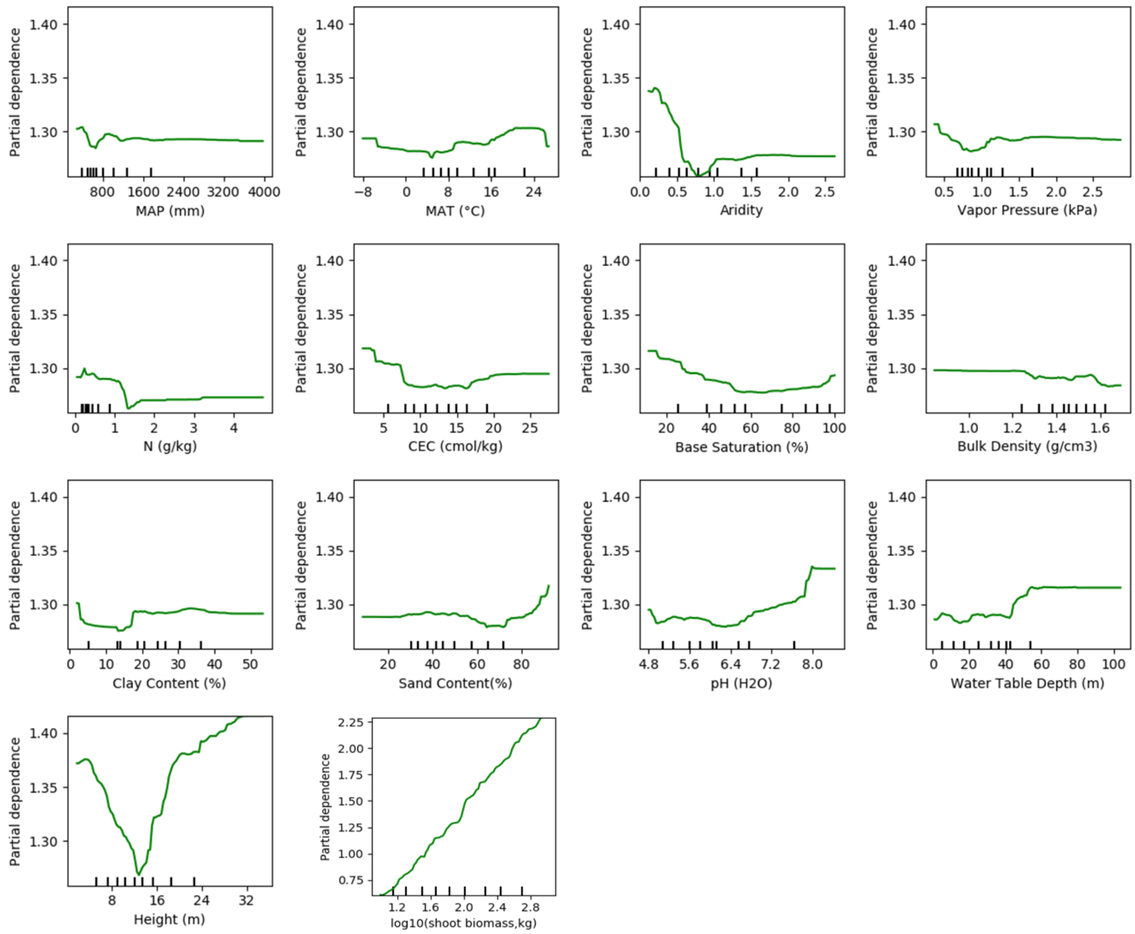
Supplementary Figure 8. Heat plots of predicted root biomass vs. observation at different tree sizes. Values are plotted at the log-scale (base 10). The red line is the 1:1 line.



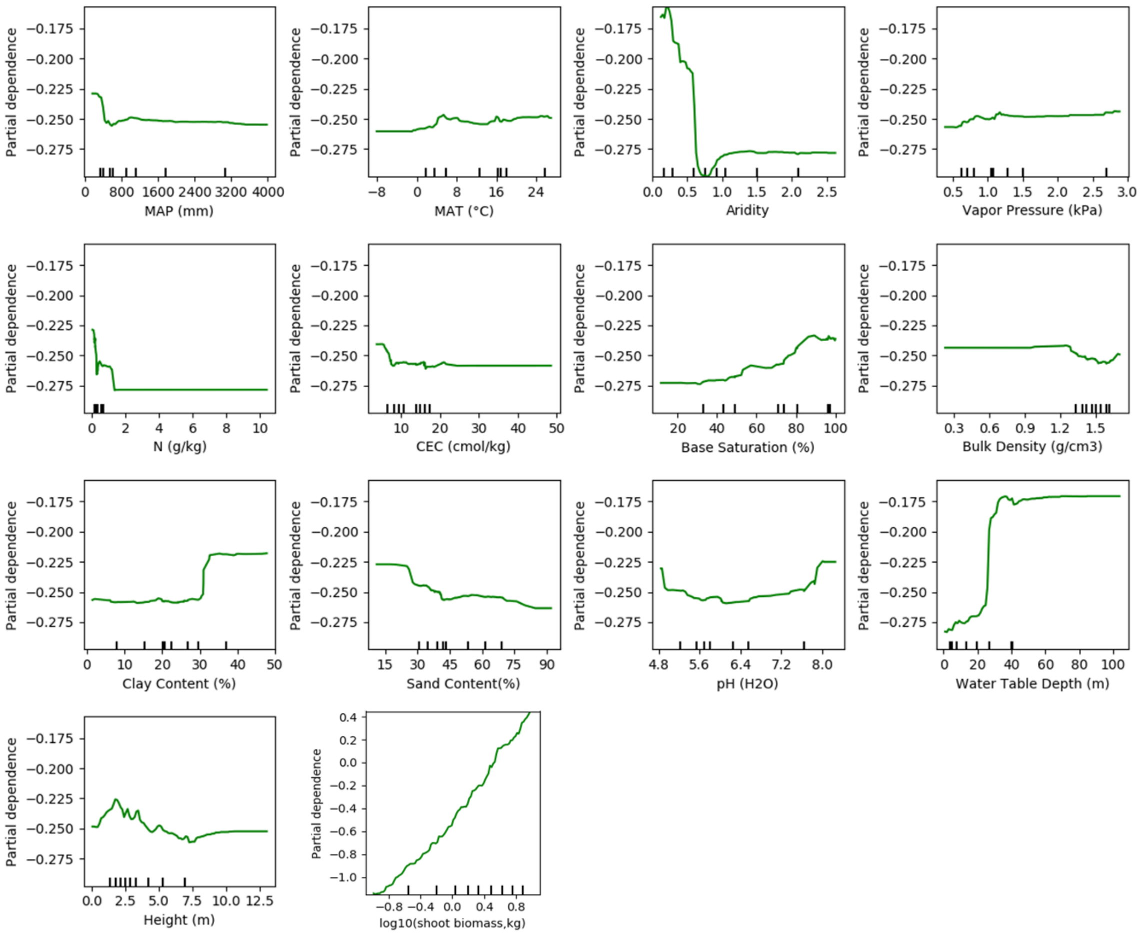
Supplementary Figure 9. Heat plots of predicted root biomass vs. observation at the continental level. Predictions at each continent are generated by random forest models. Random forest models were trained by samples excluding observations of the corresponding continent. The red line is the 1:1 line.



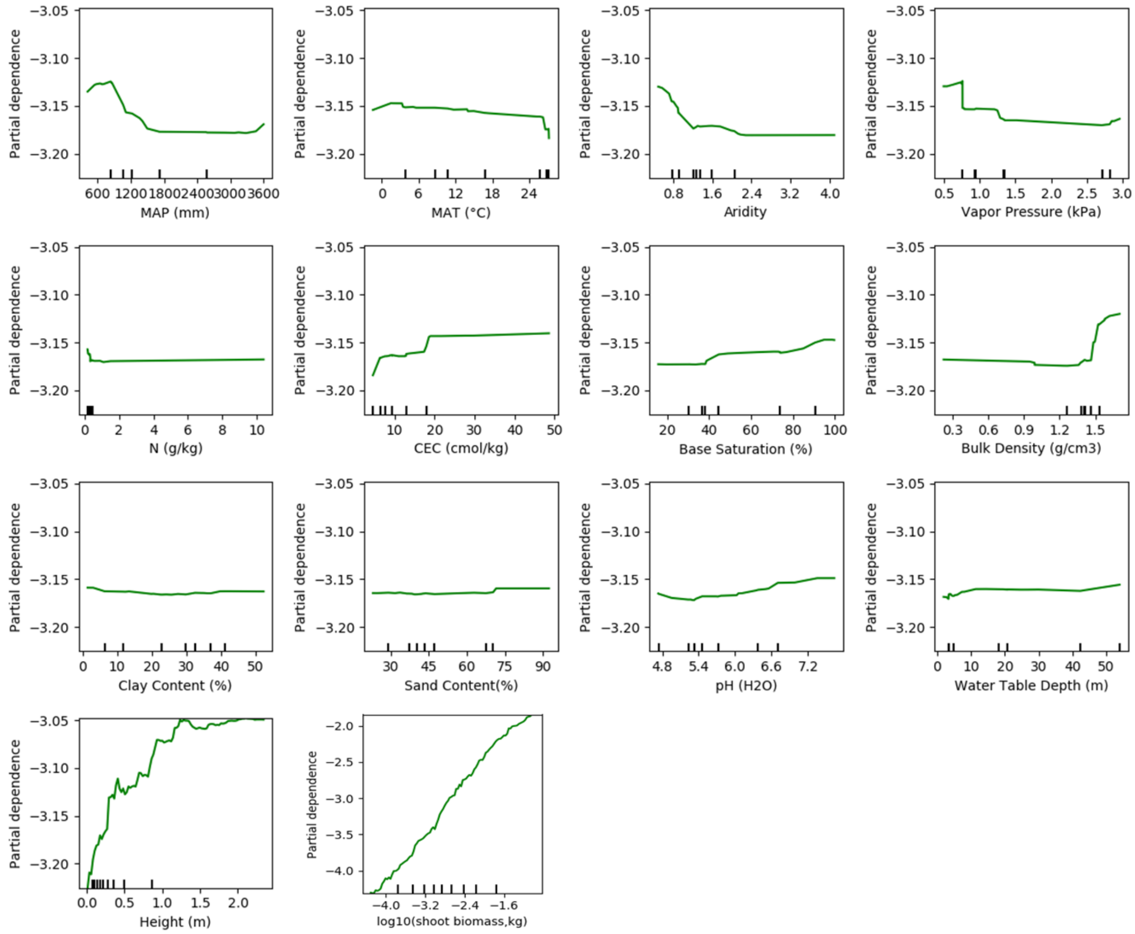
Supplementary Figure 10. Semivariogram of the random forest prediction errors.



Supplementary Figure 11. Partial dependence plots showing the dependence of root biomass on predictors for woody plant with shoot biomass > 10 kg. 10 kg is one threshold on which we split our datasets for the best model performance (see Methods). Note the y-axis of the last panel (shoot biomass) is different from other predictors.



Supplementary Figure 12. Partial dependence plot showing the dependence of root biomass on predictors for woody plant with shoot biomass between [0.1 10] kg. 0.1 and 10 kg are thresholds on which we split our datasets for the best model performance (see Methods). Note the y-axis of the last panel (shoot biomass) is different from other predictors.



Supplementary Figure 13. Partial dependence plot showing the dependence of root biomass on predictors for woody plant with shoot biomass smaller than 0.1 kg. 0.1 kg is one threshold on which we split our datasets for the best model performance (see Methods). Note the y-axis of the last panel (shoot biomass) is different from other predictors.

Supplementary Table 1. The source, unit, category, resolution, time coverage and reference of gridded global datasets used in building training model and predicting root biomass. BIO2-11 and BIO13-19 corresponds to Bioclimatic variables from WorldClim version 2. All datasets were accessed in February 2019.

Name	**Source**	**Unit**	**Type**	**Res**	**Time**	**Reference**
Age	Mixed	year	Biological	1km	Current	See Methods for details
Maximum Rooting Depth	GSES	m	Biological	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Biome	The nature conservancy		Biological	1km	Current	http://maps.tnc.org/gis_data.html
Height	Simard	m	Biological	1km	Current	https://webmap.ornl.gov/wcsdown/dataset.jsp?ds_id=10023
Aboveground biomass density	GlobBiomass	Mg/ha	Biological	1km	Current	http://globbiomass.org/wp-content/uploads/GB_Maps/Globbiomass_global_dataset.html
Tree density	Crowther	per ha	Biological	1km	Current	https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/yale_fes_data/1/
Rooting depth	Fan	m	Biological		Current	https://wci.earth2observe.eu/thredds/catalog/usc/root-depth/catalog.html
Bulk Density	GSES	g/cm^3	Soil	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Soil Organic Matter	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Soil pH	GSES		Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Soil Sand	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Soil Clay	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Total Nitrogen	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Total Phosphorus	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Bray Phosphorus	GSES	ppm	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Total Potassium	GSES	% of weight	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Exchangeable Aluminum	GSES	cmol/kg	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Cation Exchange Capacity	GSES	cmol/kg	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Base Saturation	GSES	%	Edaphic	1km	Current	http://globalchange.bnu.edu.cn/research/soilw
Soil Moisture	ESA CCI	m3/m3	Edaphic	0.25°	Average 1982-2005	https://www.esa-soilmoisture-cci.org/
Water Table Depth	Fan2013	m	Edaphic	1km	Current	https://glowasis.deltares.nl/thredds/catalog/opendap/opendap/Equilibrium_Water_Table/catalog.html
Mean Annual Precipitation	WorldClim V2.0	mm	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
Mean Annual Temperature	WorldClim V2.0	°C	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
Aridity	GA-ET		Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	https://figshare.com/articles/Global_Aridity_Index_and_Potential_Evapotranspiration_ET0_Climate_Database_v2/7504448/3
Potential Evapotranspiration	GA-ET	mm	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	https://figshare.com/articles/Global_Aridity_Index_and_Potential_Evapotranspiration_ET0_Climate_Database_v2/7504448/3
Solar Radiation	WorldClim V2.0	kJ/m2/day	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
Vapor	WorldClim	kPa	Climatic	1km	Average	http://www.worldclim.org

Pressure	V2.0				1970-2000	
Cumulative Water Deficit	WorldClim V2.0	mm	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	PET - MAP
Wind Speed	WorldClim V2.0	m/s	Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
BIO2-11	WorldClim V2.0		Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
BIO13-19	WorldClim V2.0		Climatic	1km	Average 1970-2000	http://www.worldclim.org
Elevation	SRTM30_PLUS v8	m	Topographical	1km	Average 1970-2000	https://eatlas.org.au/data/uuid/80301676-97fb-4bdf-b06c-e961e5c0cb0b

Supplementary Table 2. Alterative global datasets for quantifying root biomass prediction uncertainty. All datasets were accessed in June 2019.

Name	**Variables**	**Res**	**Time**	**Reference**
AGB_Hu	Shoot biomass	1km	Current	Hu, et al. [2]
AGB_Liu	Shoot biomass	0.25°	1993-2012	Liu, et al. [3]
AGB_GeoC	Shoot biomass	0.01	Current	GEOCARBON, https://www.bgc-jena.mpg.de/geodb/projects/Home.php
SoilGrid	CEC, Bulk density, Clay content, Sand content ,CEC,	1km	Current	Hengl, et al. [4]
WISE30	Total nitrogen, pH, Bulk density, clay, sand, Base saturation, CEC,	1km	Current	Batjes [5]
CHELSA	MAT	1km	Same as WorldClim	http://chelsa-climate.org/
TerraClimate	Aridity, MAP, Vapor pressure	4 km	Same as WorldClim	http://www.climatologylab.org/terraclimate.html
CRU_TS4.03	Vapor pressure, MAP, MAT, aridity	0.5°	Same as WorldClim	https://crudata.uea.ac.uk/cru/data/hrg/

Supplementary Table 3. Land area, land area occupied by woody plants (forest area), shoot biomass, root biomass and weighted *R:S* ratio (total shoot biomass/total root biomass) at the biome and global scales. The biome classification is from The Nature Conservancy[1]. Forest area covers land with canopy cover > 15%[6]. Numbers after ± are 95% confidence intervals (see Methods).

Biome number	**Name**	**Land area (10^6 km^2)**	**Forest area (10^6 km^2)**	**Shoot biomass (Pg)**	**Root biomass (Pg)**	**Weighted *R:S* Ratio**
1	Tropical moist	19.8	15.6	295	71.7±23	0.24±0.08
2	Boreal	16	11.2	77.5	19.5±6.5	0.25±0.08
3	Tropical savanna	19.5	6.7	52	13.7±3	0.26±0.06
4	Temperate broadleaf	12.9	5.8	66	16.6±4.6	0.25±0.07
5	Temperate coniferous	4.4	2.5	32.2	8.2±2.1	0.25±0.07
6	Tropical dry	3.8	1.4	13.7	3.8±4.2	0.28±0.31
7	Tundra	8.0	0.9	3.9	1.1±0.7	0.28±0.18
8	Temperate savanna	9.6	0.7	4.7	1.4±0.7	0.30±0.15
9	Montane	5.2	0.5	4.3	1.3±1.1	0.30±0.26
10	Mediterranean	3.3	0.5	4.8	1.5±0.7	0.31±0.15

11	Tropical coniferous	0.6	0.4	3.3	0.9±0.4	0.27±0.12
12	Desert	27.9	0.4	2.9	0.9±0.6	0.31±0.21
13	Flooded savanna	1.1	0.3	2	0.5±0.4	0.25±0.18
14	Mangroves	0.3	0.2	2.1	0.4±0.2	0.19±0.10
	Globe	132.4	47.3	566.2	141.6±25.1	0.25±0.04

Supplementary Table 4. Mean and median *R:S* from observations and predicted in this study. The mean *R:S* is the arithmetic average of individual R:S across site level observations (Obs) or gridcells (Gridded). The median is the 50th percentile across observations (Obs) or gridcells (Girdded). Note the mean and median *R:S* are different from the weighted *R:S* from the last column of Table 3 which shows the ratio between total root biomass and shoot biomass. The weighted *R:S* is weighted by biomass while the mean and median are not weighted by biomass.

Biome number	**Name**	**Mean (Obs)**	**Median (Obs)**	**Mean (Gridded)**	**Median (Gridded)**
1	Tropical moist	0.37	0.32	0.26	0.24
2	Boreal	0.45	0.32	0.27	0.26
3	Tropical savanna	0.44	0.36	0.29	0.27
4	Temperate broadleaf	0.58	0.38	0.28	0.26
5	Temperate coniferous	0.29	0.25	0.29	0.26
6	Tropical dry			0.33	0.30
7	Tundra			0.34	0.29
8	Temperate savanna	0.74	0.45	0.36	0.33
9	Montane	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.35
10	Mediterranean	0.43	0.35	0.39	0.35
11	Tropical coniferous	0.67	0.55	0.35	0.31
12	Desert			0.40	0.35
13	Flooded savanna			0.33	0.32
14	Mangroves	0.47	0.40	0.26	0.25
	Globe	0.50	0.36	0.29	0.26

Comparison with published results

There are few studies quantifying large scale vegetation root biomass. We searched through the literature and compared our study with earlier studies[7-10]. We grouped here forests into mega-biomes of tropical, temperate and boreal systems to enable a comparison between different studies that used different forest biome definitions and areas (see Table 5). The three mega-biomes together hold ~68% of the global total root biomass[7] (forest and non-forest together), and are also commonly reported and therefore convenient to compare across studies. It is unclear whether forest in tropical/subtropical grasslands, savannas and shrublands (Biome 3, Supplementary Figure 2) should be treated as a tropical forest across studies. Similarly, it is unclear whether forest in temperate grasslands/savannas and shrublands (Biome 8) should be treated as a temperate forest, and forest in tundra (Biome 7) as a boreal forest. We therefore conducted two series of comparisons with and without the above-mentioned ambiguous forest classes. In series 1 (S1), Biomes 1, 6, 11 and 3 (Biome distribution is displayed in Supplementary Figure 2) are aggregated to represent tropical systems; Biomes 3, 5, 8 are grouped into temperate forest; and Biomes 6 and 7 are grouped into boreal forest. In series 2 (S2), we grouped Biomes 1,2,3 into tropical forest, Biomes 4 and 5 into temperate forest and Biomes 6 as boreal forest. Together, root biomass from tropical, temperate and boreal forests is 44-183% higher in earlier studies than in S1 and 65-226% higher than in S2 (Table 5).

This over-estimation from earlier studies is largely explained by an over-estimation of shoot biomass by earlier studies. To demonstrate this, we compiled additional studies (Table 6) that reported shoot biomass at the global, tropical, temperate and boreal forests.

The global forest root biomass ranges between 154 – 210 Pg if root biomass was upscaled through different allometric equations collected from literature (Table 7). A prediction of root biomass after fitting our site-level data with an allometric equation (fitted equation: $R = 0.289S^{0.974}$, $R^2 = 0.79$, Table 7) yielded a global forest root biomass of 155 Pg (tree-level-upscaling) or 172 Pg (stand-level-upscaling), which is larger than 147 Pg from the RF up-scaling model. For stand-level-upscaling, we followed the practice in literature[11,12] and assumed an allometric equation is equally applicable to stand level data (weight per area) despite being derived from individual-level data. Root biomass density (weight per area) was directly estimated from GlobBiomass-AGB[13] shoot biomass density through the allometric equations. In tree-level upscaling, similarly to the RF upscaling procedure, GlobBiomass-AGB[13] shoot biomass density was firstly downscaled to individual tree level through tree density[14]. Allometric equations were applied to estimate tree level root biomass (weight per plant), which is then transferred into per area level through the same tree density. Whether it is upscaled from the individual-tree-level or the stand-level is unlikely to explain the overestimation as there is no systematic difference between these two approaches (Table 7).

Supplementary Table 5. Comparison between studies quantifying root biomass in tropical, temperate and boreal forests. This table expands upon Table 1 in the main text with shoot biomass, land area, biomass density and *R:S*.

		This study[S1]	This study[S2]	Jackson1997[7]	Saugier2001[15]	Robinson2007[10]
Method		Machine learning	Machine learning	Biome average root biomass density, area	Biome average *R:S* ratio, shoot biomass density, area	Biome average *R:S* ratio, shoot biomass density, area
Root biomass	Tropical (Tr, Pg)	92	76	114	147	246
	Temperate (Te, Pg)	26	25	51	59	98
	Boreal (Bo, Pg)	21	20	35	30	50
	Tr + Te + Bo (Pg)	139	121	200	236	394
	RD_{S1}*	0%		44%	70%	183%
	RD_{S2}&		0%	65%	95%	226%
Shoot biomass (Pg)	Tropical	364	312		532	532
	Temperate	102.9	98.2		218.4	218.4
	Boreal	81.4	77.5		83.6	83.6
Forest area (10^6 km^2)	Tropical	24.1	17.4	24.5	17.5	17.5
	Temperate	9	8.3	12	10.4	10.4
	Boreal	12.1	11.2	12	13.7	11.2
Root density (kg/m2)	Tropical	3.8	4.4	4.6	8.4	14.0
	Temperate	2.9	3.0	4.2	5.7	9.4
	Boreal	1.7	1.8	2.9	2.2	4.5
Shoot density (kg/m2)	Tropical	15.1	17.9		30.4	30.4
	Temperate	11.4	11.8		21	21
	Boreal	6.73	6.9		6.1	7.5
Average *R:S*	Tropical	0.25	0.24		0.28	0.46
	Temperate	0.25	0.25		0.26	0.45
	Boreal	0.26	0.26		0.37	0.6

S1. Tropical moist forest (Biome 1), tropical dry forest (Biome 6), tropical/subtropical coniferous forest (Biome 11) and forest in tropical/subtropical grasslands/savannas and shrublands (Biome 3) are aggregated to represent tropical systems (Tr). Temperate broadleaf/mixed forest (Biome 4), temperate coniferous forest (Biome 5) and forest in temperate grasslands/savannas and shrublands (Biome 8) are merged together as temperate systems (Te). Boreal forest (Biome 2) and woody plants in tundra region (Biome 7) are aggregated as boreal forest (Bo). Biome classification is from The Nature Conservancy[1] and is shown in Supplementary Figure 2.

S2. Tropical systems (Tr): Biomes 1,6,11; Temperate systems (Te) : Biomes 4,5; Boreal systems (Bo) : Biome 2.

* RD_{S1}, the relative difference of Tr + Te + Bo between this study (S1) and previous quantifications. RD_{S1} = (previous study – this study)/this study x 100%. For example, in the column with the head Jackson, RD_{S1} = (200-139)/139*100% = 44%.

& RD_{S2}, the same as RD_{S1}, but with the S2 definition of tropical, temperate and boreal systems.

Supplementary Table 6. Comparison between shoot biomass used in this study[13] and other estimates for tropical, temperate, boreal forests and the globe.

		This study[S1]	This study[S2]	Pan2011[16,17]	Saatchi[11]	Liu2015[3]	Bacchini2017[18]	Hu2016[2]
Method		GlobBiomass-AGB	GlobBiomass-AGB	Inventory	Satellite	Satellite VOD	Satellite	Satellite LiDAR
Time		Current	Current	Current	~2000	~2000	~2007/8	Current
Shoot biomass (Pg)	Tropical	364	312	410	346-424	360-416	318	
	Temperate	102.9	98.2	88		74-132		
	Boreal	81.4	77.5	72.4		48-78		
	Globe	566	566					533

S1. Tropical moist forest (Biome 1), tropical dry forest (Biome 6), tropical/subtropical coniferous forest (Biome 11) and forest in tropical/subtropical grasslands/savannas and shrublands (Biome 3) are aggregated to represent tropical systems (Tr). Temperate broadleaf/mixed forest (Biome 4), temperate coniferous forest (Biome 5) and forest in temperate grasslands/savannas and shrublands (Biome 8) are merged together as temperate systems (Te). Boreal forest (Biome 2) and woody plants in tundra region (Biome 7) are aggregated as boreal forest (Bo). Biome classification is from The Nature Conservancy[1] and is shown in Supplementary Figure 2.

S2. Tropical systems (Tr): Biomes 1,6,11; Temperate systems (Te) : Biomes 4,5; Boreal systems (Bo) : Biome 2.

Supplementary Table 7. Global forest root biomass estimated from allometric equations.

	Fit	**Jiang[19]**	**Niklas[20]**	**Robinson[9]**	**Cairns[21]**
α	0.289	0.332	0.372	0.384	0.338
β	0.974	0.920	0.924	0.954	0.926
Global Total[t] (Pg)	155	165	186	199	167
Global Total[s] (Pg)	172	154	176	210	161

Fit: Observed root (*R*) and shoot (*S*) biomass were fitted into an allometric equation, $R = \alpha S^{\beta}$ where α and β are allometric coefficients.

Jiang, Niklas and Robinson: coefficients of the allometric equation were taken from corresponding literature.

[t]: tree-based estimation. GlobBiomass-AGB shoot biomass was firstly transferred to individual tree level through tree density. Tree level root biomass was estimated from the allometric equation and the derived tree level shoot biomass. Tree level root biomass was then transferred into per area level through tree density. This approach takes the similar procedure as the machine learning approach.

[s]: stand-based estimation. Per area root biomass was directly estimated from GlobBiomass-AGB shoot biomass through the allometric equation. This approach mimics practice in literature[11,12].

Preliminary estimation of fine root biomass

Broadly speaking, leaf and fine root biomass are highly linked[22]. Ref[22] derived an relationship between annual leaf biomass production and annual root biomass production (Table 1 of Ref[22]). Assuming an annual turnover of leaves and fine roots, we approximate fine root biomass through above mentioned relationship and leaf biomass. Leaf biomass is estimated through the remote sensed leaf area index (LAI)[23,24] and the observation-based leaf mass per area (or the inverse of specific leaf area)[25]. We apply two LAI datasets, the GIMMS3g[24] and the GlobMAP[23]. We estimate the total global fine root biomass in forest (with 15% canopy cover threshold as in the main text) to be 6.7 Pg (GIMMS3g) or 7.7 Pg (GlobMAP). We acknowledge leaves and fine roots may not be in sync [26] temporally and/or locally. Our estimation here is preliminary and can be improved with a better understanding of fine roots in the future.

Arithmetic mean *R:S* is always larger than shoot-biomass weighted mean *R:S*

The general form of the allometric equation is given by:

$$R/S = \alpha S^{\beta-1} \qquad \text{(SI1)}$$

We prove here that if root and shoot biomass are related by Equation SI1, the arithmetic mean *R:S* is always larger than the biomass weighted mean. Suppose that we have two classes of trees or forest stands that differ in shoot biomass, one with size *x*, and the other is *y*. We assume the number of *x* is *m* if we look at the individual-tree-level, or the area is *m* if we look at the stand or larger level, and n is the number or area of y.

The (shoot) biomass weighted mean *R:S* is:

$$\frac{\alpha m x^{\beta} + \alpha n y^{\beta}}{mx + ny}$$

The arithmetic mean *R:S* is:

$$\frac{\alpha m x^{\beta-1} + \alpha n y^{\beta-1}}{m + n}$$

The difference between the weighted and arithmetic mean is:

$$deltaMean = \frac{\alpha m x^{\beta} + \alpha n y^{\beta}}{mx + ny} - \frac{\alpha m x^{\beta-1} + \alpha n y^{\beta-1}}{m + n}$$

By algebraic transformations, this equation can be transformed into:

$$deltaMean = \frac{\alpha m n}{(m+n)(mx+ny)}(x-y)\left(x^{\beta-1} - y^{\beta-1}\right) \qquad (SI2)$$

Since we have $\alpha, m, n, x, y > 0$, Equation SI2 tells $if\ \beta = 1, deltaMean = 0; if\ \beta < 1, deltaMean < 0;\ if\ \beta > 1, deltaMean > 0.$ Both theory and empirical evidence across world's forests lead to *R:S* vs. S relationships like Equation SI1 with $\beta < 1$,[8,27,28], which proves that the arithmetic mean *R:S* always overestimate the (shoot) biomass weighted mean *R:S*.

Allometric upscaling overestimates *R:S* at 1km resolution

If we assume root and shoot biomass follow a universal allometric equation at different scales (Equation SI1), we show here we would always overestimate root biomass from the average shoot biomass at the pixel level. Here, we take the 1-km resolution as an example and upscaling to other resolutions follow the same logic. We start from upscaling from individual trees and discuss later the case for the stand-level. Suppose we have two classes of trees or forest stands that differ in shoot biomass, one with size *x*, and the other is *y*. In tropical forest, the number of individuals (N) generally follows a tight power law distribution, with the dominant power function of the form $d^{-(\theta+1)}$, where d is the tree diameter and θ is related to the allometric exponent of the crown area to diameter[29], which is relatively consistent across tropical forests. Reported value of θ is around 1.27-1.31. In temperate or boreal forests, sometimes there may lack the above power law size structure, and we will discuss this case later. The relationship between tree diameter and biomass is highly conserved, with idealized trees exhibiting a general allometric function where $AGB \propto d^{\omega}$ [30]. The range of ω is between 1.1 and 3.37 from China's tree biomass equation database which consists of 5,924 biomass component equations for nearly 200 species. Together,

$$N = \mu\, AGB^{-\frac{\theta+1}{\omega}}$$

where μ is a parameter with a positive value. We use γ to replace $\frac{\theta+1}{\omega}$ for simplicity, and can write

$$N = \mu\, AGB^{-\gamma}$$

The real *R:S* ratio is,

$$RS_{real} = \frac{\alpha\mu x^{\beta-\gamma} + \alpha\mu y^{\beta-\gamma}}{\mu x^{1-\gamma} + \mu y^{1-\gamma}}$$

Which is the same as:

$$RS_{real} = \frac{\alpha(x^{\beta-\gamma} + y^{\beta-\gamma})}{x^{1-\gamma} + y^{1-\gamma}}$$

The estimated *R:S* is:

$$RS_{esti} = \alpha(\frac{\mu x^{1-\gamma} + \mu y^{1-\gamma}}{\mu x^{-\gamma} + \mu y^{-\gamma}})^{\beta-1}$$

Which is the same as:

$$RS_{esti} = \alpha(\frac{x^{1-\gamma} + y^{1-\gamma}}{x^{-\gamma} + y^{-\gamma}})^{\beta-1}$$

Therefore, the difference between estimated and real *R:S* is,

$$deltaRS = RS_{esti} - RS_{real} = \alpha\left(\frac{\mu x^{1-\gamma} + \mu y^{1-\gamma}}{\mu x^{-\gamma} + \mu y^{-\gamma}}\right)^{\beta-1} - \frac{\alpha\left(x^{\beta-\gamma} + y^{\beta-\gamma}\right)}{x^{1-\gamma} + y^{1-\gamma}} \qquad (SI3)$$

With the condition $\beta < 1, \alpha > 0, \mu > 0,\ x > 0, y > 0, \gamma > 0,\ deltaRS$ is always bigger than 0, as shown in Supplementary Figures 14, 15 numerically.

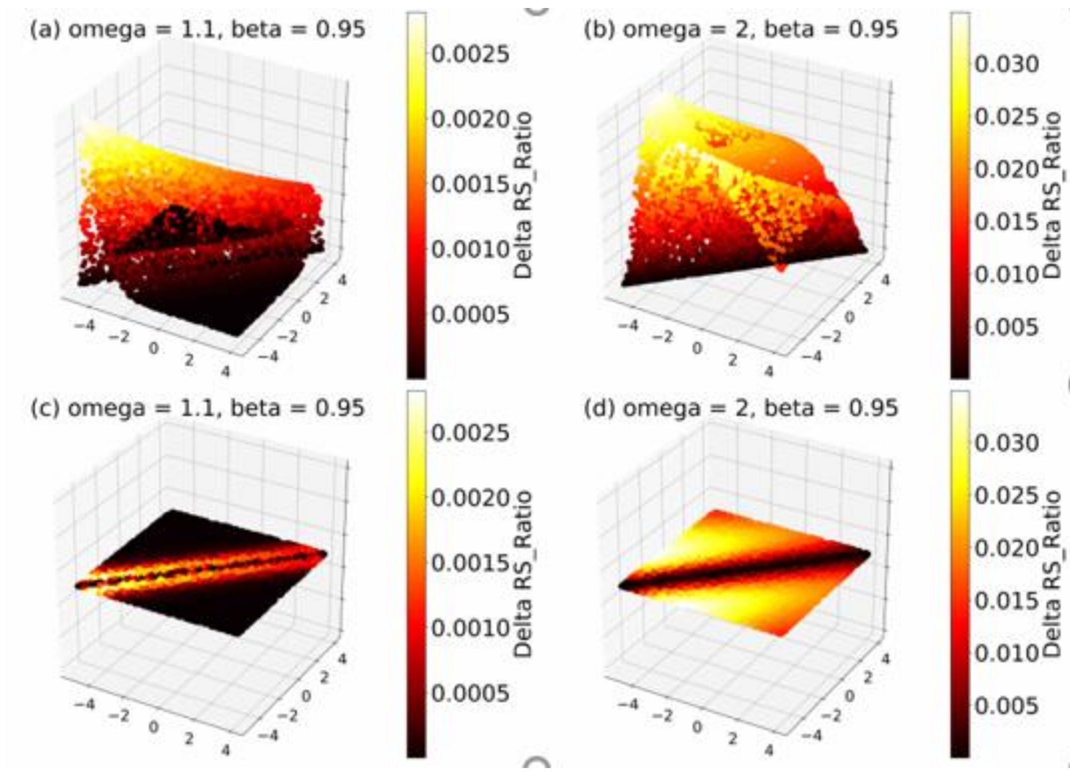
For forests without the power law structure or when we upscale from the stand-level measurement, we use *m* and *n* to denote the number of trees or the area of stands with the size of shoot biomass *x* and *y*.

The difference between estimated and real *R:S* is,

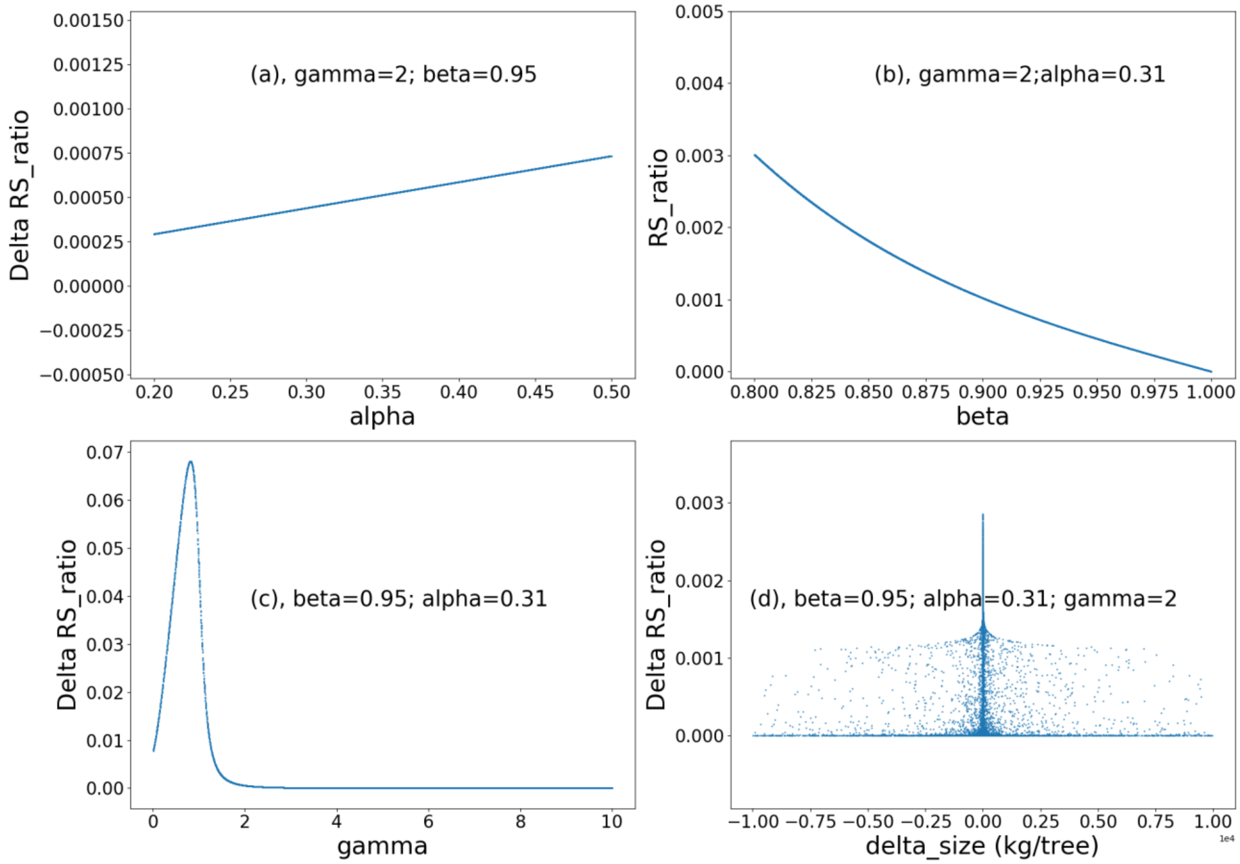
$$deltaRS = RS_{esti} - RS_{real} = \alpha\left(\frac{mx + ny}{m + n}\right)^{\beta-1} - \frac{\alpha\left(mx^{\beta} + ny^{\beta}\right)}{mx + ny} \qquad (SI4)$$

With the condition $\beta < 1, \alpha > 0, \mu > 0,\ x > 0, y > 0, m > 0, n > 0, \gamma > 0,\ deltaRS$ is always bigger than 0 as illustrated in Supplementary Figures 16, 17 numerically.

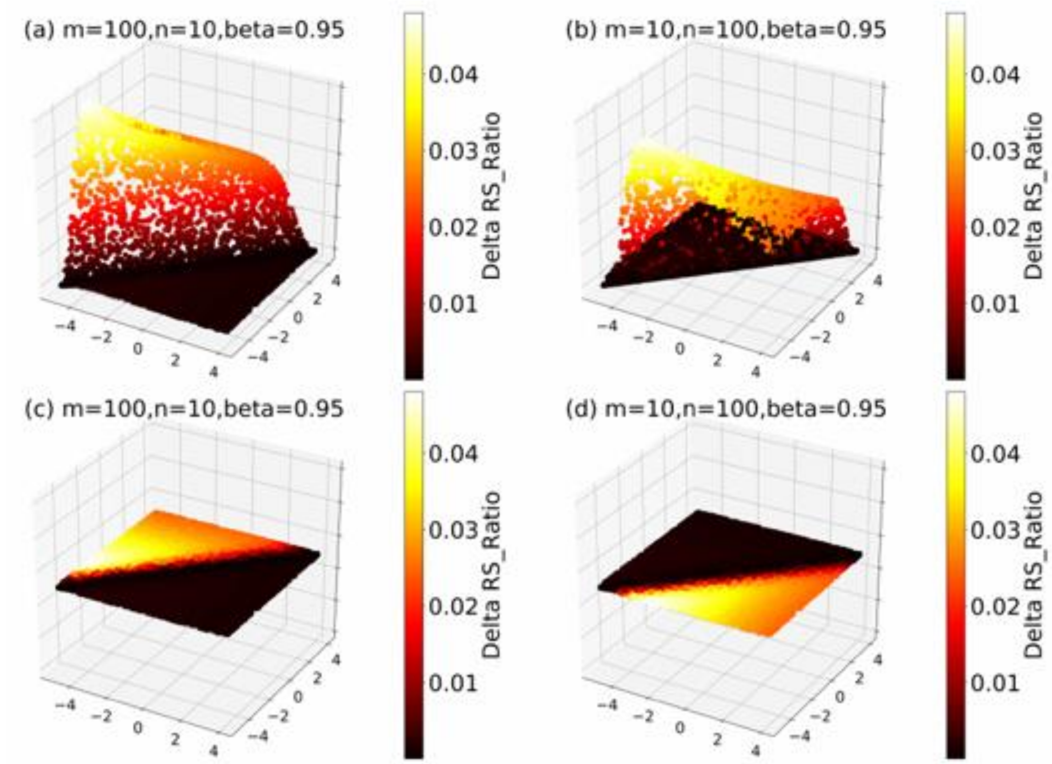
The magnitude of overestimation is related to $\beta, \alpha, \mu, x, y, m, n$ ($or\ \gamma$ in case of forests with power law size structure).



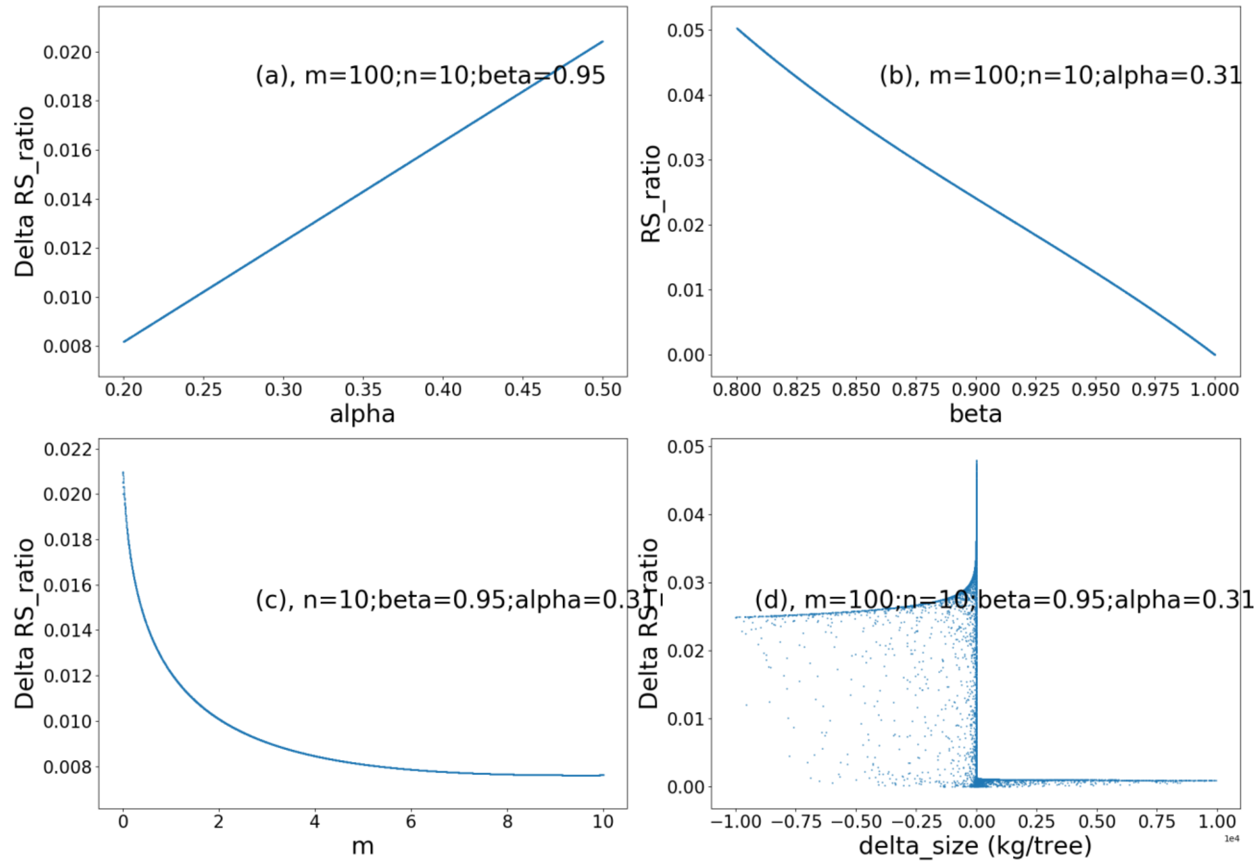
Supplementary Figure 14, $deltaRS$ in responses to changes in tree sizes in *x* (*x*-axis) and *y* (*y*-axis). Size *x* and size *y* are randomly chosen with $\log x, logy \in [-5,4]$. Here we fix $\alpha\ and\ \theta$ with typical values $\alpha = 0.31,\ \theta = 1.3.$ (a) and (c) show $deltaRS$ with ω=1.1, β=0.95. (b) and (d) show $deltaRS$ with ω=2, β=0.95. (a) and (b) display $deltaRS$ in a 3-dimentional space and the (c) and (d) are corresponding projections into the *x*-*y* space. $deltaRS$ is always bigger than 0 with different values of $x, y, \alpha, \theta, \omega, \beta$ in literature. We choose fixed values for demonstration purpose here. See Equation SI3 for details.



Supplementary Figure 15. $deltaRS$ in responses to changes in α (a, alpha), β (b, beta), γ (c, gamma) and difference in tree size (d, delta_size). In panels (a), (b) and (c), the parameter in *x-axis* varies in a range that is broader than typically reported in literature while other parameters are fixed at a typical value. Panel (d) shows changes in $deltaRS$ in response to differences in size *x* and size *y* where size *x* and size *y* are randomly generated with a uniform distribution of *logx* and *logy* with $\log x, logy \in [-5,4]$. Note, in (d) Delta RS_ratio = 0 when delta_size = 0, but varies largely in a small region around 0. See Equation SI3 for details.



Supplementary Figure 16. $deltaRS$ in responses to changes in tree sizes in *x* (*x*-axis) and *y* (*y*-axis). Size *x* and size *y* are randomly chosen with $\log x, logy \in [-5,4]$. Here we fix $\alpha\ and\ \theta$ with typical values $\alpha = 0.31,\ \theta = 1.3$. (a) and (c) show $deltaRS$ with *m*=100, *n*=10, β=0.95. (b) and (d) show $deltaRS$ with *m*=10,*n*=100, β=0.95. (a) and (b) display $deltaRS$ in a 3-dimentional space and (c) and (d) are their corresponding projection into the *x*-*y* space. $deltaRS$ is always bigger than 0 with different values of $x, y, \alpha, \theta, m, n, \beta$ in literature. We choose fixed values for demonstration purpose here. See Equation SI4 for details.



Supplementary Figure 17. $deltaRS$ in responses to changes in α (a, alpha), β (b, beta), number of trees or stand area of shoot biomass class *x* (c, *m*) and difference in tree size (d, delta_size). This figure is the same as Figure 15 except the exponent controlling the number of trees (γ) is replaced by the number of trees or stand area of each biomass size (*m* and *n*). Note, in (d) Delta RS_ratio = 0 when delta_size = 0, but varies largely in a small region around 0. See Equation SI4 for details.

Root biomass prediction with age as a predictor

When age is fixed as a predictor in the random forest model, the “best” trained model incorporates 14 additional predictors which are shoot biomass, height, soil nitrogen, pH, bulk density, clay content, sand content, base saturation, cation exchange capacity, vapor pressure, mean annual precipitation, mean annual temperature, aridity and water table depth. This model slightly reduced the mean absolute error (MAE = 2.16 vs. 2.18). Global total root biomass from this model is similar to the model without age. The age map is merged from several different sources (see Method), which likely introduce additional uncertainty in our estimation. We therefore prefer the prediction without age as a predictor.

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