

The end of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon?

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A new article in the December 4 issue of *Science* addresses how the combined efforts of government commitments and market transition could save forest and reduce carbon emissions in Brazil. The Policy Forum brief, entitled "The End of Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon" was authored by contributors from the Woods Hole Research Center, Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazonia (IPAM), Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Aliança da Terra, Environmental Defense Fund, University of Florida, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, and the Universidade Federal do Pará.

According to Daniel Nepstad, a senior scientist at the Woods Hole Research Center and the study's lead author, "market forces and Brazil's political will are converging in an unprecedented opportunity to end [deforestation](#) in the Brazilian Amazon with 80 percent of the forest still standing."

Brazil has lowered deforestation rates 64 percent since 2005. This remarkable achievement was possible through a government crack-down on illegal activities in the region. It was helped by a retraction of the cattle and soybean industries, and a growing effort to exclude deforesters from the beef and soy markets. The article describes how Brazil could build upon this progress to end forest clearing by the year 2020, and the additional funding that will be required to reach this goal.

The study estimates that \$6.5 to \$18 billion will be needed from 2010 to 2020 to achieve the end of deforestation, resulting in a 2 to 5 percent

reduction in global carbon dioxide emissions. The steps include the support of low-deforestation livelihoods for forest peoples and smallholders; identifying and rewarding responsible cattle ranchers and farmers; improved enforcement of environmental laws; and investments in protected area management. This estimate utilizes a sophisticated economic model of the Amazon region that estimates and maps the value of forgone profits from ranching and soy farming that are associated with forest conservation.

Britaldo Soares-Filho of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, the article's second author, describes, "Our economic models integrate the best available information on soils, roads, and the costs of production to capture the economic logic of the Amazon's drivers of deforestation."

Brazil has emerged as one of the most progressive nations in the world in assuming commitments to lower greenhouse gas emissions within the United Nations climate negotiations. In December of 2008, this nation declared that it would cut deforestation to 20% of its historic level by 2020. Brazil's position going into Copenhagen next week, when climate negotiations should culminate in a new climate agreement, could be even more progressive.

Paulo Moutinho, leader of IPAM's climate change program, in Brazil, and a scientist at the WHRC, states, "Brazil was, for many years, the country that said that rich nations must lead in developing a solution to climate change. Now, Brazil is showing that leadership."

Source: Woods Hole Research Center

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