

Brazil says Amazon deforestation down to lowest level

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Aerial view of a forest in the state of Para, northern Brazil, in 2009. Brazil said Monday that the pace of deforestation in its Amazon region fell to its lowest level since authorities began monitoring the world's largest tropical rainforest.

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The head of the National Institute of [Space Research](#) (INPE), Gilberto Camara, said deforestation dropped to 6,238 square kilometers (2,408 square miles), between August 2010 and July this year, down 11 percent compared with the same period in 2009-2010.

"It's the lowest deforestation rate measured since INPE began its monitoring in 1988," Camara told a press conference.

"It's a great victory for Brazil. It's the lowest deforestation rate. The Amazon is a great instrument for [carbon sequestration](#)," one of the tools to combat global warming, said Aloizio Mercadante, the minister of science and technology.

Still, the area deforested in the year ending in July is four times the size of Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city, according to the state Agencia Brasil.

Between August 2009 and July 2010, the [Brazilian Amazon](#) lost 7,000 square kilometers (2,700 square miles) of [rain forest](#), until then the smallest loss recorded.

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon reached a historic peak of 27,700 square kilometers (10,700 square miles) in 2003-2004.

Monday's announcement came a day before the Brazilian Senate was due to adopt a reform of forestry legislation which could reduce the protected area.

The bill, which would have to be approved by the Chamber of Deputies, has the backing of Brazil's powerful agribusiness sector.

The current forestry code, which dates back to 1965, limits the use of lands for farming and mandates that up to 80 percent of the Amazon remain intact.

Authorities say key reasons for Amazon deforestation are fires, the advance of agriculture and stockbreeding and illegal trafficking in timber and minerals.

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