

Brazil loses 'one million football pitches' worth of forest

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An aerial photo from September 2017 showing an area of deforestation in the western Amazon region of Brazil

Deforestation in Brazil has reached such epic proportions that an area equivalent to one million football pitches was lost in just one year, Greenpeace said.

Between August 2017 and July 2018, deforestation increased by almost 14 percent with an area of 7,900 square kilometers (3,050 square miles) of forest cleared, according to the governmental institution of special investigations.

"It's more or less one million football fields of deforestation in just one year," Marcio Astrini, the public policies coordinator for Greenpeace Brazil, told AFP.

"Every year we have this news that forest is being criminally deforested."

Astrini said things could get even worse if president-elect Jair Bolsonaro carries out his threats to loosen environmental protection rules.

His appointment of Tereza Cristina as agriculture minister also caused concerns as she heads the agribusiness lobby in congress and is a supporter of clearing more forested area to make way for pasture land and agriculture.

The Amazon rainforest represents more than half of Earth's remaining rainforest and covers an area of 5.5 billion km², about 60 percent of which is in Brazil.

But it is under threat from illegal logging as well as farming, in particular from soybean plantations and pasture land for cattle.

Between 2004 and 2012, deforestation in Brazil was slowed through controls imposed at a government level as well as by the private sector.

But Bolsonaro has said he will "end protected [areas](#), indigenous reserves, that he will reduce the power to inspect and punish environmental crimes," according to Astrini.

"If he does all this, if he reduces the ability to punish crimes, Amazon [deforestation](#) could explode into an unimaginable situation," added Astrini.

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