

Report links world's top meat firm to deforestation

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In this file photo taken on August 25, 2019 cattle graze with a burnt area in the background after a fire in the Amazon rainforest near Novo Progresso, Para state, Brazil

Brazilian firm JBS, the world's biggest meat processing company, was

again accused Monday of "laundering" cattle from ranches blacklisted for destroying the Amazon rainforest.

The charge, leveled in a report by an investigative journalism consortium, marks at least the fifth time in just over a year that the company, which exports around the world, has been accused of cattle laundering.

That is a practice in which animals from a blacklisted ranch are transferred to one with a clean record to dodge a ban on sales.

The London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, British newspaper the Guardian and Brazilian journalism group Reporter Brasil said in the joint report that pictures posted on Facebook by a JBS truck driver appeared to show him and his colleagues transporting cattle from a blacklisted ranch, Estrela do Aripuana, to a "clean" one 300 kilometers (185 miles) away, Estrela do Sangue, in July 2019.

The drivers wore JBS uniforms and drove JBS trucks in the pictures.

Located in the west-central state of Mato Grosso, which is largely covered in Amazon rainforest, Estrela do Aripuana was blacklisted by Brazil's environment ministry in 2012 over the [illegal deforestation](#) of around 1,500 hectares (3,700 acres) of land.

Authorities also fined its owner 2.2 million reals (around \$1 million at the time).

The consortium said it had obtained Brazilian government records indicating that at least 7,000 animals were shipped from the embargoed ranch to the "clean" one between June 2018 and August 2019.

Other documents show the latter sold 7,000 animals to JBS

slaughterhouses from November 2018 to November 2019, it said.

JBS denies cattle laundering and says it is implementing measures to prevent third parties from sneaking such animals into its [supply chain](#).

"We have adopted an unequivocal stance of zero deforestation," it said in a statement, adding it had opened an internal investigation into the latest allegations.

Brazil faces mounting pressure to slow surging deforestation after massive fires devastated the Amazon last year—often set to clear land for ranching and farming.

Some European countries have threatened to scupper a trade deal between the EU and the Mercosur trade bloc, of which Brazil is a member, over the issue.

And global investment firms managing close to \$4 trillion in assets last month wrote an [open letter](#) to far-right President Jair Bolsonaro urging him to change government policies blamed for accelerating the destruction.

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