

# Wildfires ravage vast area of eastern Bolivia: NGO

August 13 2021

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Firefighters battle flames close to the Santa Cruz airport in Bolivia on August 1, 2021.

Devastating wildfires in Bolivia consumed 749,000 hectares from January to July, the Friends of Nature Foundation (FAN) NGO said on Thursday night.

FAN said it had used images from the European Space Agency's Sentinel-2 satellite to study the damage.

As in neighboring Brazil, the fires have been aggravated by widespread deforestation aimed at expanding farming or pastureland.

The eastern Santa Cruz and northeastern Beni departments account for 94 percent of [burnt areas](#), FAN said.

Up to the end of July, 137,000 hectares (3400,000 acres) had been burnt in Santa Cruz but the local governor said Thursday that figure had since passed 200,000.

Beni had registered 564,000 hectares of damage in the seven-month period.

Santa Cruz, which lies close to the border with Brazil, declared a "red alert" on Thursday.

"The red alert was declared because of the progressive increase in heat sources and because of the climactic conditions we're facing," said Yovenka Rosado, the coordinator for [forest fires](#) in Santa Cruz.

According to the FAN report, the vast majority of the burnt area was pastureland, shrubs and grasslands.

Just three percent was woodland while eight percent was land used for farming.

FAN estimates that more than 2.3 million hectares of forests and prairies were destroyed by [fire](#) in 2020 and 6.4 million hectares the year before.

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