

# Brazil's Amazon deforestation down 61% in January

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New Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has promised to protect the environment, including the Amazon rainforest, a portion of which is seen here in June 2022, after the severe governmental cuts by previous leader Jair Bolsonaro.

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest was down 61 percent in January—Leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's first month back

in the job—compared with the same period last year, according to an official report published on Friday.

Satellite images from the DETER monitoring system showed an area of 167 square kilometers had been destroyed, according to the INPE space research institute.

That amounts to the equivalent of 22,000 football pitches, but is a huge decrease on the 430 square kilometers of deforestation in January 2022, when far-right climate change skeptic Jair Bolsonaro was in power.

The news came just before Lula was due to meet US President Joe Biden in Washington.

Despite the year-over-year drop off in deforestation, the new January figure is still higher than in two of the four years of Bolsonaro's presidency.

In 2019 it was 136 square kilometers and just 83 square kilometers in 2021.

However, over Bolsonaro's presidency, average annual deforestation increased by 75 percent compared to the previous decade.

Bolsonaro instigated policies that favored the agriculture and logging industries, which are mostly responsible for deforestation.

Last month's data "may reflect the resumption of the environmental defense agenda" that the Lula administration has made a priority, said the Brazilian arm of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

However, the WWF warned that "it is too early to talk of a reversal" of increasing deforestation, not least because it usually peaks in the dry

season, beginning in June.

"The action plans for prevention and control of deforestation and forest fires must be restructured as a matter of urgency so that Brazil rediscovers its role as an international environmental leader," said Frederico Machado, a conservation specialist at WWF Brazil.

He accused Bolsonaro's policies of being "anti-environmental" and "criminal."

Having previously governed Brazil from 2003-10, Lula has promised to rebuild the government agencies tasked with protecting the environment after the severe budget and personnel cuts inflicted on them by Bolsonaro.

He has also announced an ambitious goal of zero deforestation by 2030.

In order to do so he is counting on international aid, notably through the Amazon Fund, to which Germany and Norway are the main contributors.

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