

Deforestation in Brazilian Amazon down 22% in a year

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Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon fell by 22.3% in the twelve months to July, the best result in four years, the government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva reported on November 9, 2023.

Brazilian Amazon deforestation fell 22.3 percent in the year through

July, hitting a five-year low, officials said Thursday, as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government fights to curb destruction of the world's biggest rainforest.

Satellite monitoring found 9,001 square kilometers (3,475 square miles) of forest cover was destroyed in the Brazilian Amazon from August 2022 to July 2023, according to national space agency INPE's annual deforestation tracking program, PRODES.

It was the first time the figure came in at less than 10,000 square kilometers since 2018, before the presidency of far-right ex-leader Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), who presided over a sharp increase in clear-cutting in the Amazon.

Under Bolsonaro, there was "an explosion of crime, following a complete dismantling of the government's environmental structures," Environment Minister Marina Silva told a news conference.

Since taking office on January 1, the Lula administration has dramatically increased anti-deforestation operations and fines for environmental crimes.

However, Silva admitted the government faces a tough battle to fulfill Lula's commitment to achieve zero deforestation by 2030, citing "a mix of drug- and arms-trafficking, land grabs, and illegal mining and fishing" that are fueling the destruction of the rainforest.

The Amazon is a key resource in the fight against [climate change](#), with hundreds of billions of carbon-absorbing trees that help curb global warming.

But experts say it is increasingly fragile, and risks hitting a "tipping point" where large portions die off and turn to savanna.

"This is a forceful result that seals Brazil's return as a partner in the fight against climate change," Marcio Astrini, the head of the Climate Observatory, a coalition of environmental groups, said in a statement.

But conservationists urged the government to step up its crackdown on environmental crime.

"This is still a high rate" of deforestation, said Mariana Napolitano, of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Brazil office.

"The Amazon is suffering from a very high level of degradation, which makes the forest more susceptible to fires."

The figures came days after INPE reported more than 22,000 fires in the Brazilian Amazon in October, the worst in 15 years for the month, amid a severe drought in the region.

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