

Deforestation in Brazil's Cerrado higher than in Amazon: Report

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Brazil's vast Cerrado savanna covers a region the size of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain combined.

Deforestation in Brazil's Cerrado region, a vast tropical savanna renowned for its rich biodiversity, increased sharply in 2023 and

overtook that of the Amazon, according to a report published Tuesday.

In the Cerrado, which extends through central Brazil and into neighboring Paraguay and Bolivia, more than 1.11 million hectares (2.74 million acres) were destroyed in 2023, an increase of 68 percent compared to the previous year, said the report by research group MapBiomas.

These losses represent almost two thirds of the [deforestation](#) suffered by all of Brazil and about 2.4 times the destruction recorded in the Amazon, the report said.

Last year 454,300 hectares were deforested in the Amazon, 62.2 percent less than in 2022.

This is the first time that deforestation in the Cerrado has been higher than that in the Amazon since MapBiomas began compiling data in 2019 from various satellite mapping systems.

Less famous than the Amazon rainforest to the north, the Cerrado is one of Earth's three great savannas, along with Africa's and Australia's, and covers a region the size of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain combined.

"The face of deforestation is changing in Brazil, concentrating in biomes dominated by savannas and grasslands, and decreasing in jungle areas," said MapBiomas coordinator Tasso Azevedo.

But in all cases, "almost all deforestation in the country (97 percent) is driven by agricultural expansion," stressed MapBiomas, a collective of NGOs and Brazilian universities.

More than 93 percent of the destruction "presented at least one

indication of illegality" or irregularity, according to data from the Amazon Environmental Research Institute.

More generally, deforestation in Brazil decreased in 2023 for the first time in four years, a drop of 11.6 percent compared to the previous year.

The report is bittersweet news for left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who presents himself as a champion of the fight against [climate change](#) and has pledged to eradicate [illegal deforestation](#) in Brazil by 2030, which had dramatically worsened under his far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro.

The loss of native vegetation in the immense South American country has increasingly evident consequences, such as the historic floods which hit the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul earlier this month, killing at least 170 people and forcing around 600,000 people to leave their homes.

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