# **Beyond deforestation: 38% of the Amazon Rainforest is affected by other forms of degradation**

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In October 2022, the Amazonas government declared that all 62 municipalities in the state were suffering from a drought that left rivers, such as the famous Solimões, full of sandbars, and the population with difficulty navigating and accessing potable water.

At that time, 19 cities were considered in a situation of attention, 41 in alert and two in a stage of emergency - the most serious.

The recent example, coming from one of the Brazilian states that are part of the Legal ***Amazon***, shows that the threats that surround the forest go far beyond ***deforestation***.

This is the alert of a study published this Thursday (26/01) in the scientific journal Science, one of the most important in the world: other forms of degradation that have human interference already destroy a good part of the forest and should be, by 2050, one of the main sources of carbon emissions, regardless of the increase or decrease in ***deforestation***.

The study estimates that 38% of the ***Amazon*** Rainforest is today affected by some type of degradation:

* fires;

1. drought (intensified by climate change)
2. selective logging (legal or illegal; "selective" because some commercially interesting trees are removed, leaving others standing)
3. and the so-called edge effects (changes in forests near deforested areas, therefore a direct consequence of ***deforestation***).

"The degraded area in the ***Amazon*** and the carbon emissions from degradation are equal to or even greater than those from ***deforestation***," David Lapola, a researcher at the Center for Meteorological and Climatic Research Applied to Agriculture at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) and a doctorate from the University of Kassel, Germany, told BBC News Brazil.

The research in Science considered the ***Amazon*** area both in Brazil and neighboring countries and was based on previous studies and satellite images. The analyzed period ranges from 2001 to 2018.

Authored by 35 Brazilian and foreign researchers, the study differentiates between ***deforestation*** and degradation. While, in the former, the forest undergoes major changes to make way for a new use - for example, an area that is burned to turn into pasture -, degradation is different because it involves more contained changes in forest cover and does not aim to transform the use of that land.

In scientific production, there is another difference: according to the authors, ***deforestation*** has received much more attention than degradation.

"In the ***Amazon*** Forest, the extent and long-term effects of such anthropogenic disturbances [degradation] on the terrestrial carbon cycle, ecosystem functioning, and the means of survival of local populations are beginning to be understood and differentiated from the impacts of ***deforestation***," says an excerpt from the study, which also has the participation, in addition to Unicamp, of researchers from the Institute for Environmental Research in the ***Amazon*** (Ipam) and the National Institute for Space Research (Inpe).

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