# **Brazil's Amazon deforestation down 61% in January**

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**Body**

Brasília: ***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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