# **Brazil Amazon deforestation drops in Lula's first month in office**

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**Body**

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***Deforestation*** in Brazil's section of the ***Amazon*** rainforest[1] dropped by 61 percent in January, the first month in office for left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has promised to relaunch environmental protection efforts.

Preliminary satellite data collected by the government's space research agency Inpe and released on Friday showed 167sq km (64sq miles) cleared in the region last month, down from the 430sq km (166sq miles) lost in January 2022.

But experts cautioned that while the decrease was a good sign, it is still too early to say that the ***deforestation***, which surged under Lula's predecessor[2], far-right Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, has been reversed.

'It is positive to see such a relevant drop in January,' WWF-Brasil conservation specialist Daniel Silva said. 'However, it is still too early to talk about a trend reversal, as part of this drop may be related to greater cloud cover.'

WWF-Brasil also pointed out that ***deforestation*** usually peaks in the dry season, beginning in June.

'The action plans for prevention and control of ***deforestation***[3] 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, another specialist with the group.

***Deforestation*** increased dramatically[4] under Bolsonaro, who was narrowly defeated by Lula in October elections and had promoted more mining and economic development in Brazil's sprawling ***Amazon*** region.

Environmental and Indigenous rights groups had blamed the Bolsonaro administration's policies for the increase in ***deforestation***[5] and illicit activities in the ***Amazon***, including illegal gold mining, as well as an uptick in violence against Indigenous communities in the area.

The new ***deforestation*** data came as Lula, who previously served as Brazil's president from 2003 to 2010, was scheduled to meet his United States counterpart[6], President Joe Biden, in Washington, DC, later on Friday.

The two leaders are expected to discuss support for democracy, as well as efforts to fight climate change, among other issues.Lula has promised to get ***deforestation***[7] down to zero in the ***Amazon*** rainforest, roughly two-thirds of which lies in Brazil.

On the eve of the talks, the Reuters news agency reported that the US was considering its first contribution to a multilateral fund aimed at fighting ***Amazon*** ***deforestation***, with a possible announcement coming during the Biden-Lula meeting.

The Brazilian-administered ***Amazon*** Fund, supported mainly by Norway and Germany, was reactivated by environment minister Marina Silva[8] the day she took office last month, after being frozen since 2019 under Bolsonaro.

Charred trunks are seen on a tract of ***Amazon*** land burned by loggers and farmers, in Porto Velho, Brazil, August 23, 2019 [File: Ueslei Marcelino/Reuters]

In late January, German development minister Svenja Schulze announced that Berlin would make $38m available for the ***Amazon*** Fund, saying Lula's administration[9] offered 'a great chance to protect the forest and to offer a new perspective to the people who live there'.

Germany also pledged to provide $87m in low-interest loans for farmers to restore degraded areas and $34m for Brazilian states in the ***Amazon*** region to protect the rainforest.

Yet even with the positive start to the year, experts and staff at Brazil's environmental agency Ibama have warned that it may take years for Lula to deliver on conservation targets after Bolsonaro cut funding and staff at key agencies.

Still, the new Brazilian government has already taken some steps in its push to reverse environmental degradation in the ***Amazon***.

Earlier this week, the authorities launched raids[10] to remove illegal gold miners from Indigenous territories in the region, where they have been blamed for violent attacks and a health crisis affecting the Yanomami people.

[ 1]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/16/at-cop27-brazils-lula-vows-halt-to-rampant-***deforestation*** [ 2]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/7/brazilian-***amazon***-***deforestation***-up-150-in-bolsonaros-last-month [ 3]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/31/lula-victory-spurs-hope-for-***amazon***-fight-against-climate-crisis [ 4]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/6/brazil-sets-another-***amazon***-***deforestation***-record-prompting-alarm [ 5]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/11/brazil-***amazon***-***deforestation***-reaches-new-high-before-govt-change [ 6]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/9/lula-goes-to-washington-eyeing-a-new-era-in-us-brazil-relations [ 7]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/14/with-lula-set-to-take-over-what-role-can-brazil-play-on-climate [ 8]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/29/brazils-lula-picks-***amazon***-defender-to-run-environment-ministry [ 9]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/30/germany-pledges-millions-to-help-brazil-protect-***amazon***-rainforest [ 10]: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/8/brazil-launches-raids-to-oust-illegal-miners-from-indigenous-land

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