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Brazil halves environment budget amid rising Amazon deforestation

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In a bid to contain a growing budget deficit, the government has slashed the funding to enforce forest protection laws



Environmental budget cuts come as pressure on the rainforest is intensifying (Photo: Neil Palmer/CIAT)

By [Megan Darby](#)

The Brazilian government is cutting its environment ministry budget by 51% as part of a bid to limit the country’s spiralling deficit.

The cuts come as deforestation rates are rising, driven by demand for timber, soy and beef. The Amazon region saw a 29% increase in forest clearance last year, according to preliminary data from Brazil’s National Space Research Institute.

It is an even steeper drop in spending than the 31% Donald Trump’s administration is proposing for the US Environmental Protection Agency.

The environment ministry oversees Ibama, the agency responsible for enforcing laws to protect the forest. Sharp spending cuts risk weakening its capacity to carry out inspections, warned NGO Observatorio do Clima.

Other ministries hit by the austerity drive include transport, tourism and planning, budget and management. Certain programmes have been protected under the government’s “growth acceleration programme”.

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The move comes among reports that Brazilian government environment and land policy is being swayed by a dominant pro-beef caucus.

Last week, [Climate Home](#) reported that Brazil’s environment minister José Sarney Filho had criticised Ibama for embargoing two processing plants owned by the world’s largest protein exporter JBS.

The agency had found JBS had purchased tens of thousands of cattle from areas that had been illegally converted from rainforest to pasture.

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