

# Brazil cuts environment budget despite climate summit pledge

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The Bolsonaro government has called for protected areas in the Amazon to be developed

**Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has approved a cut to the environment ministry budget a day after he vowed to boost spending to tackle deforestation.**

At a US-led climate summit, he promised to double the money reserved for environmental enforcement and to end illegal deforestation by 2030.

But the budget signed off on Friday did not include his spending pledge, or additional proposals made by Congress.

His government has weakened protections and wants to develop protected areas.

Critics say the president's promises on Thursday were linked to a controversial deal Brazil is negotiating with the US to receive

financial aid in return for protecting the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest, and other areas.

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The 2021 federal budget includes 2.1bn reais (£280m; \$380m) for the environment ministry and agencies it oversees. The ministry had a budget of about 3bn reais in 2020.

Late on Friday, Environment Minister Ricardo Salles said he had requested the economy ministry to review the numbers and fulfil the pledge made by President Bolsonaro at the virtual climate summit hosted by US President Joe Biden.

The environmental policies of President Bolsonaro, who is supported by powerful agribusiness leaders, have drawn widespread condemnation. The far-right leader has encouraged agriculture and mining in the Amazon, and rolled back environmental legislation.

**Last year, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon surged to a 12-year high.** Activists and indigenous groups say environmental enforcement remains underfunded, and denounce the impunity for illegal logging and mining in protected areas.

The president rejects the criticism, saying Brazil remains an example for conservation. But at Thursday's summit he attempted to strike a more conciliatory tone, and also promised that Brazil would reach zero carbon emissions by 2050, 10 years earlier than previously agreed.



Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon surged to a 12-year high in 2020

Brazilian and US officials have been discussing the possibility of collaborating to stop the destruction of the Amazon. Politicians and environmentalists have warned that the Bolsonaro government should show results first before any financial commitment is made.

Earlier this week, **a group of 35 US and Brazilian celebrities voiced their opposition to a deal with Brazil**, saying it risked legitimising a government that was encouraging environmental destruction.

The document followed another letter in which more than 200 Brazilian groups told President Biden that the Bolsonaro government was an "enemy" of the Amazon and that it did not have legitimacy to represent Brazil.

Last week, the environment minister said the country would need \$1bn in foreign aid to support efforts to reduce deforestation in the Amazon by 30% to 40% in a year.