

Manifesto in defense of the Amazon Soy Moratorium - 12 December 2024

Signed in 2006, the Soy Moratorium has established itself over 18 years as a historic milestone and a positive example in the relationship between agriculture and tropical forests. The Moratorium promoted the reconciliation between environmental protection and increased soy production in the Amazon. It has established itself as an example to be followed today, especially when two other important biomes, the Brazilian Cerrado and the South American Gran Chaco, face the same accelerated deforestation process due to the rapid expansion of soybean plantations. The Cerrado's annual deforestation rate is now higher than that of the Amazon and, in Brazil, land use change accounts for 46% of greenhouse gas emissions (SEEG).

After 18 years, the agreement has proven decisive in the dramatic reduction of deforestation in the Amazon. The area planted with soy in 2007, the year before the deforestation deadline accepted by the Moratorium, was 1.64 million hectares. In 2022, soybeans planted in the Amazon biome covered 7.28 million hectares – and only 250 thousand of these areas had been planted in areas deforested after 2008, in disagreement with the Moratorium. Soybeans planted in these areas deforested after 2008 cannot be sold by companies participating in the Moratorium, which then block the farm. As a result, soybean production continued to expand over degraded pasturelands deforested before 2008. Therefore, in addition to drastically reducing deforestation, the Moratorium also acted as an efficiency driver in Brazilian agriculture, by promoting the expansion of soybean over abandoned or misused areas.

Despite the success, the Moratorium agreement seems to be heading towards the end due to pressure from backward segments of Brazilian agribusiness. Ignoring the reality of the climate and biodiversity crises in which we live, this segment advocates for its extinction, as pronounced repeatedly in two public hearings in the Chamber of Deputies, with representation sent to the Administrative Council for Economic Defense (CADE). Legislative assemblies approved laws at the state level (Law 12709-MT and Law 5837-RO), and there are similar bills in other states, such as PL 1041 GO and PL 419-PA, as well as a Bill in the National Congress (PL 3927).

Such laws aim to remove tax incentives for companies that adopt additional procurement criteria to the Forest Code, in line with the demands of international markets that see the climate emergency as a systemic crisis that requires harsh, but necessary, measures from consumers. This means penalizing companies committed to ending deforestation, promoting the continued expansion of agribusiness in Amazon forest areas, creating subsidies for deforestation, and discriminating against the granting of tax incentives based on companies' environmental commitment. Therefore, those who are more ambitious in environmental protection lose the incentive.

These laws are unconstitutional by violating the Constitutional Amendment n. 132/23, which constitutionally established the defense of the environment as one of the basic principles of

the National Tax System, and also article 170, VI, of the Federal Constitution, which establishes that the principle of economic order is linked to environmental protection, accepting differentiated treatment to reduce impacts and conserve the environment.

In addition to being unconstitutional, such laws are harmful to society as a whole for encouraging deforestation in a context in which the planet is heading towards an average increase in global temperature above 2o Celsius. We have already lost more than 70% of the world's biological diversity, and science clearly demonstrates that deforestation directly affects the rainfall cycle and agricultural production itself, therefore threatening Brazilian and global food security.

There are two paths left for companies participating in the agreement: maintain their tax exemptions and end the Soy Moratorium, or maintain their commitment to zero deforestation in the Amazon regardless of access or not to benefits and incentives.

The main value of the Soy Moratorium is to establish an origin control system that prevents deforestation-related soy from entering the supply chain. This generates a transformation in the logic of land use and occupation in the Amazon, as rural producers and land users, including land grabbers and speculators, are discouraged from acquiring or invading new forest areas, as they know that they will have obstacles in commercializing any eventual production of soybeans in the future. If the Moratorium as an effective barrier to disorderly expansion and land speculation in the Amazon is eliminated, we will have a reestablishment of the incentive for deforestation, in addition to a penalization of producers who already comply with current rules, as well as consumers of soy products who, for 18 years, have trusted the Soy Moratorium as a robust and effective instrument to control the destruction of the Amazon forest for soy production.

Furthermore, reputational risks are increased for companies, which will have less evidence and robustness to defend themselves against accusations of purchasing recently deforested areas.

The signatories of this manifesto defend strong actions by the public and private sectors that lead to the rapid and necessary reduction in deforestation. Therefore, we demand that companies linked to the soy chain maintain a commitment to zero deforestation and participate in the Soy Moratorium. Any attempt to make the Moratorium more flexible to comply with these new laws represents an unacceptable setback, significantly limiting the ability to avoid the commercialization of products associated with the destruction of the Amazon. It is essential that this mechanism, which has already demonstrated important environmental results, continues to do its work.

Signatários:

Action Aid

AdT - Amigos da Terra Amazônia Brasileira

All4trees

Alternativa Terrazul

Amazon Watch

AMDL - Associação Mico Leão Dourado

Apremavi

Biofuelwatch (Europe/USA)

Blue Dalian

Brigada de Alter

BVRio

Canopée

Ciupoa - Centro de Inteligência Urbana

Clima de Eleição

CNS - Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas

Comitê Chico Mendes

CTI - Centro de Trabalho Indigenista

Earthsight

Ekō

Environmental Defender Law Center - EDLC

Environmental Investigation Agency

Envol Vert

Forests of the World

Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra

Global Canopy

Global Witness

Greenpeace Brasil

Hospitais Saudáveis

ICV - Instituto Centro de Vida

IDC - Instituto de Direito Coletivo

IDS - Instituto Democracia e Sustentabilidade

Imaflora

Instituto 5 Elementos

Instituto Comida e Cultura

Instituto Escolhas

Instituto Kabu

Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos - INESC

IPAM - Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia

IPÊ- Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas

ISA - Instituto Socioambiental

ISPN - Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza

Mater Natura

Mazô Maná, Nutrição da Floresta

Mighty Earth

Movimento Pela Soberania Popular na Mineração - MAM

Observa-MT

Observatório do Código Florestal

Observatório do Clima

OPAN - Operação Amazônia Nativa

Plataforma CIPÓ

Projeto Saúde e Alegria

World Animal Protection

Rainforest Action Network

Rainforest Foundation Norway

Rede Vozes Negras pelo Clima

Repórter Brasil

ROBIN WOOD, Germany

Sea Shepherd Brasil

Snow Alliance

SOS Amazônia

SoS Mata atlântica

SVB - Sociedade Vegetariana Brasileira

SPVS - Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental

Uma Gotinha no Oceano

Viração Educomunicação

WWF-Brasil