

Latin America lost over 39 million hectares of forests

04 May 2023

Agriculture has taken its toll on Latin American forests, particularly in South America's two largest countries. Argentina reached 444,535 hectares deforested to prioritize crops and cattle feeding.

All in all, 39 million hectares of primary forests have been lost, it was reported. According to a study by the Latam Network of Young Journalists, titled "The forests we lost" Brazil has lost 28,239,879 hectares of wild forests (72.41% of the total lost in the region), particularly under former President Jair Bolsonaro. Cattle ranching, agriculture, the development of human settlements, water catchment, fires, illegal or unsustainable logging, mineral extraction, and the creation of transport infrastructure are the main reasons for the loss of primary forests, the study pointed out.

The seriousness of this fact lies in the fact that these species have not been previously intervened by humans, making their loss irreplaceable, it was explained.

The report also revealed how the global demand for meat has pushed Latin America to increase its production and, consequently, to extend its livestock pastures over thousands of hectares that used to be forests: beyond their role against pollution, they represented ecosystems that will now only be used for economic production. Another issue analyzed is the inconsistencies in the recording and reporting of deforestation statistics in the countries. Argentina, for example, keeps track of cases annually only since 2014.

In the last two decades, mainly as a result of the conversion of natural ecosystems to agricultural land, 11% of all forests in the region have been deforested in Argentina. This represents a total of 444,535 hectares of forest (0.02% of the country's total area) in the period 2001-2021. The second reason for the loss of primary forest accounting for 33% of the cases, is fires.

"Ninety-five percent of the fires are always caused by anthropogenic reasons. That is worldwide," Fernanda Rezzano, spokeswoman for the Forest Fire Prevention and Fighting Service (SPLIF) of Río Negro, told *Ámbito*.

Source: <https://en.mercopress.com/2023/05/04/latin-america-lost-over-39-million-hectares-of-forests>