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## Deforestation Of The Amazon Up 29 Percent From Last Year, Study Finds

By [CAMILA DOMONOSKE](#)



*Sunset colors cut through the smoky haze in the Brazilian Amazon in 2015.*  
KAINAZ AMARIA / NPR

An annual study released by the Brazilian government estimates that the rate of deforestation in the Amazon has increased by 29 percent over last year.

That's the second year in a row that deforestation in the Amazon quickened; last year, the pace rose by about 24 percent.

The estimated deforestation rate, [released Tuesday](#) by Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), is based on satellite imagery. The institute found that from August 2015 to July 2016, the



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Amazon rainforest was deforested at an estimated rate of 7,989 square kilometers (more than 3,000 square miles).

The year before, it was 6,207 square kilometers. Two years ago, it was barely over 5,000 square kilometers.

INPE acknowledged the increase but noted that "the current rate represents a decrease of 71%, when compared with 2004." That was the year the government implemented a policy designed to curb deforestation; from 2004-2007, the rate of deforestation dropped rapidly.

But the rate now detected is the highest for any year since 2008. NPR's Lulu Garcia-Navarro, who has reported on deforestation in the Amazon, [called](#) it a "huge jump" in the deforestation rate.

The Brazilian newspaper [Estadão reports](#) that many observers had been prepared to see an increase in deforestation, but not one *this* high. Here's more from the newspaper, translated from Portuguese by NPR's Martin Kaste:

"Environmentalists working in the region had already been sounding the alarm, and in recent months the federal government had already been working on the assumption that the loss of forest would increase above the average of the last years, which has been below 6,000 km<sup>2</sup>. But this number came as a surprise. ...

"The policy director of Greenpeace, Marcio Astrini, says among the causes of the increased deforestation were actions taken by the federal government between 2012 and 2015, such as the waiving of fines for illegal deforestation, the abandonment of protected areas — that is, 'conservation units' and indigenous lands — and the announcement, which he calls 'shameful,' that the government doesn't plan to completely stop illegal deforestation until the year 2030."

*Estadão* also notes that the rise in deforestation is raising concerns about Brazil's ability to meet its commitments as part of the international Paris Agreement on combating climate change.

Deforestation is a major contributor to climate change, and Brazil's success in reducing deforestation from 2004 to 2014 was seen as a model for other developing countries, *Estadão* writes.

Also on Tuesday, [Reuters reported](#) that a lack of funding has hampered the organization that's tasked with stopping illegal logging efforts.



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The Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, or Ibama, has struggled with budget cuts as Brazil grapples with a recession, Reuters writes:

"Hampered by poor radios with a maximum range of just 2 km (1.3 miles) and pick-up trucks easily recognised by those who cut down the forest, the exhausted Ibama agents were too often chasing shadows.

" 'The loggers are better equipped than we are,' said Uiratan Barroso, Ibama's head of law enforcement in the state capital, Santarem. 'Until we have the money to rent unmarked cars and buy proper radios we won't be able to work.' ...

"A 30 percent cut in Ibama's budget has meant fewer operations this year. Helicopters and jeeps have been idle due to a lack of fuel.

" 'We haven't even had enough money to pay for aptitude tests to allow our agents to carry guns,' said Barroso, adding the tests only cost 200 reais (\$60)."

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