



ENVIRONMENT

The Amazon Is Worth \$8.2 Billion if It's Left Standing, Study Shows

Keeping the rainforest in tact would preserve \$8.2 billion of annual revenue in the economy, but Brazil's new president Jair Bolsonaro may be dazzled by short-term gains.

By **Kaleigh Rogers** | Nov 29 2018, 4:35pm



Image: Wikipedia

If you're an environmentalist, the value of the Amazon rainforest—which amounts to half of the planet's remaining tropical forest—is obvious. But for those more interested in the financial value of the biome, clear-cutting this magnificent ecosystem for farming, mining, and building infrastructure may seem like a more profitable endeavor than preservation.

However, [a study from economists and agricultural engineers published recently](#) shows that the economic benefit of the rainforest if it's conserved is \$8.2 billion a year. In many parts of the rainforest, that economic benefit far outweighs the short-term gain of tearing it down.

"The forest should unambiguously be saved when measured in a purely economic sense," reads the study, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature* earlier this month.

The \$8.2 billion includes the economic benefit of sustainable industries that currently function in the rainforest, such as Brazil nut farming and rubber tree timber. But it also accounts for the economic benefits of the Amazon's environmental influence, such as sequestering carbon dioxide and regulating the local weather.

Tearing down the forest would reduce rainfall so significantly that it would generate an \$422 million annual loss to agriculture, defeating the benefits of having more land to farm on.

These numbers don't come from some back-of-a-napkin calculation, but are the result of a rigorous economical study where the researchers analyzed dozens of contributing, and contradicting, factors to create a spatial map of the economic value throughout the Amazon. Even still, the researchers noted that these numbers only capture a fraction of "the immeasurable overall value of the Amazon forest."

The findings are particularly timely because Brazil, where 60 percent of the Amazon is found, [recently elected a new president, Jair Bolsonaro](#). Bolsonaro is Brazil's answer to US President Donald Trump; he's an anti-globalist, right-wing climate change denier who suggested Brazil withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, and [has pledged to start tearing down the Amazon](#) to open it up for mining, farming, and building dams.

But even a climate-change denier can't argue with cold, hard cash, and this study clearly shows that the economic benefit of most of the Amazon is higher when it's left standing.

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