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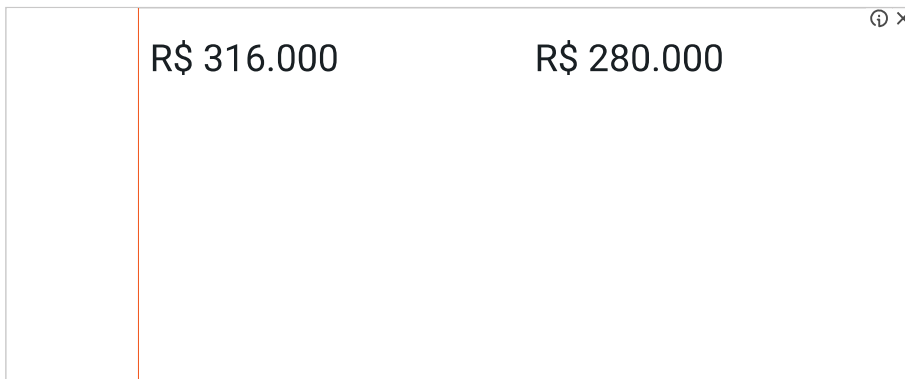
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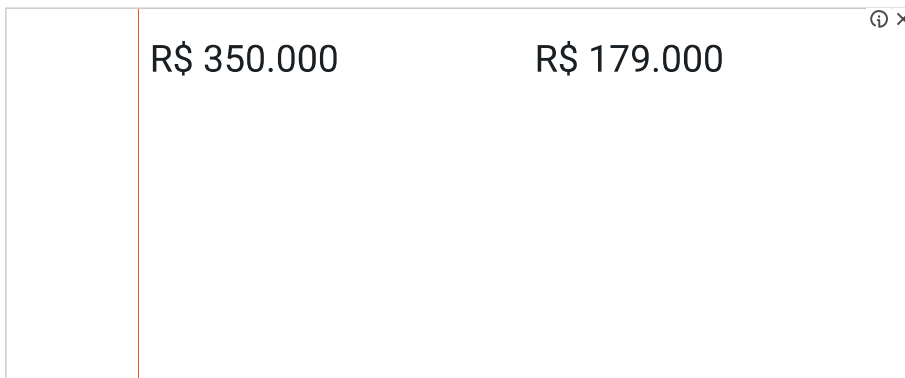
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## Can Bolsonaro be taken at his word on environmental protection? A look at his file

BY NEWSDESK · JANUARY 9, 2022 · 5 MINUTE READ



As president of Brazil, Bolsonaro controls one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, with 19% of the world's primary tropical forests remaining, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and 59% of its territory is covered by forests, much of it the Amazon – which functions as an “air conditioner” for the entire planet, influencing global temperature and precipitation patterns, and absorbing carbon dioxide. For a while, Brazil has been seen as a model for the world in some environmental indicators. According to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), from 2004 to 2013, the country reduced its annual deforestation by nearly three quarters and, by signing the Paris Agreement in 2015, pledged to reduce its emissions of 37% by 2025.



But these trends are reversed under Bolsonaro.

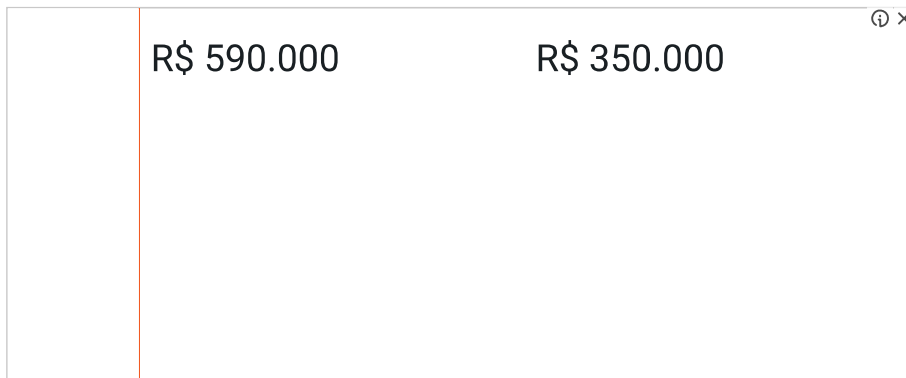
Since the bombastic “Trump of the Tropics” came to power, deforestation and emissions have increased, according to the INPE. Meanwhile, Bolsonaro’s Environment Minister Ricardo Salles has taken special positions, given his title: Exactly one year ago, on April 22, 2020, Salles was notoriously recorded advising the president to take advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to weaken regulations. Today, Brazil’s Supreme Court is considering whether to open an investigation into allegations that Salles obstructed a federal police investigation into illegal logging in the Amazon. In response, the Environment Ministry told

CNN Brazil: "The answer will be given in court." Nonetheless, earlier this month, the Brazilian president sent a letter to Biden, pledging to work for zero deforestation in Brazil by 2030 – a statement hailed as "important" by the US climate envoy. John Kerry. A wave of skepticism followed. Climate activists, civil society groups and state-level officials have written to the U.S. government asking it to establish direct partnerships without the president. Fifteen Democratic senators, including Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders and Patrick Leahy, told Biden to beware that Bolsonaro "was using climate-friendly rhetoric, with no concrete results." Even Hollywood got involved, with actors like Jane Fonda and Katy Perry co-signing a letter with Brazilian artists like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil asking Biden not to make a deal.

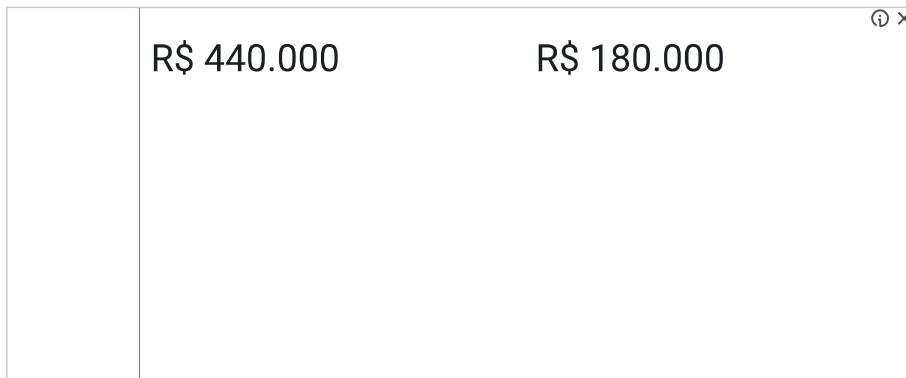
These critics fear that an agreement reached between Brazil and other countries to protect the environment will embolden the Brazilian president, as initiatives that erode environmental protections continue, such as legislation to regularize stolen public land. by land grabbers and legalize illegal mining and large-scale farming on the natives. land.

At the heart of the divide is this: Can Bolsonaro be taken at his word about protecting the environment?

Bolsonaro's office and the Environment Department did not respond to CNN's requests for comment.

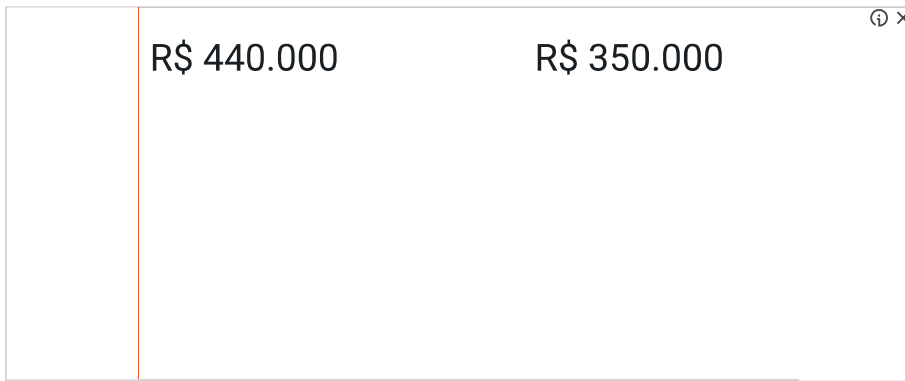


"The Amazon is ours and we are going to develop it"



The Brazilian government has defended its environmental record as sufficient and has highlighted the country's economic well-being as a key priority. In a video posted to his social media in September last year, Bolsonaro boasted that Brazil was protecting its environment, but argued that the Amazon region needs economic development for the well-being of residents. .

"Brazil is the country that preserves the environment the most. The Amazon is ours and we are going to develop it. After all, there are over 20 million Brazilians who cannot be left behind. Congratulations everyone on our Amazon day. to be more and more Brazilian,"he said.



On April 19, its vice-president general Hamilton Mourão told a press conference that Brazil is already doing its part for global environmental efforts and does not have to “beg” for funds at the climate summit for do better. “We don’t have to be a beggar there. Let us say it very clearly: we have our responsibilities. Brazil is only responsible for 3% of emissions in the world,” Mourão said.

Environment Minister Salles told Brazilian press that his intention for the Climate Summit was to seek foreign aid of \$ 1 billion a year from the United States and other partners to help Brazil to end illegal deforestation. (The Biden administration has not made any sign of offering new funds or support to Bolsonaro for climate action.)

But it's not clear that funding issues alone are at the root of the Brazilian government's lackluster environmental record. The Ministry of the Environment has not yet spent the funds already available to combat deforestation: Salles has not used a third of the funds intended to combat deforestation in the Amazon which have been available since April 2018. The program has ended in April and the fund returned to the Ministry of the Economy. In other ways, the Minister of the Environment has in fact made the enforcement of environmental protection more difficult, according to the officers in charge of this work. An April 19 letter signed by more than 600 environmental officers from the Institute of Environment and Renewable Resources (Ibama) and the conservation arm of the ministry (ICMbio) said they had been “crippled” by the recent orders suspending the processing of new fines and reducing field agents. powers to impose fines for environmental violations. The Department of the Environment did not respond to a request for comment.

Over the past two years, the Bolsonaro administration has also opened the door to increasing deforestation and emissions.

Earlier this month, Mourão announced the Bolsonaro administration's very first official target to tackle deforestation in the Amazon: a deforestation rate in 2022 that is 16% higher than the year before taking office de Bolsonaro, although below the current level of destruction – INPE estimates 11,088 square kilometers were lost to deforestation in 2020.

The 2022 target has been described as “very modest” by Brazilian climate research leader Carlos Nobre, while Marcio Astrini, head of the Brazilian environmental network Climate Observatory, called it a confession. “environmental crime”.

Most of the deforestation in Brazil is due to the deliberate clearing of land. Mining alone has deforested 405.36 km<sup>2</sup> of the legal Amazon over the past five years, an area larger than the city of Denver, according to INPE data. And with deforestation come emissions. According to the Climate Observatory, heat-trapping gases are released when primary forests are cut down and fires are started to clear the land for other purposes.

Brazil's latest update on its climate target for the Paris Agreement also allows it to emit more carbon than expected, using an outdated methodology for calculating emissions – which would allow it to emit more greenhouse gases. greenhouse without modifying the original percentage reduction targets.

In October, Brazil released an improved version of the calculation, correcting some flaws in the previous version that overestimated the rate of deforestation. But according to a study by researchers at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment continued to use the obsolete method until December.

Environmental services researcher Raoni Rajao and his colleagues at the Federal University of the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais (UFMG) say the outdated methodology allows Brazil to emit 400 million tonnes of greenhouse gases more than promised when the Paris Agreement was signed. The Ministry of the Environment did not respond to a request for comment on the matter.

Carlos Rittl, senior researcher at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, Germany, said that given the past two years, Brazil will participate in the Climate Summit “without showing anything” as proof of its commitment to the climate. ‘environment.

“The government wants to present a photo of a deforested forest and sell it as sustainability,” he told CNN.

**Sources**

1/ <https://Google.com/>

2/ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/22/americas/brazil-bolsonaro-environment-intl/index.html>

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