



Representatives from AL-INVEST Verde visit coffee plantations in Minas Gerais. Image courtesy of AL-INVEST Verde.

- *Developed by researchers at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, the Selo Verde platform provides a free, public tool to check a Brazilian producer's compliance with environmental laws, including the upcoming EU deforestation regulation.*
- *The tool crosses data from state and federal governments on land use, deforestation, cattle transport and legal infractions, to monitor environmental compliance on rural properties.*
- *Selo Verde is run by state governments: First launched in the state of Pará in 2021, it has since been adopted in Minas Gerais, Acre and Espírito Santo, with other states interested in developing their own Selo Verde, and other countries encouraged to emulate their own.*
- *The adoption of the platform by businesses remains a challenge, however, with experts saying there's no incentive to do so amid ongoing delays to the EUDR.*

In 2020, [a research paper](#) published in the journal *Science* found that 20% of soy exports and at least 17% of beef exports from Brazil's Cerrado and Amazon biomes to the European Union had been tainted by illegal deforestation.

At the time, the EU was debating the EUDR, its regulation on deforestation-free products. Producer countries like Brazil were pushing back, worried about the cost and feasibility of complying with the regulations, said Raoni Rajão, an associate professor at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in Brazil and lead author of the paper.

The study, which analyzed land use across 815,000 rural properties in the Amazon and Cerrado, showed that "technology and data do exist to implement government systems for universal traceability," Rajão told Mongabay.

This prompted him and other UFMG researchers to develop an online platform that uses official records to cross-check data on land use, deforestation, cattle transport, and compliance with environmental laws of rural properties, making the information public and free.

Called [Selo Verde](#) (“Green Label” in English), the platform was first trialed in 2021 for soy and beef in the Amazonian state of Pará. Three other Brazilian states have since adopted their own version of it, offering a model for guaranteeing that commodities destined for the EU — such as soy, beef, coffee and cacao — are compliant with the EUDR.

Due to come into effect at the end of this year [after two postponements](#), the EUDR puts the onus on importers to ensure that certain commodities entering the EU are not linked to deforestation after 2020 and are compliant with source-country laws. In Brazil, that means meeting requirements for forest preservation as well as not overlapping with conservation areas, Indigenous territories or Afro-descendant quilombola lands, and not being blacklisted for using slave labor.

The Selo Verde platform compiles all that information in one place, allowing producers, on the one hand, to prove that their properties are compliant; and traders or buyers, on the other, to do their due diligence.



Representatives from AL-INVEST Verde meet with state authorities in Minas Gerais to discuss the Selo Verde platform. Image courtesy of AL-INVEST Verde.

## Based on existing data

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Selo Verde uses existing government data, which makes it cheap and universal, and gives it legitimacy, Rajão said.

“The public nature contributes significantly to generating trust and security regarding the origin and sustainability of the products,” said Andrea Monaco, senior program manager of [Component 2 at AL-INVEST Verde](#), an EU program that funded the development of Selo Verde in several Brazilian states.

“Selo Verde is closely related to the implementation of the Forest Code,” said Pablo Majer, who leads WWF-Brazil’s Conversion Zero Strategy and helped implement the Selo Verde platform in Pará.

Brazil’s [Forest Code](#) requires rural landowners preserve a percentage of native vegetation on their land, split into two categories. The area of the “legal reserve” varies according to the biome — up to 80% of the property in the Amazon, and 20% in the Cerrado — while the “permanent protection area” (APP) applies to areas like steep slopes and riparian zones. Landowners who have irregularly cleared land must meet restoration requirements. They’re also in breach of the Forest Code if they’ve illegally cleared land after 2008.

Compliance is monitored through the Rural Environmental Registry, or CAR, a mandatory registry for all rural properties that was created in a 2012 reform to the Forest Code.

By crossing information from the CAR with the national government’s [Prodes](#) deforestation data, the Selo Verde platform can show whether there’s been recent deforestation on a property. The EUDR prohibits any deforestation, legal or illegal, after 2020.

Selo Verde also checks for a CAR’s overlap with conservation areas, Indigenous territories or quilombola lands; whether it’s been blacklisted for slave labor; and whether it’s been embargoed or fined for environmental violations.

For cattle, specifically, Selo Verde uses information from animal transit guides (GTA), a compulsory document for transporting animals, to trace cattle batches and identify both direct and indirect deforestation.

Selo Verde isn’t a certification, but the platform can issue a report that operators can then present to inspection authorities in European countries. As the CAR is compulsory, all registered rural properties appear on the platform, although anyone searching needs to know a property’s CAR number.



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## Adoption spreading across Brazil

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After Selo Verde was implemented [in Pará](#), which has Brazil's second-largest cattle herd and the [highest deforestation](#) rates in the Amazon, the state of Minas Gerais began developing its own version of the platform, [SeloVerdeMG](#), in 2022.

It did so with the objective of helping producers meet EUDR requirements. "As Minas Gerais is an exporter of the commodities listed by the European Union, principally coffee ... we started looking into the possibility of analyzing coffee plantations, eucalyptus, soy and beef," João Ricardo Albanez, the state's assistant secretary for agriculture and livestock, told Mongabay.

The platform is particularly interesting for small producers who don't have the financial capacity to pay for third-party monitoring, Rajão said. "Minas [Gerais] has more than 1 million rural properties and 150,000 coffee producers, particularly small-scale," he said.

SeloVerdeMG provides information on coffee, soy, cattle and timber plantations, as well as sugarcane, which isn't covered by the EUDR. As well as Prodes, it uses deforestation data from the state's forestry institute, IEF, and from [high-resolution mapping](#) produced by UFMG, and provides information [on local certificates](#).

The states of Acre and Espírito Santo began running beta versions of their own platforms last year. [SeloVerdeAC](#) monitors soy, while [SeloVerdeES](#) covers coffee, timber plantations and cacao. Similar platforms are under development in Tocantins and Mato Grosso do Sul, two soy- and beef-producing states.



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People involved in Selo Verde told Mongabay that there's interest in the platform from other Brazilian states, while the EU has presented the tool to other countries, including Paraguay and Argentina.

"It is not directly replicable internationally," AL-INVEST Verde's Monaco told Mongabay, noting that the platform is based on the CAR, which is specific to Brazil. "However, it can be adapted according to each country's regulations."

According to Rajão, the UFMG team is discussing transfer of technology with a partner in South America and one in Europe.

For WWF's Majer, Selo Verde plays a role in accelerating efforts to root out deforestation from supply chains. "[In Pará] the implementation of cattle traceability only happened because Selo Verde exists," he said, referring to the [Pará government's program](#) for individual cattle tracing.

It can also help strengthen other monitoring or traceability initiatives, like the federal government's [Agro Brasil + Sustentável](#) platform, which aggregates voluntarily provided data to monitor deforestation, or the recently launched [Beef on Track \(BoT\) certification](#).



A coffee plantation in Minas Gerais. Image courtesy of AL-INVEST Verde.

## Challenges amid EUDR delays

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Where Selo Verde falls short is on individual traceability, a requirement of the EUDR, especially for beef, where animals can pass through numerous farms before being sold to meatpackers.

“For grains, for agriculture, it’s the best tool we have today ... It offers greater security to the producer, the exporter and the buyer,” Majer said. “But for the livestock supply chain, [Selo Verde] is a transition tool, it’s not sufficient for complete traceability.”

In addition, the platform is only as strong as the CAR, which is self-declaratory and requires subsequent verification. Since the CAR’s implementation in 2014, environmental authorities have checked [less than 11%](#) of the registries, leaving ample scope for false or misleading declarations.

A [recent investigation by Brazilian newspaper O Globo](#) found that cases of overlapping CARs amount to an area four times the size of Germany. It also identified various instances of wrongdoing, including attempts to change the limits of a property to exclude areas with illegal

deforestation.

Rajão said he believes Selo Verde provides enough information to raise red flags on potentially noncompliant properties. He said the argument that a property must have all its paperwork in order before checking whether there is deforestation “is an excuse to not act.”

The next stage is ensuring that the tool is adopted. Both Rajão and Monaco said Selo Verde has been positively received in Europe by governments and inspection authorities, but didn’t name any of the buyers using the platform. Organizations representing Brazilian coffee exporters and producers contacted by Mongabay said they couldn’t name associated companies or producers using Selo Verde.

“Producers weren’t involved in the construction of Selo Verde, so they’re going to be [opposed to it](#),” Majer said.

Marina Guyot, executive manager for climate, land use and public policy at Imaflora, a Brazilian NGO working on beef traceability, said companies like meatpackers are unlikely to adopt monitoring and traceability initiatives while there’s no requirement to do so.

“The postponements of the EUDR are a huge shot in the foot for the sustainability agenda,” she said.

“We’re on the right track,” Majer said. “The tools exist. Certifications exist, if they’re necessary, and the legislation exists to get there [zero deforestation and land conversion]. Now, we need implementation.”



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***Banner image:*** Representatives from AL-INVEST Verde visit coffee plantations in Minas Gerais. Image courtesy of AL-INVEST Verde.

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