

## End of the Soy Moratorium puts 13 million hectares in the Amazon at risk

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The Soy Moratorium is a voluntary agreement established between Abiove — the association representing Brazil’s main soybean trading companies — and civil society organizations, with support from the Ministry of the Environment, that commits to halt the expansion of soy cultivation into forest areas within the Amazon biome. The agreement emerged after a broad Greenpeace campaign that came close to triggering a widespread boycott of soy sourced from the Amazon by major purchasing companies, especially in Europe.

The Soy Moratorium Working Group carries out detailed monitoring, blocking properties that have deforested more than 25 hectares (ha) and converted these areas to soy production within the biome. As a result, in 2022/23, 2,000 properties (5%) were blocked, totalling 250,000 ha of non-compliant soy. According to Abiove’s own assessment, 97% of the deforestation that occurred on these properties was unauthorized, demonstrating that the Moratorium largely functions as a mechanism to combat illegal deforestation (Abiove, 2025; Agro Estadão, 2025). To circumvent the blockade, soy producers often turn to cooperatives or sell to smaller trading companies, usually at lower prices, which ultimately discourages further deforestation.

As a result of this arrangement, the Moratorium generated significant environmental conservation gains. In 2006, the biome had 1.6 million ha of soy, and 30% of soy expansion in the biome occurred on forest areas. After the implementation of the Soy Moratorium in 2008, only 4% of the additional 6 million ha expanded through 2024 occurred in forest areas (Abiove, 2025; Gibbs et al., 2015). The low level of forest-to-soy conversion persisted even during the years of environmental policy dismantling under the Bolsonaro administration, indicating that private-sector initiatives can be as important as enforcement in reducing deforestation.

The end of the Soy Moratorium is expected to lead to a significant increase in deforestation associated with soy production in the Amazon. In 2023, the 43 thousand properties with more than 1 ha of soy in the biome conserved 13.9 million hectares of native vegetation, averaging 31% per property—well below the maximum 80% required by law. However, this vegetation is unevenly distributed: across the biome, these properties hold 835,000 hectares of surplus legal reserve (8% of the biome’s total surplus) that could potentially be authorized for conversion, while at the same time accumulating 4.7 million hectares of legal reserve deficit that must be restored or compensated (CSR/UFMG, 2023). With the end of the Moratorium, instead of encouraging the sector to regularize

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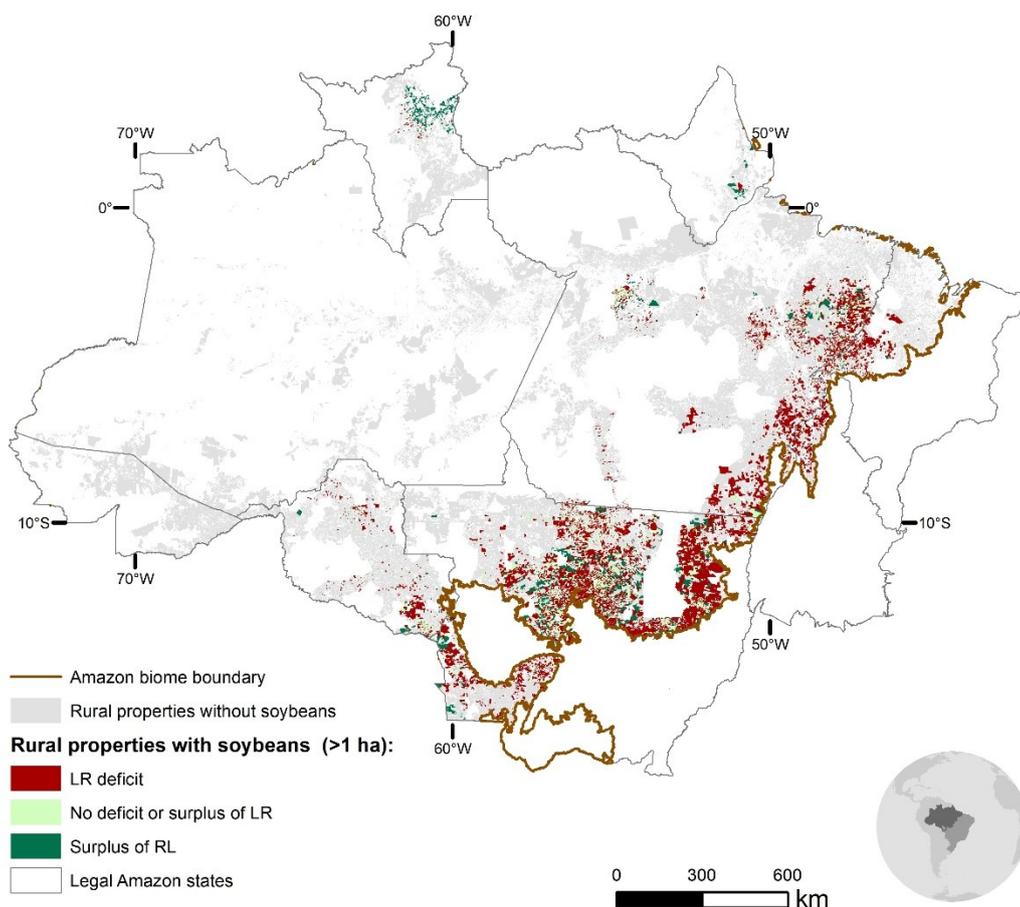
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and offset its legal reserve deficit, an additional incentive for authorized deforestation would be created. Moreover, with reduced private-sector controls, all native vegetation located within soy-producing properties becomes more exposed to the risk of illegal deforestation.

More than 80% of soy produced in the Amazon biome is exported to global markets, with China (30%) and the European Union (19%) as the largest destinations. Approximately 60% of cultivated soy is marketed by large multinational companies that were signatories to the moratorium (Lathuillière et al., 2022). Data from Forest 500 show that 49% of companies in the soy supply chain (including traders, industry, and retailers) have deforestation-related commitments for this commodity. Many of them rely on the moratorium as a reliable mechanism to help implement these commitments. Ending the Soy Moratorium in the Amazon would expose China, Europe, and major trading companies to deforestation risks in their supply chains, reopening the debate on how to guarantee soy’s origin and generating new pressures for a boycott of the entire region.



**Figure 1.** Rural properties with more than 1 hectare of soy in the Amazon biome, shown in red for properties with a legal reserve deficit and in green for those with a surplus.

**Conclusion:**

The termination of the Soy Moratorium, therefore, poses a concrete risk of environmental backsliding in the Amazon biome. By weakening one of the main governance mechanisms that helped decouple soy expansion from deforestation, the likelihood of converting native areas—including beyond legal limits—increases. The experience accumulated since 2008 demonstrates that it is possible to expand agricultural production without encroaching on forests. Abandoning this commitment could jeopardize not only environmental targets, but also the sector's credibility and access to increasingly sustainability-demanding international markets.

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