# Lula's government fast-tracks Amazon projects despite COP30 climate summit



As Brazil gears up to host the U.N.'s first climate talks in the Amazon later this year, a series of controversial decisions by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s administration are raising eyebrows and showcasing an increasingly contradictory stance on environmental issues. Just months ahead of the COP30 climate summit, the Brazilian federal government has fast-tracked several projects detrimental to the Amazon rainforest, undermining Lula’s previously strong environmental platform.

Recent approvals from Brazil’s federal environmental agency include plans for offshore drilling near the Amazon's mouth and rock blasting along the Tocantins River, set to facilitate shipping routes for soybeans, predominantly aimed at exports to China. Environmental advocates fear these plans could severely undermine any credibility Lula might have going into the climate summit. Cleberson Zavaski, president of the National Association of Environmental Public Servants, voiced concern: “What will Brazil show up with at COP30 in November? Will it be, once again, a list of commitments that contradict what the country itself is putting on the table today?”

Lula’s trajectory on environmental issues contrasts sharply with his campaign promises made during the 2022 elections, where he positioned himself as a defender of the Amazon against the rampant deforestation seen under former President Jair Bolsonaro. Yet, shortly after taking office, Lula expressed support for exploratory drilling operations by Petrobras—Brazil’s state-run oil company—criticising the environmental agency for delays in approval. This marked a significant departure from the commitments he made to protect the rainforest and has led to an outcry from environmental groups both domestically and internationally.

Simultaneously, Brazil's Congress has moved to weaken environmental protections significantly. Legislation passed in May streamlines environmental licensing, allowing project approvals for previously contentious developments, such as paving the BR-319 highway through the pristine rainforest. Critics argue the highway not only threatens the delicate ecosystem but also facilitates illegal activities related to land grabs and further deforestation. As noted by climate advocacy groups, these legislative moves indicate a “perfect combo to wipe out environmental protections and Indigenous land demarcations” in Brazil, raising alarms over the potential for increased carbon emissions and climate crises.

Despite pushback from Lula’s Workers’ Party and opposition from figures like Environment Minister Marina Silva—who has openly warned about the severe implications of such legislation—the president appears positioned to endorse much of the changes set forth by Congress. Internal divisions within Lula’s cabinet are becoming apparent; Silva’s role has visibly diminished, causing concern about a potential regression to policies reminiscent of previous administrations when environmental oversight was badly compromised.

The environmental landscape in Brazil has also seen troubling developments in the form of heightened deforestation rates, with a recent report indicating a 92% increase in deforestation in May 2025 compared to the previous year. This surge endangers Brazil’s claims of improved environmental stewardship and poses a stark threat to Lula's pledges to end deforestation by 2030. João Paulo Capobianco of the Ministry of the Environment attributes this rise to increased wildfires but stressed that reversing these trends is critical for Brazil's international standing and the overall health of the planet.

As Brazil prepares for COP30, with Lula advocating for a fair transition away from fossil fuels, the juxtaposition of ambitious pronouncements against a backdrop of accelerated exploitation raises questions about the authenticity and sustainability of the government’s commitment to protecting the Amazon. Marina Silva has suggested that COP30 presents a pivotal opportunity for global climate action, but without a concerted effort to align policy with rhetoric, Brazil risks further jeopardising both its environmental credentials and global climate goals.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-brazil-amazon-congress-jair-bolsonaro-b2767276.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-brazil-amazon-congress-jair-bolsonaro-b2767276.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd), [[5]](https://time.com/7284519/marina-silva-amazon-climate-interview/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/ba2fb67113c7d5fd5bbbbde94b9151ca), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/ed9b5f7ac1c2e326091898e96fe4d67f)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/ed9b5f7ac1c2e326091898e96fe4d67f)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/ba2fb67113c7d5fd5bbbbde94b9151ca), [[5]](https://time.com/7284519/marina-silva-amazon-climate-interview/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-brazil-amazon-congress-jair-bolsonaro-b2767276.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd> - Brazil is expediting controversial oil and infrastructure projects that threaten the Amazon rainforest, contradicting President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's environmental promises. Despite his 2022 campaign focus on environmental protection, Lula supported Petrobras' offshore drilling near the Amazon and a rock-blasting project on the Tocantins River to aid soybean export routes, both approved under emergency conditions. Critics argue these actions undermine Brazil's climate commitments and represent a regression in Amazon protection. Additionally, Congress passed legislation reducing environmental licensing requirements, potentially expediting projects like the paving of the BR-319 highway through pristine rainforest areas. These decisions complicate land demarcation for Indigenous communities and weaken federal environmental oversight. Although Lula's Workers' Party opposes the new laws, reports suggest the president supports most of the changes. Environment Minister Marina Silva has voiced strong objections, warning of severe environmental setbacks, but appears increasingly sidelined within the administration. Environmental groups and international advocates warn that these policies could result in significant deforestation and environmental damage, potentially setting off a global climate crisis. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/247c94cb58ef848eda2d6082011766cd?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/why-brazils-king-cattle-is-embracing-plan-save-amazon-2025-06-09/> - Roque Quagliato, once criticised for deforestation and unethical labour practices, is now championing sustainable cattle ranching in Brazil’s Amazon. Known as the “King of Cattle,” Quagliato has become a prominent supporter of Para state’s initiative to tag all 26 million cattle by 2027. The program aims to curb illegal deforestation and improve traceability to meet stringent demands from international markets such as the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Despite technical challenges and skepticism from smaller ranchers, support from major stakeholders, including meatpacker JBS and the Bezos Earth Fund, is building momentum. The tagging system not only helps trace the legal origin of cattle but also enhances disease control measures, potentially raising Brazil’s beef export value. Resistance remains, especially among small producers concerned about economic impacts and regulatory consequences from past deforestation. However, the initiative includes provisions allowing ranchers to clear past deforestation records by regenerating land. Although imperfect, stakeholders view the effort as a significant step toward aligning Brazil’s beef industry with global environmental and health standards, potentially reducing deforestation linked to cattle ranching in the Amazon. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/why-brazils-king-cattle-is-embracing-plan-save-amazon-2025-06-09/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://apnews.com/article/ba2fb67113c7d5fd5bbbbde94b9151ca> - In May 2025, deforestation in Brazil's Amazon surged by 92% compared to the same month in 2024, with 960 square kilometres lost—an area larger than New York City. This marks the second-highest May deforestation total since 2016 and poses a significant challenge to Brazil's environmental goals. João Paulo Capobianco of Brazil's Ministry of the Environment attributed the spike to an increase in wildfires, which became more visible due to post-rainy season satellite improvements and clearer weather conditions. Unlike North American fires, Amazon fires typically burn along the forest floor, sometimes allowing for recovery. The new data threatens to reverse deforestation reductions achieved since President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva began his third term in 2023, having pledged to end deforestation by 2030. Over the past 10 months, deforestation rose 9.7% year-over-year. This trend is especially concerning as Brazil prepares for the UN climate talks in November, to be held in Belém. Brazil, responsible for roughly 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, generates nearly half of its emissions through deforestation. Capobianco called for international backing for Brazil's Tropical Forests Forever Fund, aimed at compensating countries for forest conservation efforts. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/ba2fb67113c7d5fd5bbbbde94b9151ca?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://time.com/7284519/marina-silva-amazon-climate-interview/> - Since reassuming her role as Brazil's Environment and Climate Minister in 2023, Marina Silva has led a remarkable reversal in Amazon deforestation, achieving the lowest deforestation rate in a decade. Under her leadership, Brazil has implemented stringent environmental enforcement, rebuilt key institutions, and increased public funding. Despite progress, Silva warns that the Amazon is approaching a critical tipping point, where continued global fossil fuel emissions could lead to irreversible damage, including the transformation of rainforest into savannah. She stresses that ending deforestation within Brazil is not enough without global cooperation to reduce carbon emissions. As Brazil prepares to host COP30 in November, Silva is pushing major initiatives such as a $2 billion reforestation project and a proposed $125 billion global tropical forest fund. She also highlights Brazil's introduction of a carbon pricing mechanism. Silva envisions COP30 as a pivotal moment for real climate action, despite challenges including the U.S.'s reduced international climate engagement under former President Trump. Addressing critiques of slow progress and pending oil exploration, Silva advocates for a fair, planned transition away from fossil fuels. Her commitment underscores Brazil’s central role in the global climate movement. ([time.com](https://time.com/7284519/marina-silva-amazon-climate-interview/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/ed9b5f7ac1c2e326091898e96fe4d67f> - Brazil has reinstated its stronger greenhouse gas commitments originally set in 2015 as part of the Paris Agreement, which were weakened during former President Jair Bolsonaro's administration. This change was announced by Brazil's Committee on Climate Change, consisting of 18 government ministries, and will be communicated to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Weakening of Brazil's climate goals during Bolsonaro's tenure led to an increase in target emissions by approximately 73 million metric tons of CO2 by 2030. Under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, efforts to combat deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, a major contributor to Brazil's emissions, have significantly improved, with a 48% reduction from January to August. The Talanoa Institute emphasized that while reinstating the 2015 commitments is a positive step, Brazil needs to adopt bolder and more ambitious climate goals, including broader societal involvement in the emissions target-setting process. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/ed9b5f7ac1c2e326091898e96fe4d67f?utm_source=openai))