



Q&A: Soy & the Amazon

WWF understands that Amazon deforestation causes are complex and subject to several conditions. WWF is convinced that there is not one single product – like soy, for instance – which is, in and by itself, the cause of deforestation. The deforestation process is influenced by a number of conditions such as ambiguity over land ownership, illegal land deals, illegal logging, cattle ranching, soy production, and infrastructure expansion.

Is soy a threat to the Amazon?

While statistics show that soybean fields have directly replaced relatively few forested areas of the Amazon, soy cultivation nevertheless remains a major threat to the Amazon. That's because soy expansion in areas surrounding the forest drive up land prices and push other less profitable farming practices, like cattle ranching, into the forests, causing deforestation. So, while cattle ranching is a much bigger direct cause of deforestation in the Amazon, soy is an indirect contributor to this phenomenon.

In addition, the issue of soy cultivation goes beyond the Amazon, and beyond Brazil. Expansion of soy cultivation throughout South America is leading to destruction of many globally significant habitats, including the last remnants of the Atlantic Forests, the *Cerrado* (savannahs), and the *Chaco*, in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay, in addition to Brazil.

- WWF is also tackling the environmental impacts of livestock and cattle in a separate but linked strategy under WWF's Market Transformation Initiative: http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/how_we_work/businesses/transforming_markets/solutions/

What is the role of the Soy Moratorium in avoiding Amazon deforestation?

The Soy Moratorium is a compromise solution by the ABIOVE (Brazilian Vegetable Oil Industry Association) and ANEC (Brazilian Grain Exporters Association) and their respective member companies, which pledged not to trade soy originated in deforested areas within the Amazon Biome after July 2006. WWF welcomes that important soy companies are starting to address the uncontrolled soy expansion in the Amazon.

The initiative is supported by several NGOs, including WWF-Brazil, which is an active member of the GTS (“Grupo de Trabalhoda Soja”), the working group which leads the Moratorium.

- More on the Soy Moratorium:
http://www.abiove.com.br/english/ss_moratoria_us.html

What results have been achieved by the Soy Moratorium?

The Moratorium’s first two monitoring exercises (in 2007/2008 and 2008/2009) revealed that very little soy was cultivated in recently deforested areas in the Amazon. In the 2010/11 harvest season, 11,698 hectares (45 square miles) of soy were indentified to be violating the Moratorium. This is .39% of the total area cleared in the states of Mato Grosso, Para, and Rondonia. This shows an increase from the 2009/2010 monitoring, which showed 6,300 hectares of soy were in violation of the Moratorium. The Moratorium was recently extended until January 31, 2013:

http://www.abiove.com.br/english/sustent/abiove_release_moratoria_13out11_us.pdf

While the results of the Moratorium have been encouraging, WWF regrets they have in the past been erroneously used to promote the image of all Brazilian soy as “deforestation free.” This “deforestation free” label was mistakenly associated with the grains coming from deforested areas of the rich Cerrado savannahs and other biomes in Brazil, which are not covered by the Moratorium. Soy cultivated in the Amazon biome corresponds to around 5% of the Brazilian planted area, while the Cerrado comprises around 60% of the Brazilian production. Consequently, the Cerrado is the biome under the most pressure for soy expansion. According to Brazil’s Environmental Ministry, 50% of the Cerrado has already been cleared for agriculture expansion.

What does WWF recommend to improve the effectiveness of the Soy Moratorium?

The Soy Moratorium and its associated monitoring system has achieved a high standard, but it is now necessary to improve the control mechanisms after the soy is harvested to ensure that traders comply with the Moratorium. WWF and the other NGOs involved in the Moratorium believe that an efficient traceability system depends on the registering and mapping of the soy farms by the relevant local environmental agencies. In 2010, WWF and the other NGOs released a joint statement urging that the Soy Moratorium be strengthened through more rigorous requirements for producers and buyers:

http://www.wwf.org.br/natureza_brasileira/reducao_de_impactos2/agricultura/agr_news/?24961/Nota-publica-moratoria-soja (Portuguese).

The Soy Moratorium Working Group (GTS) has since announced the launch of an incentive program to help Amazon soy farmers comply with the Rural Environmental Registration (CAR) requirements. (Currently clear ownership records exist for less than 4 percent of private land in the Amazon – however such registration with the government is a necessary first step in assuring the compliance of soy farmers with legislation preventing deforestation as well as the Soy Moratorium). This incentive program will educate and train rural producers, making them aware of the need and advantages of adapting to current legislation and help those that are not already registered to obtain rural environmental registration for their soy farms.

WWF believes that it is essential that Brazil satisfies both agricultural and conservation concerns in all its biomes. WWF views the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) as one solution that can help ensure a Moratorium on deforestation in the Amazon and responsible expansion in the Cerrado and other biomes.

The RTRS is a multi-stakeholder, longer term and process-based approach involving a multitude of consumer and producing countries, whilst the Amazon Soy Moratorium injects urgency into the issue in an important geographic area i.e. the Brazilian Amazon. These are not competing approaches, and WWF urges relevant companies to participate in both.

- More on the RTRS: www.responsiblesoy.org

However, WWF emphasizes that the threats to the Brazilian Amazon go beyond soy cultivation. There is an urgency to act in parallel on other key issues in order to reduce forest conversion in the area, including cattle ranching (for both foreign and domestic markets), the role and ability of the Brazilian federal and state-level institutions to ensure ownership of and care for public lands, and infrastructure development.

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