

Soy moratorium reduces plantings on new deforestations to less than 1%

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Soybeans, an oilseed that had been the great villain of Amazon deforestation, today occupies less than 1% of the land in the Biome deforested since 2006. This is the result, published this Tuesday (14th), of two years of “soy moratorium”, shown by the detailed monitoring of 630 areas deforested since the pact was signed in June of that year, in the states of Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Pará, traditional soy producers. In the most recent crop, only twelve of these polygons were occupied by the grain, and these productions will not be acquired by any of the industries or exporters who are members of ABIOVE (Brazilian Vegetable Oils Industry Association) and ANEC (National Grain Exporters Association). They are responsible for the purchase of 90% of all the soy produced in the country.

“It is an extraordinary result. Soy is no longer a determining factor in the deforestation of the Amazon, and certainly part of the merit for the pronounced reduction in the region’s deforestation, which has fallen 40% in the last ten months, belongs to this pact”, said Minister Carlos Minc, who signed the Moratorium on behalf of the Ministry of the Environment, jointly with Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Amazon and other non-governmental organizations.

The monitoring, basis for the effective compliance of the moratorium, accompanied the use of deforested areas in the periods 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. The most significant result is that of the second period, not only because of the extension monitored (157,000 hectares vs. 49 hectares in the prior period), but also because of the recognition that the Biome’s land is only suitable for soy planting at least one year after deforestation.

To monitor the most recent crop, 6,000 aerial photographs during 230 hours of flyovers and 1,300 satellite images were produced. Globalsat Monitoramento Agrícola was responsible for this work, using the official databases of INPE/Prodes, IBGE, IBAMA and FUNAI.

“The work was not perfect, but we came close to this”, noted ABIOVE’s president Carlo Lovatelli, highlighting the initiative of businessmen, civilian society and government to meet a market requirement. “Soy is an international commodity with many restrictions and pressures. If soy encroaches on the Amazon, we run the serious risk of being shut out of the market.”

The “soy moratorium” was the first of six pacts already signed by the Ministry of the Environment and the private sector to place market mechanisms at the service of environmental sustainability. The last one was signed last week with Febraban (Brazilian Private Banks Federation), and the terms of a pact with the cold storage sector are being defined that should also positively impact the reduction of deforestation in the Amazon.

“Livestock is lagging behind soy”, said Minc, based on the data published yesterday: The large majority of the monitored deforested polygons were destined for pastures. In addition to the agreement that should be signed with similar terms to those of the soy moratorium, Minc said there will environmental conditions in the package the government is preparing to help the cold storage sector traverse the international economic crisis.

“All of us know that the world is watching and, as it has done with soybeans, it will impose barriers on our ethanol, our meat, our wood and everything produced at the cost of deforestations or environmental damage”, he alerted.

Soybean plantings non-compliant with the moratorium are located in the towns of Feliz Natal, Gaúcha do Norte, Querência and Sinop in Mato Grosso state and Dom Eliseu in Pará state. According to ABIOVE’s president, producers can be excluded from the supplier catalogue. The entities are already studying a way of making environmental service payments to farmers who keep their forests standing.

Carlo Lovatelli took advantage of the meeting with Minister Carlos Minc to ask about the commitments he undertook in the name of the Ministry for the Environment when signing the moratorium’s extension in June last year, especially as regards the ecologic-economic zoning (ZEE), regularization of land use, registration of rural properties and preparation of a Biome map on a more appropriate scale.

Minc said that the state zonings and the Amazon’s ZEE should be concluded in December, a year before the estimate. He also said that land regularization and registration are the subject of a Provisional Measure that has already been signed by President Lula, adding that the Amazon Biome map, on a 1:100,000 scale, is being prepared by IBGE, with the technical and financial support of the Consórcio ZEE Brasil, coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment.

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