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Deforestation soars in the Amazon

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon is on the rise and not declining as you imply (*Nature* **520**, 20–23; 2015). Forest clearance has exploded since August 2014, according to satellite data from Brazil's National Institute for Space Research and the sustainable-development organization Imazon. Monthly clearance rates are several times those for the same months in the preceding two years.

The data on deforestation drivers in the studies you discuss predate the recent deforestation surge (D. Nepstad *et al. Science* **344**, 1118–1123; 2014 and H. K. Gibbs *et al. Science* **347**, 377–378; 2015). Brazil's currency, the real, is in free-fall, with no end in sight. Exchange rates against the US dollar mean that exports from Brazil are now considerably more profitable than last year, when the deforestation decline was occurring.

Prospects for the near term are not good. A key 2008 resolution from the Central Bank of Brazil, which links financing from public banks to environmental compliance, now offers only fragile protection in the face of a congress dominated by those in favour of agribusiness. Creation of new protected areas has been essentially paralysed, existing reserves continue to have their official status removed, and government expenditure on enforcing environmental laws has been cut by 72%. Furthermore, political appointments are sending an anti-environmental signal to deforesters (see *Nature* **517**, 251–252; 2015), and plans for Amazonian roads continue as fast as money allows. The "battle for the Amazon" is far from won.

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