

# COMBATING ILLEGAL DEFORESTATION IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

Deforestation is a serious problem that causes various negative impacts of an environmental, economic, and social order. In the Amazon, the problems are amplified, given the extent of the area - much of it covered by forests -, the richness of its biodiversity, the effects on the rainfall regime throughout the country, in addition to the climate impact generated by the emissions of greenhouse gases resulting from this deforestation.

## Objective of the Performance Audit

In 2019, the Federal Court of Accounts of Brazil (TCU) conducted an audit to assess the Federal Government's actions aimed at controlling illegal deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, from 2016 to 2020, related to the governance of the policy for the prevention and control of deforestation and federal environmental inspection activities.

## Main Findings

In this work, the TCU detected the absence of fundamental elements in the current deforestation control plans. Moreover, it verified the lack of clear definition of the competencies of the main actors involved in the formulation and coordination of the policy, in addition to the reduction, over time, of the participation of stakeholders in this policy.

It was found that messages issued by high-ranking authorities of the Federal Executive Branch, delegitimizing and disqualifying the work carried out by the institutions involved in the inspection process, have negatively impacted this activity.

Regarding the inspection of the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama), situations were detected that have hindered the proper performance of the institution: reduction of its inspection capacity over the years due to the decrease in the number of agents fit for the activity; absence of a social communication strategy; deficiencies in the appointment process for strategic positions; and weakening of the right to carry firearms by inspectors.

There was also a lack of legal support for the use of the Armed Forces, within the framework of the Law and Order Guarantee Operation, to combat environmental administrative infractions, as occurred in 2019 and 2020/2021, as well as the inadequacy, from a technical standpoint, for the coordination of deforestation combat actions to be in charge of these forces. Problems of coordination between the Ministry of Defense and Ibama were also detected in the planning and execution of actions within the scope of Operation Green Brazil 2.

The findings reported above represent significant obstacles for the country to adopt effective measures to combat this serious problem, minimize the negative effects generated by deforestation, and enable the achievement of the goal assumed by the Brazilian government in the Paris Agreement, to zero illegal deforestation in the region by 2030.

## Recommendations

The Ministry of the Environment (MMA) and the National Council for the Legal Amazon (CNAL) were recommended to improve the normative-institutional arrangement of the deforestation control policy in the Amazon.

Additionally, it was recommended to the Presidency of the Republic, the MMA, and Ibama that public messages regarding the fight against deforestation and the performance of the institutions involved in the inspection process be aligned with the objectives of the deforestation control policy.

The CNAL, MMA, and Ibama were also recommended to take measures to remedy and/or mitigate the other weaknesses pointed out (related to the carrying of firearms, deficiencies in the appointment to strategic positions, inspection capacity, and social communication).

## Decisions

Judgment 1.758/2021-TCU-Plenary

Reporting Judge: Substitute Minister André de Carvalho

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Responsible technical unit: AudAgroAmbiental