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## Brazil in deal to fund Amazon reserve

By Joe Leahy in São Paulo Author alerts



The Brazilian government and donors including the World Wildlife Fund announced on Wednesday an agreement to finance the management of 15 per cent of the country's Amazon forest as protected reserves.

The deal will fund a scheme, known as the Amazon Region Protected Areas Programme, which aims to protect 60m hectares, of which about 52m ha has already been incorporated, equating to an area one and a half times the size of California, the WWF said.

"More than 50 per cent of the protected areas in the world over the past 15 years were created through this programme," Carter Roberts, WWF president, said in an interview.

The scheme, under which donors will provide funding to ensure the professional management of parks and reserves controlled by the Brazilian government, comes as rainforests around the world are under acute threat.

Singapore is bracing for the worse year on record for haze from forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia, home to one of the world's three largest concentrations of tropical rainforest, as farmers slash native vegetation to clear the way for plantations.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is seeking \$1bn from international donors in return for conserving its rainforests, which are second only to the Amazon in size.

In Brazil last year, deforestation of the Amazon rose slightly after several years of steep falls, worrying conservationists.

Mr Roberts said donors under Arpa had studied the Brazilian government's projected budget for Amazon parks over the next 25 years to calculate the additional funds required to ensure their professional management.

"It is an old story that it is easy to create parks, it is another thing to finance them to make sure they remain intact," said Mr Roberts.

The donors had created a \$215m fund that would supplement the Brazilian government's budget until this rose to a level sufficient to fully cover the expense of running the parks in a transition that is expected to take 25 years.

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"We created a transition fund that would be paid out on a year-by-year basis based on the government of Brazil raising its budget each year to close the gap," said Mr Roberts.

The alliance of supporters and donors of Arpa includes Brazil's development bank, BNDES, Germany's federal ministry for economic co-operation and development, the World Bank, Larry Linden, a former partner at Goldman Sachs.

Mr Roberts said the rationale was that there was no point creating national parks if these could not be properly managed and monitored to ensure that they were not invaded by illegal loggers, ranchers or farmers or otherwise abused.

"We are talking about vehicles, we are talking about equipment, we are talking about resources that park rangers need, we are talking about science resources," said Mr Roberts.

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“It is to really manage the parks so we don't see their diminishment over time.”

In spite of the recent uptick in Brazilian deforestation, the country has won plaudits for its efforts to slow the destruction of the Amazon.

The Arpa programme began 15 years ago with a pledge by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso to conserve 10 per cent of the Amazon in national parks and reserves, the WWF said.

His successor, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, then cracked down on illegal deforestation by blacklisting municipalities that violated the country's rigorous environmental laws and prevented offending farmers from having access to new credit.

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