

# Brazil Saw 79% Jump In Area Burned By Fires In 2024: Monitor

AFP- Wildfires in Brazil last year consumed a total area larger than all of Italy, a monitor reported Wednesday, as the country continues to battle blazes often set by farmers and ranchers illegally expanding their territory.

Some 30.8 million hectares (119,000 square miles) of vegetation were burned in Brazil in 2024, a 79 percent increase from 2023, monitoring platform MapBiomas reported.

Fires in the Amazon, a crucial carbon sink for the rest of the world as well as a global hotspot of biodiversity, accounted for 58 percent of the damage.

The figures are discouraging news for the government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who in November will host the UN COP30 climate conference in the Amazonian city of Belem.

The 2024 figures represent the largest area burned since 2019.

Some 8.5 million hectares of forest burned in 2024, compared to 2.2 million in 2023, and in the Amazon, fires took out more forest than grassland for the first time, according to the data.

“This is a terrible indicator, because, once forests are burned, they become more susceptible to future fires,” said Ane Alencar, of MapBiomas.

Climate change makes vegetation drier and thus more prone to burning.

But in Brazil, the main driver of the fires are ranchers and

farmers who clear land for pasture and agriculture – a crime the government struggles to contain.

Lula has made preserving the Amazon a priority of his government, following lax protections against human expansion into the territory under his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro.

But in September, Lula admitted that the country was not “100% prepared” to face a wave of forest fires that his government attributed to “climate terrorism.”

The Brazilian Amazon saw its highest number of fires in 17 years in 2024, government data published earlier this month showed, after the vast biome suffered months of a lengthy drought.

There were 140,328 fires detected by satellite imaging over the year, according to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

That was 42 percent more than the 98,634 fires recorded in 2023 – and the most since 2007, when 186,463 forest fires were seen.

Those figures, as well as Wednesday’s, come after some hope last year when the INPE said that deforestation in the region had fallen by more than 30 percent in the 12-month period to August 2024.

Scientists warn that continued deforestation will put the Amazon on track to reach a point where it will emit more carbon than it absorbs, accelerating climate change.

AFP