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## The Amazon: biofuels plan will drive deforestation

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The scientific community, Brazil's policymakers and the public need to take coordinated action against plans to amplify biofuel production at the expense of the Amazon rainforest. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro lifted the ban on sugar-cane cultivation in the Amazon by decree in November 2019 to help boost the country's biofuel production. Plans to produce more oil palm for biofuel in the state of Roraima follow the inauguration of a processing plant there last April. And in the west of the state of Amazonas, new roads could open up previously inaccessible areas for palm plantations and drive further devastating cycles of deforestation.

After the president took over in January 2019 ([C. A. Nobre \*Nature\* 574, 455; 2019](#)), a government consortium announced investments of 4.4 billion reais (US\$1.1 billion) in six Amazon states — Amazonas, Acre, Amapá, Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Roraima — for the installation of power plants fuelled by maize ethanol. Maize ethanol was chosen because of the ban on sugar-cane production, introduced to curb deforestation and the loss of ecosystem services essential to Brazil's

agriculture and to mitigate global climate change (L. Ferrante and P. M. Fearnside *Science* 359, 1476; 2018).

Lifting the ban adds to the already huge pressure on the rainforest from cattle ranching, soya-bean production, hydroelectric dams and mining.

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