

BRAZIL, GLOBAL CHAMPION IN NATIVE VEGETATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Do you know any other country in the world that dedicates so much area of its territory to the protection, preservation and conservation of native vegetation and biodiversity as Brazil? Does any country get close to what Brazil does for the environment, in absolute and relative terms? Nonetheless, the country is a permanent target of mean criticism, here and abroad, usually misinformed and unfounded, about the preservation of its ecosystems.

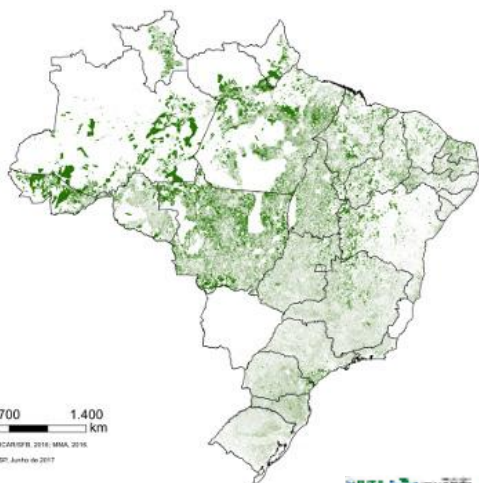
Protected areas

The fifth largest country in the world in territorial area, Brazil is the first in protected areas, according to data by UNEP and WCMC (<http://bit.ly/2zvF8bn>). Brazil dedicates 30% of its territory – more than 2.5 million square kilometers (km²) – to protected land, be it conservation units or indigenous land. The areas protected by Brazil represent 14% of all existing areas in the planet (18 million km²) and more than half of the total protected area in Latin America and the Caribbean. The average protected land in all countries with more than 2.5 million km² of area is 10%, to be compared with 30% in Brazil. UNEP’s 2016 Protected Planet Report states that Brazil has and maintains “the largest national network of protected areas in the world”.

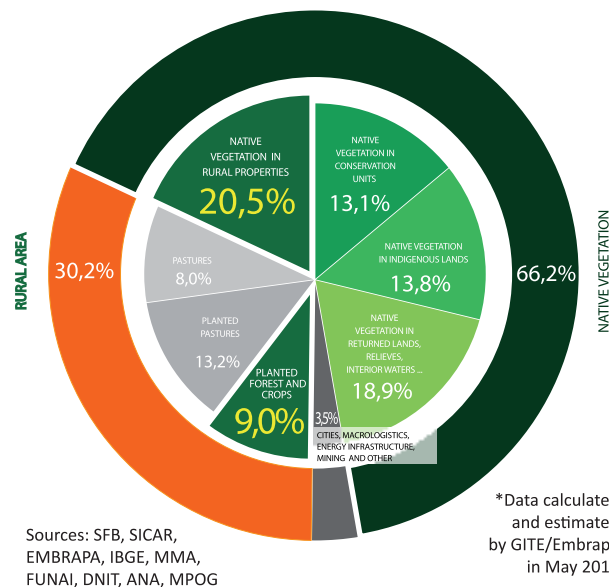
Preserved areas

In the Brazilian countryside, strict environmental legislation determines that one has to keep areas dedicated to the preservation of native vegetation inside rural properties. This area varies from 20% of the property up to 80% in the case of those located in the Amazon basin. The map of such areas has been detailed over the last 3 years by the Rural Environmental Database (CAR, in Portuguese) including more than 4.1 million properties. Today Brazilian rural growers dedicate an area larger than 1.7 million km² to the preservation of native forests and biodiversity inside their properties, without any government funding. This corresponds to 20.5% of Brazil’s area. (<http://www.cnpm.embrapa.br/projetos/car/>)

Areas dedicated to the preservation of vegetation in rural properties (Sicar – Dec 2016)



LAND OCCUPATION AND USE IN BRAZIL*



Conservation areas

There still are, in Brazil, vast areas of native vegetation in public spaces and many ecosystems are explored in a sustainable way by extensive livestock activities. This preserves native forests and biodiversity as in the cases of *Pantanal*, *Caatinga*, *Cerrado*, *Pampa* and *Campos de Altitude* (all Brazilian biomes).

Altogether, Brazil dedicates over 66% of its territory to the protection, preservation and conservation of native vegetation and biodiversity. Pastures occupy 21% of the national territory while all crops and planted forests occupy only 9%. Nonetheless, there are many people saying that 66% is too little and 9% is too much!

* General manager of Embrapa Satellite Monitoring Division.