



ENVIRONMENT INC.

HOW BOLSONARO ADMINISTRATION TURNED THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT INTO AN ALLY OF DEFORESTERS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR



DE OLHO
NAS ELEIÇÕES



DE OLHO
NOS RURALISTAS
Observatório do agronegócio no Brasil

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Agribusiness Watch (De Olho nos Ruralistas) is a non-profit organization dedicated to research and investigative journalism about the social, environmental, political and economic impacts of the agribusiness industry in Brazil. From deforestation to human rights violations against indigenous peoples, peasants and other traditional communities. From pesticide overuse to the influence of landowner politicians in the Congress. Founded in 2016, as a website, and formalized as a private association in 2017, it is coordinated by Alceu Luís Castilho, journalist and author of “Partido da Terra – como os políticos conquistam o território brasileiro” (Contexto, 2012).

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KEY FINDINGS

- Since the beginning of the Bolsonaro administration, the ministers of the Environment, the presidents of IBAMA and ICMBio and the Environmental Licensing Executive Board have had at least 709 meetings with the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), representatives of private companies and of agribusiness organizations. The data collection comprises the period between January 2019 and August 2022.
- Almost two thirds of these meetings (65.7%) were with companies, on 466 occasions; 144 meetings were held with organizations linked to the agribusiness, mining and other private sectors agendas (20.3%).
- FPA's members – the strongest representation of large farmers and agribusiness companies in the Congress – were welcomed 99 times, that is, 14% of the meetings.
- At the time, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and social movements had a disproportionate amount of meetings: there were less than 10 encounters with the Ministry of the Environment.
- The ranking of private meetings is led by companies such as: Vale, Shell, Neoenergia, Volkswagen and Rumo S.A. Together they had 109 meetings, 23.4% of the total sum of meetings the environmental cabinet had with private companies during Bolsonaro's government.
- The most important positions of the Ministry of the Environment — ministers, directors and regional superintendents — were not filled based on technical criteria, but by their alignment to Bolsonaro's ideological agenda. This survey was also exclusively conducted by this observatory.
- This group, led by Ricardo Salles and Joaquim Pereira Leite, has participated on the agenda of environmental destruction, working to disrupt the cabinet's actions, to weaken state agencies and to stimulate environmental criminals. Under Bolsonaro, the number of infraction notices has diminished, while deforestation in the Amazon has reached the highest levels of the last decades.
- A cornerstone of the Bolsonaro administration has been the systematic weakening of environmental protection. Since January 2019 the country has seen more than a change in its environmental policy; there was a profound rupture in the environmental administration that was developed for decades in Brazil.

FOREWORD

The Ministry of the Environment is the office responsible to gather knowledge, to protect and to recover the environment on Brazilian territory. The National Policy for the Environment, created in 1981, regulates the sector's management. This law states that the environment is a public patrimony and must be protected, because its use is collective. However, under Bolsonaro this purpose has been turned upside down.

The cabinet's routine — according to data consolidated by De Olho nos Ruralistas — shows that private interests have run over the public interest, while natural patrimony has been corrupted at an accelerated speed.

Considering the worsening of social and environmental problems globally, how was this project executed in Brazil? What are the groups benefited by the dismantling of environmental public policies, with the rewarding of environmental infractions, the loss of biodiversity, the climate change menace and the country and forest peoples put at risk?

This report, Environment Inc., is the third of the Bolsonaro Dossier series. Here we describe the conflicts of interest that dominate the nomination for the main positions in the government — for example the study about the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).

The public sector's kidnapping happened while the key agencies linked to the Ministry of Environment were weakened, since the beginning of Jair Bolsonaro's presidency, in 2019. The daily routine of politicians, led by Ricardo Salles and Joaquim Pereira Leite, was oriented to tend to the private sector's interests and to pardon the criminal infractions, instead of the biome and the planet preservation, observing the environmental laws.

In April 2020, Salles made famous the expression “run the cattle herd”, in a meeting with Bolsonaro and other ministers. As if the approval of more flexible environmental laws was a project yet to accomplish during the COVID-19 pandemic. This “cattle” was already quite bigger than the flexibilization and was underway, in every single meeting with businesspeople and lobbyists. After Salles' speech, and even after its negative repercussions, the project's execution has continued.

The main actors in this process were not only Bolsonaro's political allies, some of them candidates in the 2022 elections. The private sector elite, national and international, has had direct participation in this destruction.

1) PUBLIC BOWS DOWN TO PRIVATE_____



Ricardo Salles and Joaquim Leite: allies in the “privatization” of the Environment.

(Credit: MMA)

There are two agencies subject to the Ministry of the Environment responsible for executing environmental protection and the National Policy for the Environment: the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) and the Chico Mendes Institute for the Preservation of Biodiversity (ICMBio). IBAMA was created in 1989 with the purposes of granting (or denying) environmental licensing to enterprises, of controlling the environmental quality and of authorizing the use of natural resources, with federal jurisdiction. They work as an environmental police, enforcing administrative sanctions, monitoring and surveilling the environment, especially to prevent and control deforestation, wildfires and arson. ICMBio was created in 2007 and is responsible for the administration of federal Conservation Units (UC, in the Portuguese acronym). There are a total sum of 336 federal UCs in Brazil, 145 of which are located in the Legal Amazon area.¹

These two agencies are crucial to promote a balanced environment and the preservation of biodiversity, and also to guarantee rights to peasants and forest people. However, the Bolsonaro era has established an “open doors” policy to the public structure and its resources, in order to suit political and economical private interests.

Adding insult to injury

*“I will no longer allow IBAMA or ICMBio fining everyone as they please.
This party will be over soon”.*

Jair Bolsonaro, in December 2018

One month before his inauguration, Bolsonaro made the statement quoted above, during a ceremony for aspiring Army cadets in the Military Academy of the Agulhas Negras in Resende (RJ), where he studied in the 1970s. The president also talked about a R\$ 10,000 (approximately U\$ 2,000) fine he faced for irregular fishing, issued by IBAMA, that he had not yet paid. “Am I going to pay? Of course. But I am the living proof of the disregard, incompetence and bias of some of ICMBio and IBAMA’s inspectors. This has to end”.²

Bolsonaro only fulfilled one of his promises. In March 2019, José Augusto Morelli, a civil servant in IBAMA was exonerated from his position as chief of the Air Operations Center of the Environmental Protection Board of Executives. He was in charge of the surveillance operation executed in 2012 — when Bolsonaro was a federal deputy — that sanctioned and finned the politician for committing an environmental crime in Estação Ecológica de Tamoios, a Preservation Unit administered by ICMBio, located between Angra dos Reis and Paraty (RJ).³

The fine against the president reached its statute of limitations in December 2019 and, therefore, was not paid — that was the promise he did not keep. On the other hand, he made sure to end the “party” previously held by IBAMA and ICMBio.

The president was not the only one to gain advantage through shirking the executive process the Ministry of the Environment had before. The current and former ministers, Joaquim Pereira Leite and Ricardo Salles, presidents of IBAMA and ICMBio, and the Environmental Licensing Executive Board (DILIC) have systematically welcomed in their offices parliamentarians, agribusiness organizations and infractor private companies who sought to advance an agenda of environmental destruction. Meanwhile, the deforestation numbers are on the rise and the environmental crimes surveillance has declined drastically in comparison to previous years.

The Environment cabinet under the weather

“You all know that I do not give NGOs the time of the day. I always put the house in order. But I cannot seem to kill this cancer that are NGOs”.

Bolsonaro, on his social network weekly live 3/9/2020



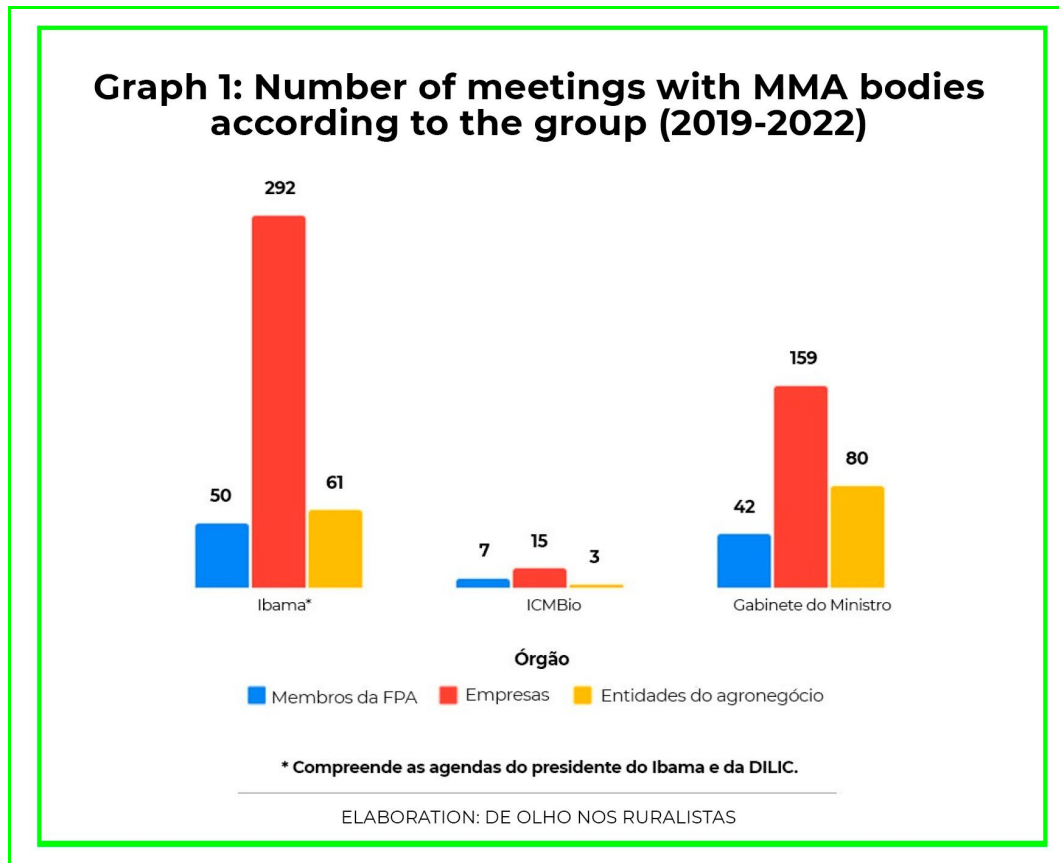
Minister Joaquim Leite in a meeting of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front.

(Credit: Agência FPA)

After a thorough analysis of the Environment ministers' schedules, and of the presidents of IBAMA, ICMBio and DILIC, between January 2019 and August 2022, De Olho nos Ruralistas registered they had 709 meetings with members of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), representatives of private companies and of agribusiness and mining organizations. For almost two years, Salles made his schedule so that the common citizen would not fit in. With private companies, however, he and his associates met 466 times, 65.7% of the total number of meetings. Another 144 meetings (20.3%) were held with agribusiness and mining organizations — 99 of them were also attended by current members of the FPA. Meanwhile, NGOs and social movements were in the ministry's schedule in a disproportionate manner: there were not even 10 meetings between them and the government officials.

Chart 1 shows the distribution of those meetings, according to the hosting offices. Salles' schedule is not available on the ministry's official website, for the period between January 2019 and October 2020, even though it should have been made public, as required by the Information Access Law in Brazil. De Olho nos Ruralistas

has requested officially this information, but we were not answered, so there is a gap in the total analysis of his meetings, since he was the environmental minister between January 2019 and June 2021.



The private companies were constantly on IBAMA's schedule, appearing 292 times. The subject matter of those meetings were not always clear on the official information released. We can only imply that those companies sought to discuss environmental infractions and environmental licensing, since they fall under IBAMA's jurisdiction. A lot of those companies, as detailed ahead, had been previously fined and interdicted for crimes against the flora, and also led the number of meetings hosted by the ministers and ICMBio.

The Agricultural Parliamentary Front and other agribusiness organizations have also had a free pass given by the ministers, which corroborates Bolsonaro's famous speech to its members, in 2019: "This government is yours".⁴

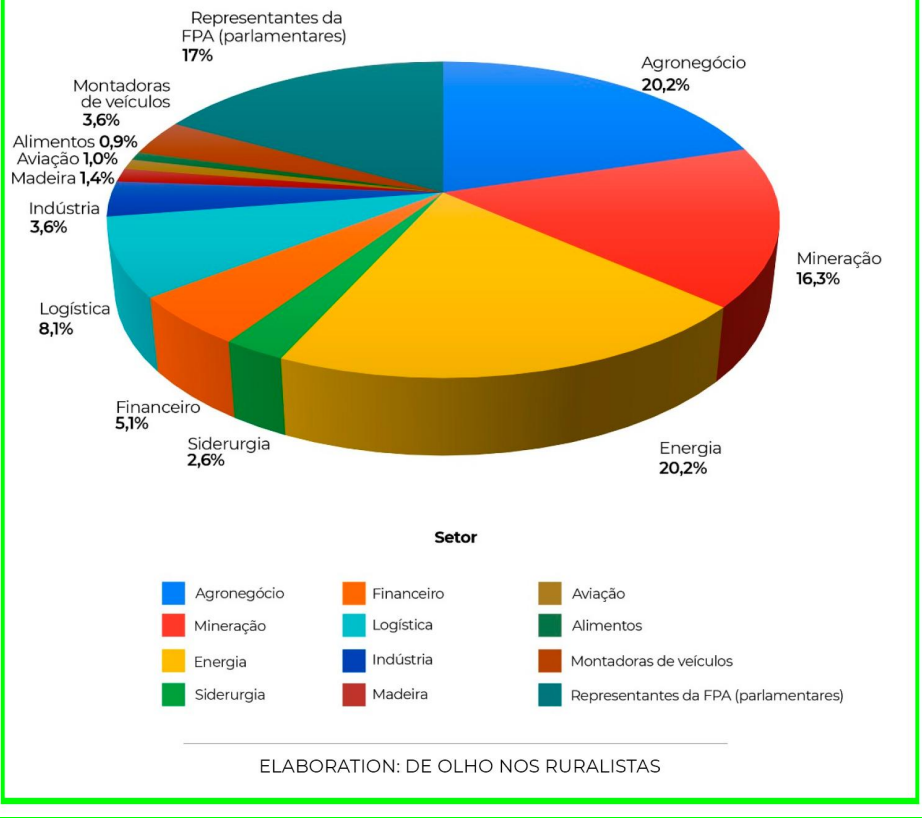
When we look at interest sectors, agribusiness interest representatives lead the meetings with the aforementioned public offices (Chart 2). With the total sum of 217 representatives welcomed at the ministry, 42 of them came from private companies and 175 from organizations and representatives of the FPA. The

organizations, confederations and the Agricultural Parliamentary Front itself have been active to guarantee their financiers' interests: out of 48 organizations that maintain Pensar Agro Institute (IPA), 13 of them were welcomed by the ICMBio, IBAMA and the ministers of the Environment under Bolsonaro, totalizing 58 meetings.⁵

The Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Confederation (CNA) attended 21 of those 58 meetings. Subsequently, with 7 meetings each, came the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) and the Sugarcane Industry Union (UNICA). The Brazilian Tree Industry Association (IBÁ) had 6 meetings. With the Brazilian Cotton Producers Association (ABRAPA), the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness (ABAG) and the Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers (APROSOJA), the latter being a crucial figure inside FPA, they met three times each. The Brazilian Food Industry Association (ABIA) held two meetings with the cabinet. At least one meeting was granted to the Brazilian Zebu Breeders Association (ABCZ), the Machinery Builders' Association (ABIMAQ), the Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (ABIOVE), the National Vegetal Defense Products Industry Union (SINDIVEG) and to the Confederation of Credit Cooperatives (SICREDI).

Aside from the various subjects discussed in meetings with CNA and ABAG, seven of those meetings occurred with the grain sector; other seven were with the sugar-ethanol sector; six with the paper and cellulose sector; two with the industry sector; one each with the meat sector, the pesticide sector, transgenic seeds and technology; agricultural machinery and financial sector.

Graph 2: Distribution of meetings by sector represented



Regarding the energy sector, out of 118 agents present in the meetings, 109 (92.4%) were private companies. They have a special eye on the environmental licensing processes, currently one of their main concerns. From the mining sector, 95 representatives were in those meetings, 88 (92.6%) of them from private companies and seven from the sector's organizations. Mining, especially in the Amazon, has been one of Bolsonaro's key projects and it appears frequently on the news coverage associated with scandals and on bills of law that seek to weaken current rules regarding mineral exploration.

The anti-environmental meetings with the agribusiness bloc



Ricardo Salles in his natural habitat, surrounded by agribusiness' representatives.

(Credit: Agência FPA)

In his official schedule — the one that was made public — Ricardo Salles, minister of Environment from January 2019 to July 2021, had 24 meetings with senators and deputies that are part of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front. His schedule was published for only a few months. Four parliamentarians met Salles more than once: Neri Geller (PP-MT), three times; Aline Sleutjes (PROS-PR), Carlos Viana (PSD-MG) and Coronel Chrisóstomo (PL-RO), two times each. The ones who made Salles' a visit in his cabinet at least once were: Carla Zambelli (PL-SP), Carlos Henrique Gaguim (União-TO), Evair Vieira de Melo (PP-ES), Irajá Abreu (PSD-TO), Kátia Abreu (PP-TO), Nelson Barbudo (PL-MT), Pedro Lupion (PP-PR), Sergio Souza (MDB-PR), Vermelho (PL-RR), Major Vitor Hugo (PL-GO), Zé Silva (SD-MG), Zé Vitor (PL-MG), Wellington Fagundes (PL-MT) and Zequinha Marinho (PL-PA). The majority of them were running for reelection. Souza is FPA's current president.

Joaquim Leite took office as environmental minister in June 2021 and also had multiple meetings with parliamentarians who are members of the FPA. There were two private meetings with the federal deputy Evair Vieira, and another one in which Carla Zambelli attended as well. Deputies Neri Geller and Pedro Lupion and senators Kátia Abreu and Zequinha Marinho gathered with the new minister, each one time. The same happened with the deputies Alceu Moreira (MDB-RS), Arthur Lira (PP-AL), Joaquim Passarinho (PL-PA), Covatti Filho (PP-RS), Marcelo Aro (PP-MG), Jerônimo Goergen (PP-RS), Cleber Verde (Republicanos-MA) and

Vinícius Poit (Novo-SP). All of those meetings were private and most of them had a secret agenda.

When we look at the president of IBAMA's schedule, we find a bigger list of meetings. Eduardo Bim has occupied this official post since January 2019, but was suspended a few times due to investigations. Even so, he has met 50 times with 28 parliamentarians who integrate the FPA. The federal deputy Joaquim Passarinho (PL-PA) and the senator Luis Carlos Heinze (PP-RS) were his most frequent visitors: they both met the president six times. Heinze and Moreira are FPA's former presidents. Moreira was also presiding officer at the Parliamentary Committee of Investigation (CPI) of Funai and Incra.

Next on the list are Neri Geller and FPA's vice-president Zequinha Marinho: each had four meetings scheduled with Bim. Nelson Barbudo and Pedro Lupion share the third position, each with three meetings. Evair de Melo and the senator Wellington Fagundes also reappear, each with two meetings. The federal deputies José Medeiros (PL-MT) and Darci de Matos (PSD-SC) and the senators Marcos Rogério (PL-RO) and Chico Rodrigues (União-RR) had two meetings as well. Old acquaintances from the FPA and the environmental cabinet were also at least once with Bim: Carla Zambelli, Jerônimo Goergen and Sergio Souza. Coronel Chrisóstomo made Bim a visit once. The head of IBAMA still welcomed Celso Maldaner (MDB-SC), Lúcio Mosquini (MDB-RO), Arthur Oliveira Maia (DEM-BA), Kim Kataguirí (União-SP), Ronaldo Santini (PTB-RS), João Roma (PL-BA) and Alan Rick (União-AC), the latter being a member of the evangelical front.

IBAMA's organizational structure is made of different boards of executives. DILIC is responsible for the environmental licensing, which was regulated in the 2012 Forest Code, together with other specific resolutions made by the National Environment Council (CONAMA). This issue is key for many sectors, especially for agribusiness, mining and energy, and also the reason for political dispute around the Senate Bill of Law 168/2018, also known as Environmental Licensing Bill of Law, written by the senator Acir Gurgacz (PDT-RO), with Zequinha Marinho as rapporteur. Both are members of the agribusiness bloc.

The patterns mentioned above are repeated at ICMBio. Fernando Cesar Lorencini, a former member of the military police in São Paulo, was head of the agency from August 2020 to October 2021. He has gathered on five occasions with members of the FPA: two of those meetings were with Zequinha Marinho. He also met twice with senator Jorginho Mello (PL-SC). Again, Luis Carlos Heinze appears, welcomed once by ICMBio former president. Marcos Simanovic, current president at ICMBio, met four times with members of the agribusiness bloc, and one of them was Heinze, who is running to be state governor of Rio Grande do Sul at the present time. There were three new names on his list: Greyce Elias (Avante-MG), José Rocha (União-BA) and Zé Vitor (PL-MG).

Almost all of those names are old acquaintances when it comes to the environmental destruction agenda and the violation of traditional peoples and

communities. At the same time Zequinha Marinho met with the president of IBAMA repeatedly, he called the agency's inspectors criminals and scoundrels.⁶ He attacked the officers after they identified illegal wood lumbering in a thousand-hectare piece of land inside the Indigenous Land Ituna-Itatá, the most deforested in Brazil — and also a place of particular interest for the senator. Marinho is one of the articulators of wood lobbying and rapporteur of the the Senate Bill of Law 168/2018, that seeks to weaken environmental licensing.⁷

Joaquim Passarinho, also from Pará, defends the regularization of illegal mining and pledges public land to illegal miners.⁸ In 2014, the deputy received financing from Vale Manganês S.A. and Alubar Metais e Cabos S/A in his electoral campaign, both private mining companies. According to the document “Quem é quem nas discussões do novo Código da Mineração” (2014), approximately 30% of the total sum received by the candidate' campaign (R\$ 341,088.66, or U\$ 66,190.00) came from mining companies.⁹ Now he is the new rapporteur of the working group responsible for debating and elaborating the new legislative proposal to alter the Decree-law n. 227/67 (Mining Code).¹⁰ Still, he has a free pass to visit the Environment cabinet.

The senator Luis Carlos Heinze is known for his denial posture when it comes to subjects such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. When he was a deputy, he articulated the approval to regularize transgenics and tried to end the mandatory identification seal that comes in genetically modified products. Heinze owns 1,564 hectares of land and Imembuy Alimentos S.A., a rice producer. In 2014, when he ran for the Chamber of Deputies, he was financed by big companies such as Odebrecht Agroindustrial S.A. and SLC Agrícola, both known for their conflicts with traditional peoples and communities. The bills of law he has written are dedicated to the defense of fundiary regularization and private property. Therefore, against the environment. Besides, he has already called indigenous people, gays, lesbians and quilombolas “everything that is worthless”.¹¹

The current minister of Environment himself has met with the FPA four times in their headquarters in Brasília — the same location in which operates the Pensar Agro Institute (IPA), that gathers the private sector's donations for the agribusiness bloc. According to Leite's schedule, only one of those meetings was also attended by IPA. However, the schedule of Eduardo Bim shows that the president of IBAMA has met 11 times with the FPA. Most of those happened in his office.

A closer look upon the Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Confederation (CNA) is necessary. This confederation gathers 27 agricultural and livestock federations with national coverage. The head of the organization is the Bolsonaro supporter João Martins. Several important agents of the agribusiness bloc have already participated in CNA, for instance, the senator Kátia Abreu. Leite has already met with CNA ten times during his administration. The same number of meetings was also held with Bim. Very few details regarding the issues discussed at those

meetings were made public. Nevertheless, it is notable the central role CNA takes in influencing Brazilian standing when it comes to climate change control. Before the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), CNA had met four times with the president of IBAMA to talk about the event, in order to highlight his sector's stance on the matter.

Other organizations are on the list of meetings with the environment cabinet. The Brazilian Cotton Producers Association (ABRAPA), the Brazilian Dairy Producers Association (ABRALEITE) and the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness (ABAG) totalled three meetings each with Joaquim Leite. The Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association (UNICA) was in three meetings, together with other interested parties, such as the National Automobile Manufacturers Association (ANFAVEA), Copersucar, Raízen, Toyota and Volkswagen.

Environment Inc.



Ricardo Salles poses with wood logs apprehended by IBAMA.

(Foto: Reprodução/Twitter)

It is notable that the active participation of private companies on environmental government policy denounces an ambiguous political stage. In the short period of eight months that Salles made his schedule public, he met 27 times with private companies from various sectors, from the automobile industry to mining companies. The leaders of the list were Vale S.A. and Volkswagen: both have had four meetings with the former minister, followed by Toyota with three meetings. His successor Joaquim Leite had 83 meetings with companies linked to

agribusiness (some of them together with organizations that represent the sector).

In his short time ahead of ICMBio, Fernando Lorencini has met six times with private companies linked to agribusiness, out of which we highlight a meeting with Vale S.A. and another with Santo Antônio Energy. Marcos Simanovic had, up until now, 21 meetings with the private sector, and six of them were with Vale representatives. There were also two more meetings in which they discussed the resources offered by the mining companies, even though the company did not participate.

IBAMA welcomed a wider variety of companies: there was a total sum of 292 meetings between Bim, the Environmental Licensing Executive Board (DILIC) and private companies tied to agribusiness. In our ranking lead Vale S.A., that together with Samarco Mining (a society with Vale and the anglo-australian BHP) and the Renova Foundation (created after the environmental crime committed by Samarco in Mariana, in 2015), totalled 39 meetings; Shell and Neoenergia, both had 14 meetings; and Rumo S.A., 9. Other companies that also gathered with the head of IBAMA were Amaggi (2), EDF Renewables of Brazil (2), Anglo American Brasil (1) and Eldorado Brasil Paper and Cellulose (1).

The common ground that links all the companies that met with the Ministry of Environment more often is that they do not have a firm commitment to the preservation of the country's forests: most of them are responsible for crimes against the flora under the Bolsonaro administration, such as deforestation, and therefore they owe the Brazilian state millions in environmental fines.

Table 1: Companies that had the highest number of meetings with MMA and have environmental fines worth millions

	COMPANY	NO. OF INFRACTION NOTICES	TOTAL AMOUNT OF FINES	NO. MEETINGS	MEETINGS
	Vale S.A.	38	R\$ 423.114.250,00	53	Ex-ministro Ricardo Salles (4), ministro Joaquim Leite (3), presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (25), DILIC Ibama (14), ex-presidente do ICMBio Fernando Lorencini (1), presidente do ICMBio Marcos Simanovic (6) ^{*1}
	Shell plc	45	R\$ 5.561.890,00	18	Ministro Joaquim Leite (4), presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (7), DILIC Ibama (7)
	Neoenergia S.A.	3	R\$ 7.300.500,00	16	Ministro Joaquim Leite (2), presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (4), DILIC Ibama (10) ^{*2}
	Volkswagen AG	1	R\$ 50.000.000,00	13	Ex-ministro Ricardo Salles (4), ministro Joaquim Leite (2), presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (7)
	Rumo Logística S.A.	37	R\$ 32.432.000,00	9	Presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (2), DILIC Ibama (7) ^{*3}
	State Grid Corporation of China (SGCC)	6	R\$ 3.454.500,00	8	Ministro Joaquim Leite (1), presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (5), DILIC Ibama (2) ^{*4}
	Agropecuária Santa Bárbara Xinguará S.A. (Agro SB)	11	R\$ 16.389.000,00	6	Presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (5), DILIC Ibama (1)
	Mineração Rio do Norte S.A. (MRN)	3	R\$ 10.532.000,00	6	Presidente do Ibama Eduardo Bim (1), DILIC Ibama (4), presidente do ICMBio Marcos Simanovic (1)
	Perenco plc	11	R\$ 13.046.000,00	5	DILIC Ibama (5)

*1 (considerando as reuniões da Samarco e Fundação Renova / considerando as multas da Vale S.A., Samarco, Fundação Renova, Salobo Metais, CSP - Companhia Siderúrgica do Pecém e VLI Logística)

*2 (considerando as multas das subsidiárias COELBA e Cia Elétrica Teles Pires S.A.)

*3 (considerando as multas das subsidiárias Rumo Malha Paulista S.A., Rumo Malha Sul S.A., Rumo Malha Oeste S.A., Rumo Malha Norte S.A. e Rumo Malha Central S.A.)

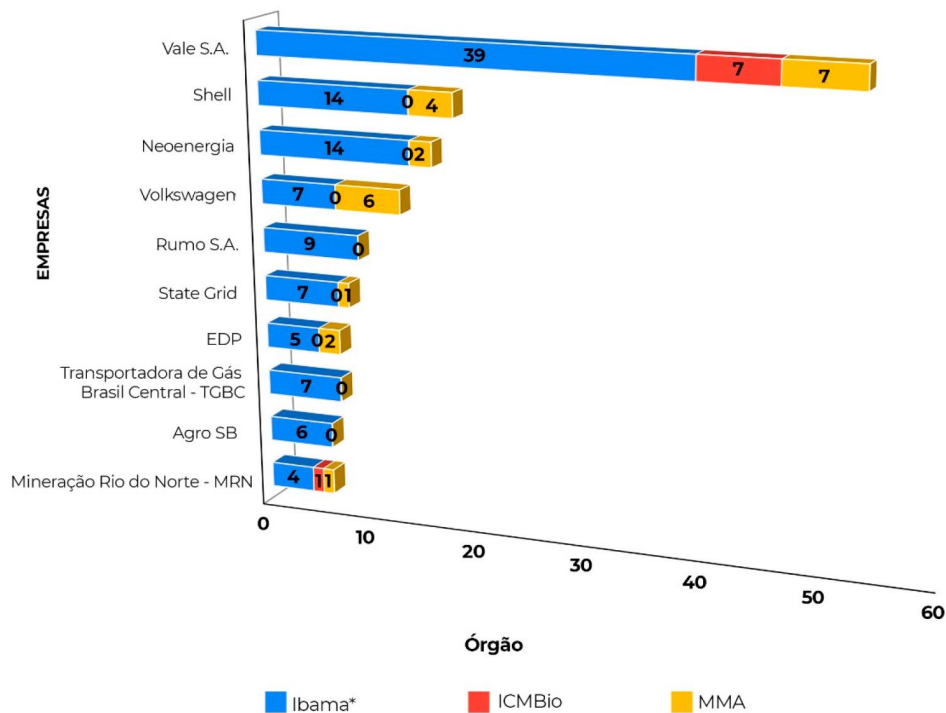
*4 (considerando as reuniões da subsidiária CPFL Energia / considerando as multas das subsidiárias RGE Sul Distribuidora, Xingu Rio Transmissora e Paranaíba Transmissora)

ELABORATION: DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

Vale S.A — including Samarco, Fundação Renova, Salobo Metais and CSP — is the leader in fines and visits to the Ministry of Environment during the Bolsonaro administration. This company alone had 53 times more meetings with the federal office than, for instance, WWF-Brazil, one of the foremost NGOs that fight environmental destruction in the country. WWF was welcomed only one time.

The companies that have a free pass to walk the halls and offices within the environment cabinet come from multiple sectors, from the agribusiness field to their broader arena, as in companies tied to speculative capital, such as banks and investment agencies, to energy private companies, metallurgy and mining. The leaders in private meetings are Vale S.A., Shell, Neoenergia, Volkswagen and Rumo S.A. Altogether they sum 109 meetings, 23.4% of the total meetings with private companies under Bolsonaro, as we can see in Chart 3.

Graph 3: Meeting champion companies with the environment folder (2019-2022)



* Compreende as agendas do presidente do Ibama e da DILIC.

ELABORATION: DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

The list of companies is wider than the chart shows, because it is limited only to the leading companies. The main issue at hand is to point out the contradictions and private interests that involve these meetings.

In 2022, 26 operating licensing titles were granted to Vale S.A., according to the National Mining Agency (ANM), which amounted to R\$ 55.5 billion (approximately U\$ 10.5 billion).¹² The company is implicated in several environmental rights and traditional and indigenous rights conflicts and violations. In 2019, there were a total sum of 18 cases of conflict involving Vale, in Brazil.¹³ The company is responsible for two of the biggest environmental crimes in Brazil: Mariana, in november 2015, and Brumadinho, in January 2019. In the first case, even though the company responsible for polluting the river was Samarco Mining, it is a joint-venture between BHP Billiton and Vale. There were 291 deaths and thousands of people affected by the incident, that up until today have not been fully compensated. If we put together Vale S.A, Samarco, BHP Billiton and Fundação Renova's schedules, from 2019 and 2022, there were 53 private encounters with Environment offices and agencies under federal jurisdiction.

Between 2019 and 2022, the federal taxpayer registries linked to companies controlled by Vale S/A amount to 38 fines, worth a total sum of R\$ 423.1 million (approximately U\$ 80.7 million). Therefore, the leader in private meetings with Environment cabinet's ministers and board executives is also the one with the biggest amount in fines throughout Bolsonaro's administration.

Another particular relationship exists between the cabinet and the Spanish bank Santander. From March to May 2022, representatives e investors of Santander Brasil S/A gathered four times with the current environment minister. Although the bank is not listed as an offender in IBAMA's registers under Bolsonaro, in 2022 the institution was benefited in its previous fines through IBAMA ministerial order n. 11996516/2022-GABIN, that renders void the notification of infractors through public notice in order to include in final allegations. According to a survey made by Agência Pública, that means the Federal Government waived R\$ 3.6 billion (U\$ 684 million) in fines collected through environmental infractions. Among those, the R\$ 47.5 million (U\$ 9 million) owed by Santander since 2016.¹⁴

The energy sector companies also cause a stir for the number of meetings: a total of 81 if we put together the schedules of the heads of all the offices we analyzed. Their interests are numerous, but they are mostly gathered around environmental licensing. Most of the energy companies listed act directly in the expansion of renewable sources of energy, specially wind power, that is neither clean nor sustainable, since its territorialization impacts the living conditions of traditional peoples and communities.¹⁵ The expansion in this sector happens because there is demand for energetical diversification, but also because there is hurry to diversify investment portfolios in times of crisis. One of the Federal Government's measures was to streamline the installment of energy enterprises, through publishing the Resolution n. 279 of Conama, in which wind energy projects are considered of low environmental impact; dispensing, therefore, the mandatory presentation of a Study of Environmental Impact and a Report on Environmental Impact (EIA/RIMA). Seeking to accelerate environmental licensing, this resolution only asks for a simplified Environmental Report (RAS).

In November 2020, the "Study of Environmental Impact and a Report on Environmental Impact EIA/RIMA Term of Reference for maritime wind energy typology - Offshore" was released.¹⁶ The ceremony occurred in the head office of IBAMA, in Brasília, and Eduardo Bim was present. After this release, according to the official schedule, several meetings took place to discuss the offshore topic. In December 2021, Servtec Energy gathered with Bim to talk about the company's interest in the environmental licensing process of maritime wind energy plants.

In 2022, the minister Joaquim Leite had five meetings to discuss the same matter. On the first one, Leite met with Servtec Energy. In March, the meeting took place in the Ministers' Hall and had as guests the Brazilian Association of Wind Energy (ABEEólica), Shell, Equinor, the Spanish company Neoenergia and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) and Copenhagen Offshore Partners (COP). CIP and

COP alone are the only ones who already have Offshore enterprises announced.¹⁷ There were two more meetings in April, the first with Vestas Wind System, that works with the development of technology for airgears, and Global Investors Group (GRI). Finally, in May, they had breakfast with XP Investments.

Among the other energy sector companies that met with the environment heads of offices of Bolsonaro, Neoenergia leads with 16 meetings. The company belongs to the Spanish group Iberdrola and acts on different fronts in the global energy sector. Neoenergia is responsible for providing electrical energy in multiple Brazilian states: currently, they own 32 operating plants.¹⁸

Debating the advance of wind energy becomes more relevant once the number of conflicts, environmental and social impacts rise in this model: in Ceará state, lagoons located between the dunes have been disappearing, generating a direct impact in the livelihood of thousands of families; in Bahia state, the wind plant projects are a menace to the reintroduced little blue macaws' reproduction, and reach the proximities of peasant farmer communities and their communal pastures.¹⁹ In May 2022, the 13^o March for Women's Lives and Agroecology, in Solânea (PB), had as its theme "The agroecological territory of Borborema is not the place for wind energy plants", in order to protest against EDP Renewables Brazil's wind energy plants that were granted in the area. EDP gathered twice with DILIC and once with Ricardo Salles.²⁰

It is worth mentioning the part played by Agro Santa Bárbara (SB), when it comes to the agribusiness agenda: the company met five times with Eduardo Bim between 2019 and 2022. One of the companies managed by the banker Daniel Dantas and controlled by the investment fund Opportunity, the AgroSB works in agricultural and cattle markets from farms located in the south of Pará states, apart from its headquarters in Palmas. Their properties, as shown in the official website, are four, all in Pará: Vale Sereno (Cumarú do Norte), São Roberto (Santana do Araguaia), Espírito Santo (Xinguara) and Lagoa do Triunfo (São Félix do Xingu).²¹ Data from the National Rural Database (SNCR), however, indicate the existence of 22 properties in those cities, totalizing 293.011,51 hectares.²² According to De Olho nos Ruralistas, Agro SB's farms have already deforested 929 hectares in São Félix do Xingu/PA, inside an Environmental Protected Area (APA) called Triunfo do Xingu.²³ From October 2019 to June 2020, there have been vegetal suppression in two of the group's properties: Lagoa do Triunfo IV and Lagoa do Triunfo V. Our observatory reported that Agro SB, through Eldorado do Xingu S.A. Agrícola Pastoril e Industrial, has been fined by IBAMA 13 times throughout the Bolsonaro administration, totalling a fine worth R\$ 24.6 million (approximately U\$ 4.7 million). Between 1995 and 2019, the company was fined 30 times in Pará, a total sum of R\$ 323.0 million (U\$ 61.4 million).²⁴ From 2008 to 2010, the company claimed being a victim of persecution by IBAMA inspectors and many of these legal processes became void. Still in 2010, IBAMA obstructed an area owned by Agro SB in São Félix do Xingu; in 2019, the same property had become pasture. Consulting IBAMA's obstructions regarding Eldorado do Xingu S.A. Agrícola

Pastoril e Industrial registries, we found nine obstructions in Pará, in 2021 alone. Agro SB provides cattle to big meatpackers, such as JBS.²⁵ In June 2020, three members of the Rural Landless Workers Movement (MST) were arrested during a police operation in Fazenda Cedro, a property of 9.991 hectares in Marabá (PA).²⁶ Agro SB has also been accused, on other properties, of using pesticides as a chemical weapon, of the use of forced labor and of creating an armed militia.²⁷

The German company Volkswagen had seven meetings with Bolsonaro's environment ministers. Four of those with Ricardo Salles and three with Joaquim Leite. They also met Eduardo Bim seven times. The company was the central actor in a scandal known as Dieseldieselgate: from 2009 to 2015, a fraudulent way of reducing pollutant gas in their regulatory tests.²⁸

Ever since Bolsonaro took over as president, Volkswagen do Brasil Indústria de Veículos Automotores Ltda. was notified for an infraction worth R\$ 50 million (U\$ 9.5 million). In 2022, the company was accused of promoting deforestation to install a big agricultural and livestock project during the military dictatorship initiated in 1964, close to the margins of the Amazon river, in south Pará.²⁹

Among the most welcomed companies in the Ministry of Environment is the Cosan Group, owned by the traditional Ometto family. Nowadays, they are the biggest sugarcane, sugar and ethanol producers in the world.³⁰ In 2008, Cosan took over the Brazilian financial assets of ExxonMobil and created Rumo, the group's logistics company, that merged in 2015 with América Latina Logística, ALL. In 2011, during the commodity boom, Cosan instituted Raízen through a joint venture with Shell, the biggest transaction in Brazilian sugarcane industry's history.³¹ Under Bolsonaro there have been 30 meetings with Cosan, Rumo and Shell and the environment cabinet. Joaquim Leite met with Cosan once; with Shell, four times. Eduardo Bim met Shell on seven occasions; Rumo, on two. However, the biggest number of meetings was with IBAMA's Licensing Executive board: Rumo and Shell were there on seven occasions each; Cosan went there twice.

The number of notifications for infractions against the flora committed by these companies since the beginning of the Bolsonaro administration is also extensive. All the federal taxpayer registries of companies linked to Rumo sum up to 37 notifications, worth the total amount of R\$ 32.4 million (U\$ 6.1 million). Rumo S.A. could have more notifications if it were not for the fact that it sold 80% of its shares in Elevações Portuárias S.A., in July 2022.³² This company was fined by IBAMA for R\$ 22.55 million (U\$ 4.3 million). Putting together the taxpayer registries of Shell Brasil Ltda. and Shell Brasil Petróleo Ltda., Shell owns up to 45 notifications from 2019 to 2022, worth R\$ 5.56 million (U\$ 1.0 million). In Mato Grosso do Sul, Raízen is located in Caarapó and Rio Brilhante, next to indigenous communities. In 2017, as reported by De Olho nos Ruralistas, the company donated a truck to indigenous people in Dourados as a way to mediate conflicts in the area.³³

2) DESTRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY TO “LET THE CATTLE PASS”



Former minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, with Jair Bolsonaro.
(Foto: Sérgio Lima/Poder 360)

The takeover of such an important office as the Ministry of Environment by private interests particularly engaged in environmental destruction was only possible after the political auctioning of positions that are strategic to the environmental policy goals. In the Bolsonaro administration, key posts that should have been appointed according to technical criteria were taken by allies that share the same agenda of environmental destruction and advocated for the disruption of actions, weakening of agencies and incentive to lawbreakers.

First-rate ally of president Jair Bolsonaro, former minister for the Environment and current federal deputy candidate Ricardo Salles (PL-SP) gained notoriety for suggesting to “let the cattle pass”, an expression suggesting the approval of environmental bills and legal norms while the media and the country were focused on the pandemic, that had begun just over a month before.

“So there has to be an effort by us while we are at this moment of ease with the media coverage, because there is only talk of Covid and [we need to] pass the cattle and change all the regulations and simplify the rules, regulations of IPHAN, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, ministry of this, ministry of that.”

Salles's cattle comes from the most diverse private sector interests, from wood exports to mining, from energy to roads. The former minister stood out for encouraging loggers in the Amazon. He is accused of facilitating, by ministerial order, the "regularization" of over 8 thousand wood cargo exported illegally between 2019 and 2020 to the USA and Europe, according to Operation Akuanduba, an investigation made by the Federal Police. At the time, Salles said the operation was "exaggerated".³⁴

Suspicion arose after another investigation, which apprehended 141 cubic meters of wood in logs and 608 cubic meters of lumber. A Federal Police (PF) officer at the time, Alexandre Saraiva, accused the minister of intervening in defense of loggers investigated by the PF and presented charges against the incumbent of the Environment Ministry. Saraiva, now a federal deputy by the PSB party in Rio de Janeiro, says that the scheme used by Ricardo Salles is similar to the one that operated while he was Environment Secretary in the State of São Paulo, meaning: document fraud, fine period suspension (making their prescription easier) and coercion of public officers.³⁵

In 2018, he was condemned by a São Paulo court for misconduct in a public office, in charges of altering the Management Plan for the Environment Protection Area (APA) Várzea do Rio Tietê, after favoring companies such as Suzano Papel e Celulose S/A, a paper industry.³⁶ In 2021, he was acquitted in a higher court.³⁷

As he took office in the ministry, Salles made a nomination spree of São Paulo military policemen (PM), for superintendencies and other offices. It was paulista MPs that conducted the discussion regarding a merger between IBAMA and ICMBio, during 2020.³⁸ After public criticism and resistance from both agencies' employees, the merger fell through. Despite being close to Jair Bolsonaro, Salles had clashes with the military wing of the federal government; in the distribution of nominations to the superintendencies, he had to give up the nomination for Santa Catarina, made by general Luiz Eduardo Ramos, now incumbent Secretary General of the Presidency.

The failure to fight deforestation using the military

One of the strategies of the Bolsonaro administration for the Amazon region consisted in militarizing the actions related to environmental issues. This can be seen in the number of offices held by servicemen in the environmental overseeing and control agencies, in disrespect to minimum requirements for some offices, according to a audit made by the Federal Audit Office, made in 2021.³⁹ A survey made by De Olho nos Ruralistas stated that 16 military policemen of the state of São Paulo were nominated by Ricardo Salles to occupy strategic posts. Just three of them are still in IBAMA, including its president Eduardo Bim.

In addition to nominating military men to technical offices, the administration promoted the reactivation of the Legal Amazon National Council(LANC) in February 2020. Without planning, goals or budget, LNAC is coordinated by vice-president Hamilton Mourão.⁴⁰ In its first inception, in April 2020, it was made exclusively by military men, without participation of state governments or ICMBio. Today, its Board and Executive Secretariat are still mainly made by military men.⁴¹ In 2019, the Operation Brazil Green 1 came into force, renewed until April 2021 as Operation Brazil Green 2. Both operations were major failures. A total of R\$ 379.23 million was destined to Operation Brazil Green 2 execution, some R\$ 1 million per day.⁴² This investment had no impact in the acute advance of deforestation in the biome. According to Observatório do Clima, between May 11 and November 11 of 2020 Operation Brazil Green 2 had 3400 servicemen, 300 civilian servants and collected R\$ 1,79 billion in environmental fines. In the same period of 2019, with just 750 inspectors, IBAMA fined the equivalent to R\$ 2,12 billion. By the end of the Operation, was expedited Decree n. 10.730, in June 28 of 2021, authorizing the use of the Armed Forces in Law and Order Guarantee operations in indigenous Lands, federal Conservation Units, land in possession or property of the Union and, by requirement of its governors, in other states of the federation.⁴³

The articulation failures in the military operations were publicly acknowledged by Mourão after the waste of R\$ 550 million in federal public funds, that were not reverted in a fall of deforestation rates in the Amazon - on the contrary.⁴⁴

Ricardo Salles is one of the founders of Endireita Brasil ("Rightening Brazil", in a loose translation) and the Millennium Institute, both organizations dedicated to

promoting and producing conservative thinking. More than 100 businessmen donated to his federal deputy electoral campaign in 2018.⁴⁵ Among them are Bolsonaro's allies such as Jayme Brasil Garfinkel, owner and chairman of Porto Seguro, Brazil's biggest insurance company; José Salim Mattar Júnior, controller of Localiz Hertz, the most valuable company in the car renting sector; Ronaldo José Neves de Carvalho, owner of Drogaria São Paulo, the second biggest drugstore chain of the country; and Luis Stuhlberg, considered one of the "greatest" financial managers, of Verde Fund. All these businessmen are investors in agribusiness. The owner of Porto Seguro is also the owner of the Fazenda Periquitos Agricultural and Cattle Company, which produces soy and beef cattle. Localiza's owner is the proprietor of the Sahara Stud Farm, in Matozinhos (MG), which also produces beef cattle, in addition to equines. The owner of Drogaria São Paulo is the owner of Agricultural and Cattle Codeine, in Mirandópolis (SP), which plants rubber trees and sugar cane. Lastly, the great investor Stuhlberg invests in assets related to agriculture such as stocks, currency exchanges, interest rates and commodities.

All this support was not enough to hold Salles in his government position after the Para loggers scandal, in June 2021. Even after his demotion, however, the lobbies that backed Salles continued to have free transit in the administration, after the nomination of minister Joaquim Leite.

New minister, continued destruction

In a seminar about sustainability promoted by the Brazilian Cooperative Organization(BCO), in August 2022, Joaquim Leite summed up his acting as head of the ministry in a line: Brazil has to "act against climate protectionism".⁴⁷ For 23 years Leite was a councilman in the Brazilian Rural Society (BRS), another financial sponsor of Pensar Agro Institute. The centenary organization is a gathering place for farmers in the country and was a key player, as in other moments of history, of the 1964 coup d'état.

A business administration major, he was a forest consultant, acted as real estate developer, director in the pharmaceutical sector e and owns a coffee farm. During Salles's tenure, Leite was secretary for Amazon and Environment Services. More discreet than his predecessor, Leite does not fail to attend events with Bolsonaro and those promoted by agribusiness.⁴⁸

IBAMA chiefs ignore technical reports and benefit companies



With Salles, Eduardo Bim lobbied in favor of loggers in IBAMA

(Foto: Arquivo/ABr)

Appointed by Ricardo Salles, the president of IBAMA, Eduardo Fortunato Bim defines his tenure as one of “technical calibration”. The expression is used to justify the constant changes in procedure made by the agency’s chief, with the goal of easing the expediency of environmental licenses and loosening oversight on loggers, miners and energy companies. In the middle of the 2020 Carnival festivities, Bim, a former judicial aide of Fiesp, published an order ending the need of authorization by the agency to the export of wood extracted from forests, against a report signed by five long time technicians of the agency.⁴⁹ The decision was made soon after a delegation from the Pará Wood Exporters Association (PWEA) met with Salles and Bim, to discuss “state of Pará native wood exports” , according to the minister’s official schedule.⁵⁰ This measure and suspicion of favoritism made both the IBAMA president and the former minister targets of operation Akunduba, in May 2021. Just a month later, Salles was fired; Bim was put on leave for 90 days and returned to his job. The president of IBAMA even made a joke about his leave, calling it a “prize leave”.⁵¹ Salles and Bim are investigated for corruption, influence peddling, malfeasance and smuggling facilitation.

In another incident, Bim ignored technical reports made by officers of the agency. In his first year ahead of IBAMA, in 2019, he authorized a company called Tibagi Energia to deforest 14 hectares of Atlantic Forest for the construction of a

hydropower plant on the Tibagi river, in Paraná. The company tried to get this authorization since 2018, but technicians pointed to an omission of data regarding fauna and flora on the construction site, including references to the dwarf pequi tree, an endangered species. Even without a permit, construction begun and, with Bim's endorsement, a 150 hectares plant will make a compensation of only 28 hectares.⁵²

In addition to ignoring his subordinates' reports, Bim usually presses his employees with the goal of guaranteeing business interests. During Operation Gold Rush, in September 2021, the Federal Police identified a load of 39 kilos of gold belonging to a company from the Água Branca ("White Water") region, in Itaituba, southwest of the Pará state. Before being embargoed, the company extracted more than R\$ 1 billion in gold from a Federal Conservation Unit with an illegal environmental permit, extracting 32 times more than that declared to authorities. A series of texts show how Bim pressed the then-IBAMA superintendent in Pará, Washington Luís Rodrigues, to drop the embargo against mining company Gana Gold.⁵³ The move to release the company from the embargo came from federal deputy Joaquim Passarinho. The legislator met personally with Bim five days after the embargo.

In the period he was removed from IBAMA, Bim was replaced by Jônatas Souza da Trindade, current environment licensing director, who also has a track record for denying his subordinates' technical reports. From 2020 to 2021, at least six reports declined the transfer to the state of Mato Grosso of a licensing process regarding a private agribusiness railroad, connecting Rondonópolis, located in the state's southeast, to Lucas do Rio Verde, one of the country's main soy production centers. This measure benefited Rumo Logística assuring, among other perks, the immediate signature of a concession deal with a 45 year duration, going against the 30 year limit established for the federal government.⁵⁴

Bolsonaro's allies appoint IBAMA superintendents



Ricardo Salles, Former Environment Minister, with Zequinha Marinho.

(Foto: Reprodução)

As with other federal agencies, such as Inbra, the partition of nominations between politicians repeats itself in IBAMA. At least 19 of the 26 Brazilian states had their regional superintendents nominated with backing of allies of president Jair Bolsonaro. Two parties lead the nominations with 3 states each: PL, Bolsonaro's party, and ruralista MDB. In second place are PSDB (connected to Salles), União Brasil and Progressistas, with 2 nominations each. Patriotas, PDT, PSD, PSL, PTB e Republicanos indicated superintendents in at least one state.

Location of the illegal wood release operation spearheaded by former minister Ricardo Salles, Pará is represented in the Senate by Zequinha Marinho, head of the Evangelical Caucus and a key political player - as shown in the previous report, on Inbra. The state has as its IBAMA superintendent a contractor for cattle farmers and soy farmers. Forest engineer Rafael Angelo Juliano is the owner of micro company Amazônia Florestal, based in Marabá. The companies that contracted Juliano have already been fined in R\$ 59 million for infractions committed in the last 26 years, including 16,1 thousand hectares of illegal deforestation.⁵⁵

Senator Zequinha Marinho was a candidate to the governor's office in 2022. He backed all 3 Inbra superintendents in the state and accompanied Ricardo Salles in the illegal wood seizure operation in Pará.⁵⁶ The nomination for IBAMA is recent, made in March 2022, before the post was occupied by reserve colonel Washington Luis Rodrigues, one of the first military appointments made by Salles. His firing happened after accusations involving the connection between both the colonel and the president of IBAMA Eduardo Bim with mining company Gana Gold, accused of illegal gold extraction in a conservation unit.⁵⁷

Marinho never left Salles's side. Both of them met at least 3 times when Salles was ahead of the ministry. Marinho also had at least 4 official meetings with Eduardo Bim, president of IBAMA. In one of them, he was accompanied by Senator Telmáro Mota (PROS-RR) to deal with issues of the wood extracting sector. Officer of the Federal Police, Alexandre Saraiva, in an interview he gave to *De Olho nos Ruralistas*, defined Marinho's activities in Pará as a criminal organization.

Senator Marinho is not the only paraense with free transit in IBAMA; federal deputy Joaquim Passarinho had six meetings with Eduardo Bim. In one of them, accompanying Aimex's president, Roberto Puppo.⁵⁸ He was also the articulator for meetings between an intermediate of heavy machinery used in mining, Roberto Katsuda, Salles and the then-Chief of Staff, Onyx Lorenzoni.⁵⁹

In Rio Grande do Sul, the superintendent Claudia Pereira da Costa, appointed early in the Bolsonaro administration, usually accompanies federal deputy Alceu Moreira, who is trying reelection in 2022, in MDB events.⁶⁰ Her practices are similar to the federal leadership of IBAMA. Seven months into the post, Claudia reduced environment inspections by 64%.⁶¹ There was a total of 111 operations between January and August 2019, against 311 in the same period of the previous year. Acting under the IBAMA's president *modus operandi*, the superintendent ran over her subordinates' technical decisions. In February 2021, Claudia suspended fines given to 3 ships owned by Sergio Daniel Maio Lourenço and his relatives. Sérgio is the president of the Rio Grande do Sul Ship Owners Union. In December 2020, agents had issued R\$ 211,500 in fines to the companies over the lack of mandatory tracking and expired permits.⁶²

Alceu Moreira was president of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), as was Luis Carlos Heinze, who had 6 meetings with IBAMA's president Eduardo Bim. In one of them, early in the administration, he tried to secure authorization for the establishment of soy farms in the gaúcho pampa.⁶³ A candidate in the gubernatorial race, Heinze backed the concession to the private initiative of the Aparados da Serra, Serra Geral, and Canelas parks, projects of Ricardo Salles.⁶⁴

Another mainstay on meetings in the Ministry of Environment was the rapporteur of the Environment Licensing Bill, federal deputy Neri Geller. He backed the Military Police lieutenant-colonel Gibson Almeida Costa Júnior.⁶⁵ A candidate in the Senate race, Geller lobbies for the approval of the Bill in the Chamber of Deputies, a legislation that would ease environmental licensing. Nine former Environmental ministers of different administrations, signed a letter criticizing the bill.⁶⁶

The main individual donor to Neri Geller's 2018 bid to the Chamber of Deputies was Elizeu Zulmar Maggi Scheffer, with R\$ 100,000.⁶⁷ The Maggi Scheffer family, big soybean producers, are accused for flora destruction in Fazenda Iguaçó, Rondonópolis (MT). Another donor, José Izidoro Corso, that gave R\$ 25 thousand, was notified in Gaúcha do Norte, for deforesting the legal reservation Pontal do Piranha.

When he was governor of Rio Grande do Norte, in 2015, Robinson Faria (PL) harshly criticized the regional superintendent of IBAMA, Alvamar Costa de Queiroz, that ended up being exonerated by the former environment minister Izabella Teixeira.⁶⁹ In 2018, Faria lost his reelection, but was able to become more powerful inside IBAMA, and is running for a spot in the Chamber of Deputies in 2022. The current IBAMA superintendent in his state, Rondinelle Silva Oliveira, was president of the Environment and Development Institute (Idema) during Faria's tenure. Part of his influence comes from his son, Bolsonaro's minister of Communications, Flávio Faria, who is also the son-in-law of Silvio Santos, who owns SBT, one of the biggest TV networks in Brazil.

In Paraíba, the federal deputy Efraim Filho (União), nominated his former chief of staff, Dallys Henrique de Andrade, as IBAMA superintendent.⁷⁰ Andrade has no experience in environmental issues, and owns a company dedicated to administrative consultancy for town halls. He also defends vaquejadas, a sport typical to the Northeast region of Brazil, in which two cowboys ("vaqueiros") on horseback pursue a bull, seeking to pin it between the two horses and direct it to a goal (often consisting of chalk marks), where the animal is then knocked over. Environmentalists are firmly opposed to this tradition. Efraim Filho has wide support among local sugar mill owners and has already received donations from the businessmen Rubens Ometto Silveira Mello, who owns Raízen. He is running for a spot on the Federal Senate in 2022.

Santa Catarina is another state who has as superintendent an inexperienced person in regards to the environment: Glaudo José Côrte Filho, who comes from the entrepreneurial area, and worked as a consultant to entrepreneurial restructuring and is supported by business people such as Bolsonaro's ally Luciano Hang, owner of Havan stores. His appointment came from general Luiz Eduardo Ramos.⁷¹ The general secretary to the president, at the time, looked for political support from the "Big Center", a political group that dominates the widest portion in Congress.

3) DISMANTLING THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



Environmental destruction bears Bolsonaro's fingerprints.

(Credit: Alan Santos/PR)

Bolsonaro's anti environment public policy

The dismantling of environmental protection has been a rule under Jair Bolsonaro. From January 2019 up to today, we have experienced more than a change in the environmental policy in Brazil; there has been a profound schism, considering the environmental public administration that was developed in the previous decades.⁷²

The first shift that indicated this process was when Ministry of Environment jurisdiction and attributions were reduced. The National Water Agency (ANA) was transferred to the Regional Development Ministry (MDR), suppressing the interaction between the National Environment System (Sisnama) and the National Water Resources Management System (Singreh); the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB), a state agency that has autonomy and inspect forest licenses and the Rural Environmental Register (CAR), were transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA); the office inside the Ministry of Environment that dealt with climate change was extinguished; the fishing oversight was transferred to Mapa; and the department responsible for environmental education was also extinguished. In 2020, a presidential decree finalized the public forest management to Mapa, including the forest management global concessions. Still in 2019, there was a decree altering the

member structure of the National Environment Council (Conama), a consulting and decision-making public office that belongs to the National Environment System (Sisnama), reducing the participation of civil societies organizations.

The weakening of environmental inspection: an incentive to crime

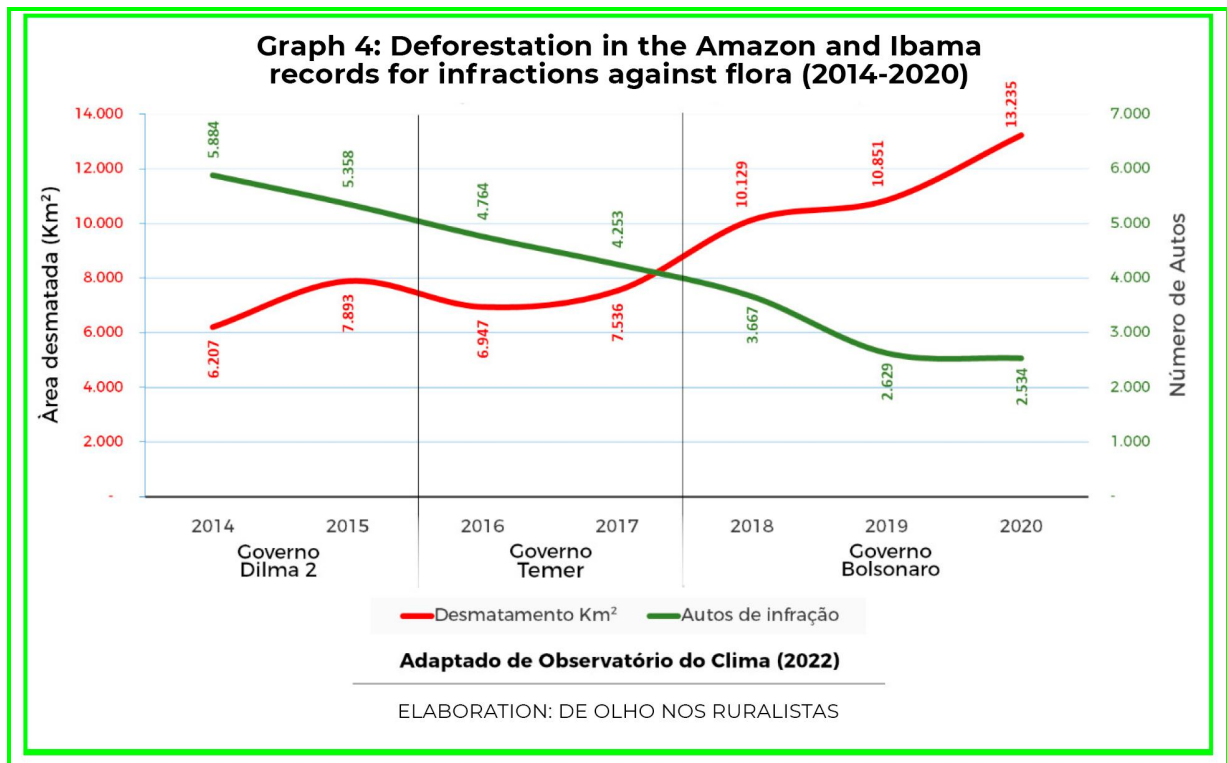
"We do not have problems with the environment issue anymore, especially when it comes to fines. Is there a need for their existence? Yes. But we were able to reduce the "fining" (sic) by 80% in the countryside".

Bolsonaro's speech, in January 2022

In the sentence above, the data brought up by Bolsonaro regarding environmental fines does not mean the number of environmental crimes has diminished. It only shows his modus operandi when it comes to environmental policy: they turn a blind eye. Ever since the beginning of his presidency, the Ministry of Environment is a main character acting to promote the setback in IBAMA's jurisdiction, especially when it comes to the Legal Amazon.

A Policy Brief made by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) points to a rapid decline in flora infraction notifications from 2019 to 2020. Those are the smallest numbers ever recorded in the last 21 years in regards to the nine states that encompass the Legal Amazon, even though new deforestation records have been set since 2019 (10,1 thousand km²) and 2020 (10,9 thousand km²).⁷³ According to the document, from 2012 to 2018 there was an average of 4.620 flora infraction notifications executed per year, while from 2019 to 2020 there were only 2,610, a 43.5% decrease. This happened in spite of the rising deforestation rates. An audit made by the Federal Audit Office, in 2021, corroborates these allegations.⁷⁴

In a recent survey, the Climate Observatory revealed that embargoes and apprehensions made by environmental inspectors in the Amazon followed the same tendency of a drastic decline: in 2018, there were 2.589, and in 2020, only 385⁷⁵ According to the UFMG Policy Brief, this decline points to an inspection strategy that avoids immediate economic sanctions to infractors in areas where an environmental damage has occurred.



The inspection that sought to fight illegal deforestation in the Amazon also suffered the impact of IBAMA's surveillance competence, since the number of inspectors have been drastically reduced. Chart 4 indicates that, during the Bolsonaro administration, the number of infraction notifications has diminished while the deforestation in the area has reached its highest level in the last decades.

Besides, there is evidence new inspectors were appointed without having the minimal qualifications required by regulation. The technical note n. 16/2020/CODEP/CGGP/DIPLAN from May 2020, released by IBAMA, indicated they needed to hire at least 1.306 public officers with higher education.⁷⁶ The federal government promised to hire 740 inspectors, but only authorized, in September 2021, a competitive civil-service examination that created only 157 inspector positions. As of 2019, the number of inspector positions filled has decreased, generating a rising number of vacancies, in spite of the urgent demand in all Brazilian states.⁷⁷

The obstacles created to sanctioning infractors, specially those who commit crimes against the flora, began in 2019, the first year of the Bolsonaro presidency. Changes in the Decree n. 6.514 from 2008, among others, gave the Ministry of Environment regulatory power. That has lead to the possibility of the elaboration of orders and norms that, given the wider political context, shaped the office's procedures accordingly to Bolsonaro's agenda in regards to environmental surveillance and fines.⁷⁸

There was another extremely harmful to the criminal process for environmental damages decree from 2019 signed by IBAMA president. It changed the regulation for Environmental Crimes Law and created environmental conciliation — a new legal arena, previous to trial, was created to mediate the State and the infractor, and among the changes is a 60% discount on the fine. This implicates suspending the effects of the infraction notifications until there is a hearing and the infractors do not even have to hire a lawyer to elaborate on their defense — the most common economic harm to being notified. Until 2021, only 252 conciliation hearings were finalized, representing less than 2% of the total infraction notifications served in the period. In practice, almost all of the infraction notifications served between 2019 and 2020 were suspended, generating a real risk that those processes will prescribe, the negotiations will not come to term and the infractions will quietly disappear.

In 2022, two of Eduardo Bim's orders made the situation even more catastrophic. One of them establishes that the infractor must be subpoenaed in person to present his or hers final allegations, instead of through notice by publication.⁷⁹ As reported by Agência Pública, this change means the Federal Government may be giving up a sum worth of R\$ 3.6 billions (U\$ 684 million) in environmental fines, besides the possibility that guilty infractors may ask for their money back. The National Environmental Civil Servants Association (Ascema), representative of IBAMA and ICMBio officers, denounced Bim's act to the Office of the Federal District State's Attorney, claiming that this measure will impact those offices' credibility and also lead numerous processes to end due to the statute of limitation.⁸⁰

While the legal decision has not been reached yet, the order issued by IBAMA's president still stands. Another norm, also from 2022, makes environmental fines viable only if the guilt of the infractor is proved, that is, if the crime was committed intentionally. However, there is already a legal common ground that states merely proving there was damage (in case of deforestation, for instance) is enough to apply environmental fines. This allowed for the use of CAR and remote satellite monitoring. Therefore, the new rule weakens remote inspections based on satellite imaging and causes legal uncertainty in IBAMA and the state's work, for there might be ample dispute over fines issued before and after the decision.

De Olho nos Ruralistas has accessed an internal intelligence report by Greenpeace, where the Bolsonaro administration policies to dismantle environmental protection are comprehensively depicted. Here we highlight the measures that emptied the Ministry of Environment and weakened international treaties, the omission of the Climate Fund and the Amazon Fund, as well as their misuse, and finally, the weakening and loss of autonomy imposed on IBAMA and ICMBio.⁸¹

The natural privatization of natural heritage is a key goal that boosts such neglect towards environmental preservation. The fallacious narrative that the State is not

able to execute an efficient environmental management opens up space to the appropriation of public assets by the private sector. Public policies such as “Adote um Parque” (Adopt a Park) are the perfect cover to the distortion of the ministry’s duties.

Adopt a Park: nature privatized and financialized

In accordance with the Bolsonaro administration worldview on environmental management, one that seeks the privatization of natural assets, ICMBio has created a program called Adopt a Park, instituted by Decree n. 10.623, on February 10th of 2021. The Decree states that the purpose of this public policy is to preserve, restore and improve Federal Preservation Units — both the ones fully protected and the ones of sustainable use — through a partnership between the government and national or foreign private people and companies. However, this practice seeks to privatize protected areas and traditional territories, as denounced by organizations such as Fase, Terra de Direitos and Grupo Carta de Belém in a document published in 2021.⁸²

They claim the Federal Government encourages the privatization of parks and protected areas under the pretext of scarcity of resources to fund socio environmental policies. This happens through concession programs that have impacts on traditional territories, and result in public assets appropriation, favoring private governance over territories of collective and social interest. As reported by Observatório do Clima, the hidden agenda in play is that the Government withdraws from its duty to look over protected areas in the country, giving up public management to the private sector.⁸³

The interested parties who seek to “adopt” a preservation unit must present a proposal to ICMBio, the agency responsible for evaluating and approving those proposals. The term of adoption has a minimal contract period of one year, possible to be extended up to five. The government’s expectation is that this adoption renders R\$ 50 or € 10 per hectare a year and those resources be invested in services such as surveillance, protection, prevention, and actions to fight forest fires and illegal deforestation and to recover damaged areas. The counterpart offered to the adopting company is that they can use those actions for publicity, inside or outside the Preservation Unit, through the installment of identifying elements or advertisements.

The Environment Ministry administrative rule n. 73, published on the 25th of February 2021, made public the 132 Preservation Units in the first phase of the program — all of them located in the Legal Amazon, in an area equivalent to 64.369.569 hectares, totalling 15% the Amazon territory. The administration of such large portion will be handed to the private sector, national or foreign, at the full amount of R\$ 3.2 billion (U\$ 611.5 million).⁸⁴ Eight Preservation Units have already been adopted by the following companies: Grupo Carrefour, Recofarma Indústria do Amazonas Ltda. (Coca-Cola), MRV Engenharia, Grupo Heineken, Coopcredi Guariba, Genial Investimentos, Geoflorestas and Cooperativa Agroindustrial (Coplana), adding up to R\$ 6.1 million (U\$ 1.15 million). All of the adopted units up until now are Extractive Reserves (Resex) and Relevant Ecological Interest Areas (Arie). Unfortunately, a company does not become sustainable by merely adopting a park: Carrefour, for instance, has adopted Resex Lago do Cuniã, in Rondônia, for R\$ 3.79 million (U\$ 720,831); however, in the Bolsonaro administration, the conglomerate was notified by IBAMA four times, in a total sum of R\$ 12.58 million (U\$ 2.39 million) worth of fines.⁸⁵

4) CONCLUSION

“Social movements are still tirelessly resisting, blowing the whistle, countering the government’s studies and fighting to build a future where we can dream of an inclusive country that respects diversity”.

(Kátia Penha, Grupo Carta de Belém)

The anti environmental policy of the Bolsonaro administration operates through two main fields: on the one hand, they seek to weaken the legislation, supporting agribusiness agendas in Congress and promulgating legal frameworks that make the environmental destruction possible. On the other, they dismantle inspection programs and deforestation prevention, diminish the number of environmental civil servants and reduce financial resources previously allocated towards environment protection. One of the key instruments of public policy planning in Brazil is the Plurianual Plan (PPA), and the one destined to the period between 2020 and 2023 has allocated only 0.03% of the budget for environment protection policies, out of a total budget worth of R\$ 6.8 trillion (approximately U\$ 1.3 trillion).

Such actions contribute to a view that illegal deforestation, malicious arson and conflicts with traditional peasant and forest populations will go unpunished. There has been resistance to the dismantling the environmental policy and its instruments, from social movements, NGOs and civil servants organizations, as is the case of Ascema. Before Bolsonaro, social movements used to participate actively in building environmental legal frameworks and public policy in a historical manner, so their voices still echo exposing the catastrophe caused by the Federal Government. Besides, there are serious parliamentarians, pledged to the environment, are still working the trenches inside the National Congress — they are less numerous, but still fundamental to put some breaks to the “boiada”, increasingly violent and fast.

The impact environment federal offices and agencies have suffered is profound. The monitoring actions towards environmental infractors have been weakened after the criminal trials have been centralized — Bolsonaro himself has criticized equipment destruction, a measure taken by inspectors when they apprehend cattle and e interdict illegally deforested areas. There is a tendency to aggravate the catastrophe unless the normative rulings are restructured, the budget recomposed, more officers with experience in environment management are appointed and popular participation is welcomed. If this government’s strategy continues as it is, the State and the private sector will go down together, dragging with them the last morsels of the preserved environment that still exist in the country.

If Bolsonaro's strategy for socio-environmental policy continues, the State and the private sector will be in a drowning embrace. Dragging with them what is left of the preserved environment in the country.

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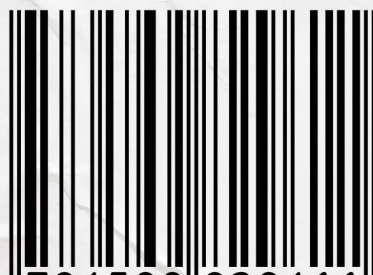


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