



Amazon Plan: three years of achievements, lessons and challenges

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Context

In 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres¹, said that he was “deeply concerned” with the Amazon, drawing attention to the risks of aggravating the damage to the biome amidst the global climate crisis. The world’s largest tropical forest, which shelters more than half of the planet’s biodiversity, was facing an alarming increase in wildfires and deforestation. In view of the importance of the region, in July 2020, the banks Bradesco, Itaú Unibanco and Santander joined efforts to launch the **Plano Amazônia (Amazon Plan)**, an alliance created with the purpose of designing and putting into practice strategies that promote sustainable development in the region. Now, on its third anniversary, the Amazon Plan celebrates a journey marked by progress and lessons.

From the outset, the challenge of creating economic incentives that favored the standing Amazon Forest, allowing the creation of economic and financial value, was evident. To tackle the issue, the Amazon Plan then initiated a consulting process, involving a broad range of scientists, governmental and non-governmental organizations, community leaders and other critical agents in this debate. Partnerships, in this case, was the key word.

With the support of a team of renowned specialists serving on an Advisory Council, including Carlos Nobre, Denis Minev, Izabella Teixeira, Adalberto Val, Adalberto Verissimo, André Guimarães and Tereza Vendramini, the banks had access to comprehensive analyses of the challenges, dynamics, potentialities, risks and opportunities in the context of the Amazon. This guidance underpinned the definition of ten operational measures to be taken. From among these measures, four were prioritized: tackling deforestation exposure

¹ <https://news.un.org/pt/story/2019/08/1684351>

in the meat-packing industry; promoting sustainable crops; tackling land-use regularization; and promoting the bioeconomy.

Deliveries

With respect to the **meat-packing industry and deforestation**, the purpose of the measure was to engage the meat-packing industries that operate in the Amazon in the adoption of supply chain traceability, so that they could credibly demonstrate that they were free of illegal deforestation by 2025, as an essential requirement for obtaining credit.

This project later inspired the members of the Brazilian Federation of Banks (Febraban) to create a **voluntary standard** whose main purpose is to prevent illegal deforestation in the meat supply chain. It covers direct suppliers and the first level of indirect suppliers, on which most deforestation records are concentrated, and applies to all banks that were part of Febraban's self-regulation system.

"Sector engagement to promote good production and conservation practices in the Amazon is critical for expanding the impact of the initiatives. The Amazon Plan is innovative as it defines a common strategy for a group of banks and their businesses in that biome. It served as inspiration also for the preparation of the Febraban Self-Regulatory Rule for the management of the deforestation risk in the meat chain."

Amaury Oliva, Febraban's Sustainability, Financial Citizenship, Consumer Relations and Self-Regulation Officer

In the measure aimed at **expanding financing to sustainable crops**, the banks have, independently, developed credit lines for entrepreneurs who proposed to manage, cultivate, extract, process and sell products originated in the Amazon while adopting sustainable production practices. To guide these businesses, the banks aligned around a concept of sustainable crops which was based on criteria that were validated with NGOs and technical partners.

An example of a successful investment was the joint financing of the first ferry boat plant aimed at the processing of the acai berry of the company Transportes Bertolini. By taking the industrial activity close to the producers in riparian communities, the operation reduced the reliance on intermediaries for product sales and solved issues related to logistics and the fast post-harvest perishability of the fruit. With the ferry boat, the local producers sell the acai berry directly and have the guarantee of selling the entire production for a better sales price.

In the **land-use regularization** measure, the banks collaborated with the law firms Machado Meyer, Mattos Filho and Pinheiro Neto Advogados to conduct a [broad study](#)² on the laws in effect in the nine

² <https://api.mziq.com/mzfilemanager/v2/d/42787847-4cf6-4461-94a5-40ed237dca33/c0cf4357-b76e-9d5f-6be3-b47654b4a94a?origin=2>

states of the so-called *Amazônia Legal* (Legal Amazon) region, allowing increased understanding of the region's land tenure challenges. The purpose of the study was to explore and deepen the understanding of the legal framework of the land-use legalization issue, without which it is almost impossible to envisage a solution of scale for the region's sustainable development. Land-use regularization involves the overcoming of many challenges before the banking system can broadly serve producing communities in the vast Amazonian territory.

In **bioeconomy**, the Amazon Plan sought to address some of the main structural bottlenecks that limit the growth of the business ecosystem in this sector, which is still incipient and requires greater support and capacity to scale.

“The partnership with the Amazon Plan and its leading players, Bradesco, Itaú Unibanco and Santander, was essential for the Jornada Amazônia Platform to leap towards its first scaling cycle, which will allow for the expansion of the services under the Gênese (Genesis), Sinapse da Bioeconomia (Synapse of Bioeconomy) and Sinergia (Synergy) programs and other innovative entrepreneurship promotion mechanisms. Our purpose is to contribute to the competitiveness of the standing forest through a broad platform of support for bioeconomy innovation. In this context, the Amazon Plan is contributing to the viability of this purpose, not only financially, but also working in a proactive manner on the governance of the platform and on the link with other important players for the innovative entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Amazon.” **Marcos Aurélio da Ré, Green Economy Officer at Fundação Certi and Strategic Coordinator of the Jornada Amazônia Platform**

With Fundo Vale, Porticus and CLUA foundations, the banks financially supported the *Jornada Amazônia* (Amazon Journey) Platform, created and managed by *Fundação Certi* (Certi Foundation) aimed at business innovation in the Amazon.

According to Gustavo Luz, Executive Officer of Fundo Vale, “no structural change in the Amazon will be possible without the partnership and engagement of many sectors of society. The participation of the members of the Amazon Plan as co-financers of the Jornada Amazônia Platform, originally built with the support of funds from philanthropic organizations such as Fundo Vale, was strategic for this initiative to expand its scale of impact. This is a program that seeks to boost businesses associated with bioeconomy and innovation in the biome and it was created and implemented by Fundação Certi and is a concrete example of collective impact. The exchange of experiences and knowledge from different standpoints generated from the interactions in the Jornada Amazônia Platform in the search for systemic solutions to maintain the standing forest is extremely valuable for the innovation and Amazon bioeconomy agenda.”

By 2025, the initiative intends to: train 3,000 talented people in innovative entrepreneurship; support the creation of 200 startups in a pre-acceleration program; qualify 100 startups in an acceleration program; and facilitate equity investment for 30 startups through a micro-Corporate Venture Capital

fund managed by Darwin Startups. It also aims at supporting the strengthening of at least ten organizations from the local ecosystem, including venture builders, accelerators and incubators, so that they can better provide support to the ecosystem of startups, and the development of the *Gêmeo Digital* (Digital Twin) project, a technological platform that comprises the development of market and marketplace models for three products linked to the forest.

Additionally, the banks financed a [study](#)³ led by Professor Salo Coslovsky, from New York University, on the potential of the cultivation of sustainable crops and bottlenecks in production chains, and cacao production was the first chain to be analyzed. The purpose is to promote the growth and expansion of businesses that encourage the maintenance of the standing forest, also bringing solutions for sector challenges that limit the growth of the activities associated with bioeconomy in the region.

Next steps

As the three-year anniversary of the Amazon Plan was approaching, the banks reflected on the lessons and consolidated the ten initial measures into three strategic objectives, thus ensuring greater focus and robustness for the deliveries: **(i) forest conservation; (ii) promotion of bioeconomy and (iii) access to connectivity**. Connectivity became a new focus since the banks came across a chronic problem for the sustainable development of the Amazon: the restricted access to quality Internet. According to data from the Brazilian National Household Sample Survey (Pnad - 2022)⁴, only 55% of the households in the urban areas and 45% households in the rural areas of *Amazônia Legal* have broadband Internet access. These figures are, respectively, 20 and 18 percentage points lower than in the rest of Brazil. Contributing to the solution of this problem will allow communities in the region to have better access to education, health, productive inclusion, banking services, entertainment and even greater capacity to warn the authorities about deforestation and illegal activities.

The World Bank⁵ recently highlighted the enormous benefits that the conservation of the Amazon biome can bring to society – R\$1.5 trillion a year, in its most conservative estimate – against the benefits that would be obtained from deforestation and conversion of land for exploring the agricultural production and the extraction of wood and minerals – R\$490 billion a year, which, in this case, would be the most optimistic estimate. It is clear that choosing sustainable development with the maintenance of the forests is the best option, which will require redoubled efforts of public authorities, the private sector, civil society and local communities, taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the region, its peoples and their environmental, social and economic dynamics.

³ <https://amazonia2030.org.br/oportunidades-para-a-producao-de-cacau-na-amazonia-brasileira/>

⁴ https://amazonia2030.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AMZ2030_Solucoes-Digitais.pdf

⁵ <https://www.estadao.com.br/economia/amazonia-em-pe-valor-banco-mundial/>