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Activists call on World Bank to cancel loan for livestock expansion amid fires and climate crisis

NGO Sinergia Animal protests with a stuffed jaguar with bandaged paws, symbolizing the devastation of recent fires in Brazil

São Paulo, September 27, 2024 – Activists from the NGO [Sinergia Animal](#) and the [Stop Financing Factory Farming campaign](#) held a protest in front of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) office in São Paulo on Thursday (26), demanding the cancellation of a proposed loan to finance a cattle feedlot in Mongolia. The massive project, which could import soybeans from Brazil, has sparked outrage over its potential environmental and animal welfare harm. The IFC, a branch of the World Bank funded by taxes paid by citizens around the world, including in Brazil, is facing increasing criticism for supporting this type of controversial initiative and is expected to make a final decision on the financing on September 30.

The protesters held a banner with the slogan “World Bank: When will you stop financing destruction?” and presented the financial institution with a stuffed jaguar with bandaged paws, lying on a bed of charcoal. Its burned paws symbolize the devastating impact of the recent fires in the Pantanal, Cerrado and Amazon. Often caused by deforestation for livestock farming, these fires are the product of the irresponsible expansion of feed production for industrial livestock farming, the NGO says.

A [letter](#) to IFC executives expressing these concerns, which was signed by 77 civil society associations from 30 different countries, including five entities from Mongolia, was also delivered to the institution, along with the stuffed jaguar. Opposition to this project is the latest in a series of industrial livestock projects opposed by the global Stop Financing Factory Farming campaign. The campaign delivered a [petition](#) to the World Bank earlier this year from 280 groups in 60 countries urging the Bank to halt its harmful investments in industrial livestock and shift its financing to more sustainable food production

“The expansion of livestock feedlots in Mongolia and other countries is increasing demand for grains such as soybeans, which are largely produced in Brazil. This demand could further exacerbate deforestation in the Amazon and Cerrado, leading to more large-scale fires and other natural disasters”, said Carolina Galvani, Executive Director of Sinergia Animal. “It is unacceptable that the World Bank and IFC use our tax dollars to finance this destructive

agricultural model. This jaguar with bandaged paws represents the countless wild animals that were burned and lost their lives during the recent fires”, she added.

The situation in Brazil is alarming. At least 619 wild animals have already been rescued from the recent fires, but the real impact is immeasurable. According to Ibama, there are still no official figures on wildlife deaths, but the magnitude of the drought and fires underscores the gravity of the situation. Among the species impacted are maned wolves, jaguars, blue macaws and giant anteaters.

According to IFC documents, the proposed Mongolian feedlot project by the company Metagro, could rely on imports of grains such as soybeans to feed the animals—often sourced from countries facing severe environmental destruction, such as Brazil. The expansion of industrial agriculture and feed production in these areas has resulted in massive deforestation, biodiversity loss, and increased carbon emissions. According to Sinergia Animal, this link between international industrial livestock farming and deforestation means that taxpayer money indirectly contributes to environmental disasters around the world, including in Brazil.

“These fires are not just accidents; they are a byproduct of deforestation and land clearing for agriculture, often to grow feed for livestock raised in other countries,” Galvani added. “As more land is cleared for soy production, the greater the pressure on our ecosystems to be destroyed and carbon emissions to increase, exacerbating the climate crisis.” Furthermore, the NGO points out that the World Bank would be contradictory in financing such projects, since its recent report "[Recipe for a Livable Planet](#)" highlights the urgency of combating climate change, protecting biodiversity and ensuring food security. The document recognizes industrial livestock farming as one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, deforestation and excessive water consumption.

Sinergia Animal also points out that feedlots are not ideal systems for animal welfare, as they keep animals in overcrowded conditions, leading to stress, injuries and a greater risk of disease for the animals. The concentration of thousands of cattle in this system also makes it difficult to provide adequate veterinary care, often leaving sick animals without treatment and leading to early deaths. Another worrying factor, according to the organization, is that cattle naturally feed on grass, but in feedlots they are fed grains, which causes digestive problems such as bloating, acidosis and, in some cases, death.

As part of its campaign, Sinergia Animal and the Stop Financing Factory Farming campaign are encouraging the public to email the IFC and the World Bank demanding that the loan be removed from consideration. The organization emphasizes that public funding should be directed toward sustainable food systems that protect both animals and the planet, rather than fueling industries that drive deforestation, fires, and the loss of vital biodiversity.

Additional data for Box:

- A [MapBiomass](#) analysis revealed that soybean cultivation in Brazil increased from about 1 million hectares to 7 million hectares between 1985 and 2022.

- In the last 5 years, 97% of native vegetation loss in Brazil was caused by agricultural expansion, according to MapBiomas' [Annual Deforestation Report](#).
- In 2023, the Cerrado became the most deforested biome in Brazil, and soybean production is a key driver of agribusiness expansion in the region. The region known as Matopiba, distributed between Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia, alone surpassed the deforested area in the Amazon states and accounted for 47% of the loss of native vegetation in Brazil.
- A survey carried out by the transparency platform [Trase](#) in partnership with Imaflora, in 2022, indicated that the Amazon remains under serious threat from the expansion of soybean cultivation. In 2020, 133 thousand hectares of soybeans were harvested from areas deforested after 2008 in the Amazon, in contradiction to the Soy Moratorium.
- According to the [UN](#), our global food system is the main cause of biodiversity loss, with agriculture being the identified threat to 24,000 of the 28,000 (86%) species at risk of extinction.
- Scientists from the United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) have warned that factors such as agricultural intensification, increased demand for animal protein, deforestation and climate change could lead to the emergence of new pandemics that originate in animals before spreading to humans, similar to Covid-19 (or the new coronavirus).