



## Letter to the editor



## Right of reply to the article in Biological Conservation that attacks the work developed by Embrapa Territorial

Mr. Editor,

I hereby, through the right of reply, come to question and point out contradictions in the article “*The risk of fake controversies for Brazilian environmental policies*” published in the journal **Biological Conservation**. The aforementioned manifesto, disguised as an article, made direct attacks on the work carried out by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation – Embrapa (Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária) and, in particular, on the studies carried out by Embrapa Territorial.

This article was publicly refuted in Brazil, in all its arguments. Research institutions, such as Embrapa (Embrapa, 2022), and dozens of agricultural organizations (Embrapa Territorial, 2022) expressed their repudiation of the article. People and their technical work were attacked in this article, denounced (Costa, 2022) as a pamphlet by legal experts.

Embrapa Territorial, in fact and in law, elaborates technical and scientific studies on the allocation, occupation, land use and territorial distribution of native vegetation in Brazil. Its scientific staff detects, identifies, qualifies, quantifies, maps, and monitors the legally protected areas in the country. Such analyses have been the object of Embrapa Territorial's official commitment since its foundation. This research center is a strategic instrument to support the Brazilian State in issues related to the competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural territories.

The authors of the mentioned article never addressed any Embrapa Territorial researcher for clarification or dialogue. Worse, without objectively pointing out errors in Embrapa's research or a contradictory study produced in their academies, they call into question Embrapa Territorial's work on the use and land occupation in Brazil based on opinions and “personal communication” (page 5).

Here is one example: according to the authors, the results of these surveys prevented the demarcation of new conservation units or indigenous lands, harming environmental and indigenist policies by exaggerating their territorial scope. And, according to them, the data presented were used to make false claims about Brazil as the country in the world that most protects its native vegetation. The statement of these authors, as it is presented, is false.

Essentially located on public lands, these protected areas in Brazil are made up of integral conservation units and indigenous lands. The legal protection of portions of the national territory is always the result of established technical processes, finalized by acts of the government.

In the concept of protected areas, the UN includes the Sustainable Use Conservation Units, here, and in the world. Brazil has 30.3 % of its territory protected by conservation units, preservation areas and indigenous lands. There are 2471 protected areas, totaling 2,584,808 km<sup>2</sup> (Embrapa Territorial, 2021), discounting territorial overlaps, especially in the Amazon. The UNEP- Protected Planet Report (a United Nations report) states: *The most extensive coverage achieved at a regional*

*level is for Latin America and the Caribbean (...). Half of the entire region's protected land is in Brazil, making it the largest national terrestrial protected area network in the world (ONU, 2016).*

In trying to point out errors and false controversies in Embrapa Territorial research, the article does not present equivalent studies of land allocation, use and occupation capable of refuting the number or range of protected areas existing in Brazil, according to Embrapa and the UN itself, nor show equivocations in their locations or territorial dimension.

Embrapa Territorial is using this right of reply to repel the false accusations of which it was the object. Let this summary of the challenge at **Biological Conservation** be registered. The full text is available, with numerical and cartographic data, to its readers and can be consulted on the corporate site of Embrapa Territorial in <https://www.embrapa.br/territorial/sala-de-imprensa/esclarecimentos-oficiais/esclarecimentos-sobre-criticas-aos-estudos-de-atribuicao>.

### Declaration of competing interest

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

### Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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