



Sainsbury's sells corned beef linked to Amazon deforestation

A new [investigation](#) by Repórter Brasil in partnership with Mighty Earth has found that corned beef sold by UK supermarket Sainsbury's is linked to deforestation in the Amazon. The investigation found corned beef, which was processed at the JBS slaughterhouse in Lins, São Paulo, in southern Brazil. This slaughterhouse received supplies of cattle from a farm that receives animals for fattening from remote farms which have been officially sanctioned - and embargoed - for illegal deforestation over 2,000 kilometres away in the Amazon rainforest.

These revelations come despite Sainsbury's role as a high-profile climate champion and [sponsor](#) of the recent COP26 UN climate change conference, and Sainsbury's own [commitments](#) to zero deforestation and ecosystem conversion in its global beef supply chains. Sainsbury's [policy](#) stipulates that its suppliers of corned beef must have made public commitments not to source from farmers engaged in deforestation of the Amazon.

The new research follows [persistent reports](#) since 2009 of alleged deforestation linked to Brazilian-based global meat giant [JBS](#) - through multiple [news reports](#), [exposés](#), and [investigations](#), as well as Mighty Earth's own corporate audits and [recent Trader Tracker monitoring reports](#). Other UK supermarket chains have dropped JBS as a supplier after [allegations](#) of modern slavery and deforestation, linked to exports of its beef and other meat products.

Campaigners at Earthsight [alerted](#) Sainsbury's to Amazon deforestation linked to JBS and Princes corned beef in 2019. Sainsbury's was later publicly [criticised](#) for not suspending JBS-controlled meat company Moy Park after [allegations](#) of Amazon deforestation linked to soy-reared chicken and pork products were exposed in 2020. The recurrence of such [serious allegations](#) points to a systemic failure by JBS to address deforestation in its Brazilian supply chain effectively, and the need for both enhanced regulatory action and decisive commercial action by supermarkets and other consumer-facing companies to tackle forest and other habitat destruction.

BEEF DRIVING FOREST DESTRUCTION IN BRAZIL

The production of beef in Brazil is a major driver of deforestation in the Amazon and other biodiverse habitats like the Cerrado woody savanna. Brazil is the world's largest beef exporter, exporting two million tonnes of beef each year. Scientists estimate that two-thirds of cleared land in the Amazon and Cerrado has been converted to cattle pasture and that 57 million hectares of the Brazilian Amazon is now used for cattle ranching. From 2019-2020, Brazil exported 60,000 tonnes of processed beef to the UK - worth \$200 million.

JBS is the second largest food company in the world and the world's largest producer of beef - slaughtering almost 35,000 cattle a day in Brazil alone. In 2017, about a third of JBS's beef exports from Brazil were assessed to have come from the Amazon. Despite the deforestation risks, JBS's global meat exports are booming - JBS saw an increase in trade volume from Brazil of 40% between 2017 and 2019, and JBS was responsible for about a third of Brazil's beef exports in 2019. JBS's exports of corned beef to the UK hit an estimated £42 million in 2018.

The recent investigation by Repórter Brasil found that Santa Lúcia Farm near São Paulo supplied cattle to the JBS slaughterhouse in Lins, São Paulo between 2019 and 2021. Santa Lúcia Farm had purchased cattle for fattening from Estância Painera, a farm in the Amazon officially charged with illegal deforestation.

Estância Painera covers an area of 392 hectares in Altamira in Pará state, over 2,000 km away and in the heart of one of the Amazon regions most affected by deforestation. According to Pará state public records, Amazon deforestation has been recorded at Estância Painera since 2008, together with a failure to maintain Legal Reserve and Permanent Protection areas.



The owner of Estância Painera, Carlos Antônio Nunes, also owns another much larger property nearby in Altamira, the 2,200-hectare **Bonanza Farm**. Since 2013, 330 hectares have been under interdiction and embargoed by the Brazilian Ministry of Environment's [IBAMA](#) anti-deforestation authority for illegal deforestation of Amazon forest. Nunes was fined 1.6 million Brazilian real (£221,000) for this environmental crime in 2013.



Indirect supplier **Bonanza Farm**, at Altamira in Pará state in the Amazon was interdicted and fined for illegal deforestation of 330 hectares in 2013. Over 500 calves were sent from Bonanza Farm for fattening to nearby Estancia Painera in Altamira. Satellite image taken June 2020.

Repórter Brasil found that between 2019 and 2020 alone the Bonanza Farm sent more than 500 cattle to be fattened at Estância Painera. There is a risk that cattle purchased from Estância Painera by third parties - such as JBS - come from the pastures of the Bonanza Farm, which has been interdicted, fined, and officially embargoed by IBAMA for illegal deforestation.

PRINCES CORNED BEEF SOLD IN UK LINKED TO AMAZON DEFORESTATION



1

Bonanza farm

Five hundred calves sent from Bonanza farm to be fattened at Estância Painera between 2019 and 2020.



2

Estância Painera

Fattened calves sent to the JBS direct supplier near São Paulo.



3

JBS direct supplier

Santa Lúcia Farm, Espírito Santo do Turvo near São Paulo.



4

JBS slaughterhouse

Meat processing plant and export hub Lins, near São Paulo, which produces corned beef.



5

Sainsbury's stores

Princes corned beef found online and at three stores in Oxford.

DEFORESTATION ON SAINSBURY'S SHELVES

Researchers from Mighty Earth found sample tins of Princes corned beef processed by JBS in Brazil available at three stores in Oxford, during March 2021 and on the Sainsbury's website on December 1, 2021. Sainsbury's continues to stock the product through its online store (as of date of publication).

Sainsbury's is committed to deforestation and conversion-free beef supply chains and recently made specific [commitments](#) to suspend suppliers linked to recurrent deforestation or serious human rights abuses.

In response to a request for information from Mighty Earth in December 2021, Sainsbury's responded to the findings of this investigation by stating that the company has 'committed to moving our own brand corned beef sourcing away from Brazil so that we can ensure our product can be independently verified deforestation and conversion-free in origin.' While this move is a positive step, taking action on one product line does not substitute for a fundamental or overarching policy or approach on deforestation.

Therefore, Mighty Earth urges that:

- Sainsbury's should suspend all direct and indirect supplier contracts with JBS considering this investigation and multiple earlier ones, highlighting links between the company and deforestation. Any suspension should only be reversed once the company has agreed to adopt a meaningful zero deforestation policy, as well as stringent monitoring of both direct and indirect suppliers with full traceability.
- Sainsbury's has a specific policy on soy, a key driver of deforestation, but not on beef. Sainsbury's should adopt time-bound, specific commitments to eliminate deforestation, ecosystem conversion, and human rights abuses from their global beef supply chains.
- Sainsbury's must ensure effective implementation by monitoring suppliers' practices and requiring suppliers to provide evidence of compliance. In practice, this means that JBS and other suppliers in high-risk areas should provide full traceability of both direct and indirect suppliers.
- Sainsbury's should make full supply chain transparency, monitoring, and traceability a condition of trade with all suppliers for commodities with deforestation, environmental and human rights risks.
- Sainsbury's should regularly and publicly report on progress toward deforestation and conversion-free beef commitments, using verified metrics and disclosing all farm suppliers to enhance supply chain traceability.

Sainsbury's also recently urged the UK Government to increase the scope of the deforestation-free supply chain provisions in the UK's draft Environment Bill, which currently fails to include deforestation linked to beef and processed beef supply chains. Therefore, we urge Sainsbury's to:

- Work with other leading UK supermarkets to publicly call for the scope of the UK's Environment Bill to be strengthened to include beef and processed beef products, and cover all forms of deforestation, ecosystem conversion, and human rights abuses.

RIGHT TO REPLY

Sainsbury's responded to Mighty Earth to state that: "The link between cattle farming and the destruction of ecosystems like the Amazon, the Cerrado, and the Pantanal is a complex issue, which we take extremely seriously."

"We have taken a range of steps together with our suppliers and the wider industry to try to address this, but we recognise that not enough progress has been made... Sainsbury's has committed to moving our own brand corned beef sourcing away from Brazil so that we can ensure our product can be independently verified deforestation and conversion-free in origin."

Brazilian meat supplier JBS told Repórter Brasil that "it does not condone or tolerate any type of disrespect for the environment, Indigenous communities or Brazilian legislation" and that "at the time of purchase, all of the aforementioned direct supplier properties complied with the company's responsible source protocols."

Approached by Mighty Earth, the Princes Group said: "Princes has not placed a contract for corned beef from JBS since November 2020; the Princes branded corned beef sourced from JBS and identified by Mighty Earth on shelves in the UK and Netherlands will be residual sales from this last contract. Princes takes the issue of deforestation very seriously and continually engages with suppliers to improve supply chain management, mitigate risks and enhance transparency. We have been reviewing our corned beef supply chain and are developing a new sourcing policy for Brazilian material taking into account a wide range of factors including traceability, risk, cost, quality, customer feedback, the management of indirect suppliers and a commitment to zero deforestation."

The owner of Bonanza Farm and Estância Painera, Carlos Antônio Nunes, could not be reached by Repórter Brasil.

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