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WILDFIRE IS THE AMAZON FOREST'S BIGGEST THREAT AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE IT

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Wildfires are devastating lives and landscapes across the U.S. and around the planet.

Wildfires are also the biggest threat to the Amazon forest and, therefore, a double blow to humanity's ability to solve the climate crisis. This vast forest, nearly as large as the lower 48 of the US, is a huge global cooling system, cooling the air by evaporating billions of tonnes of water each day. Add to that the carbon stored in the wood of its trees and out of the atmosphere — equivalent to the carbon emissions of the global economy over the last decade. When the Amazon burns, we lose both this natural cooling system and its carbon storage.

Image available online: [view image](#)

Credit: Aliança da Terra

In 2024, [wildfires damaged far more](#) of the Amazon forest than chainsaws — driven by extreme drought that made even the lush rainforest flammable.

But here's the surprising truth: wildfires can also spark *collaboration* among rural Amazonians. When they scorch forests and fields, *everyone* loses. And

we have learned that efforts to stop wildfires can unite stakeholders who have often been divided, building collaboration that also helps protect and restore forests.

Many Indigenous Peoples, small-scale farmers, and traditional communities—including *caboclo* and *quilombola* groups (Afro-descendant and mixed-heritage populations)—use fire to prepare fields for growing cassava and other staple crops, a practice rooted in centuries of Amazon farming tradition. And many cattle farmers set their brush-infested pastures on fire to favor forage grasses, at the cost of long-term pasture productivity.

But today, climate change is making these intentional fires much riskier. As it becomes warmer and drier, fires that were once easy to contain now escape into the surrounding forest and spiral out of control. These communities and cattle ranchers often lack the tools and knowledge to prevent and contain wildfires. Meanwhile, agribusinesses—no longer reliant on fire but vulnerable to damage from wildfire—have the machinery, staff, and motivation to help.

Image available online: [view image](#)

Credit: Aliança da Terra

At Earth Innovation Institute, we have spent decades studying Amazon wildfires and their solutions. When the 2024 wildfires struck, our team on the ground leveraged this accumulated knowledge to form a core partnership with [Aliança da Terra](#), the Brazilian non-profit organization that pioneered an integrated, decentralized approach to fire prevention and combat—arguably the most effective and sustainable strategy for significantly reducing forest fires in the Amazon. Together, we launched two wildfire solution pilots in the Amazon counties of Paragominas (Pará) and Querência (Mato Grosso), with

additional support from our long-term partners [Produzindo Certo](#) and [Instituto PCI](#).

Together, we're:

- Supporting local communities, farmers, and governments to design and implement county-wide wildfire prevention and control plans
- Training communities and farmers to prevent wildfires and stop them before they spread; supporting those who want to move beyond their dependence on fire.
- Connecting these plans to [state climate finance programs](#) that reward forest protection and low-emission farming, to [state government wildfire programs](#), and to the new [federal program](#) for preventing and controlling wildfire.

Soon, we will:

- Increase county-wide resilience in the face of climate change by mapping forest protection and recovery zones to establish biodiversity corridors and restore the health of streams and rivers.

Wildfire is now one of the greatest threats to the Amazon — but it's also one of our biggest opportunities for change. By tapping into the broadly shared interest in solving wildfire, we are fostering collaboration across Amazonian landscapes to eliminate wildfire, reverse forest loss, and conserve water resources and biodiversity.

[With your support](#), we can scale fast — before more forest is lost. Together, we can stop the fires and secure a healthier planet for future generations.