

# Brazilian researchers protest budget cuts

Science, technology and innovation spending will fall by 20%

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**RIO DE JANEIRO**

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Science agencies in Brazil have voiced concern at the government's decision to cut the science, technology and innovation (ST&I) budget by nearly a fifth.

The US\$3.8 billion (6.7 billion Brazilian reais) Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MSTI) budget for 2012 — which had already been approved by Congress — was cut last month (15 February) by around US\$850 million, as part of efforts to cut the overall budget by US\$31 billion.

Funding for science increased year on year throughout the eight-year presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose time in office was characterised by strong support for science.

But the ministry's budget has now shrunk for a second year in a row under the new president, Dilma Rousseff, despite promises to continue her predecessor's policies.

Overall funding now stands at around a third of what it was in 2010 — a worrying trend, according to Luiz Davidovich, director of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences.

"Last year's reduction could have been seen as an 'accident' — reflecting the government's intention to balance the budget in the context of the global economic crisis. But a second cut starts to look like government policy," he told SciDev.Net.

The Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC) and the Brazilian Society of Physics (SBF) have both sent public letters of protest to the government.

The president of the SBPC, Helena Nader, told SciDev.Net that Rousseff is giving contradictory messages about her government's intentions on the future of ST&I investment.

Nader said Rousseff had highlighted the importance of ST&I in the country's 'Major Plan', issued in August 2011, and again when appointing Marco Antonio Raupp as Brazil's new science minister in January of this year.

"In spite of that, the budget has been significantly cut back — and our understanding is that the president reviews all such cuts," said Nader.

In its public note of protest, the SBF said it was concerned and disappointed at the decision to impose fresh cuts at a time of increasing



*Edu Andrade/LatinContent/Getty Images*

Brazilian scientists are concerned by President Dilma Rousseff's second year of budget cuts.



Davidovich and Nader said the budget cuts will affect productivity, and make Brazil less attractive to scientists — possibly exacerbating brain drain.

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"What successful researcher would want to exchange a country with a stable investment for a country where they do not know what is going to happen next month?" Nader said.

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