

## ENVIRONMENT

# Deforestation rates spike in Brazil

*Loosening protections damages the Amazon.*

BY JEFF TOLLEFSON

Illegal deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has jumped to its highest level in eight years, raising fears that the country could lose a decade's worth of progress in forest protection.

Satellite data released on 29 November by Brazil's National Institute for Space Research in São José dos Campos show that 7,989 square kilometres of land — nearly the size of Puerto Rico — was cleared between August 2015 and July 2016. That is 29% above the 2015 level, and 75% above the level for 2012 (see 'Going up').

Brazil basked in the international lime-light for nearly a decade after deforestation began to drop in the Brazilian Amazon in 2005, thanks in part to stronger government enforcement.

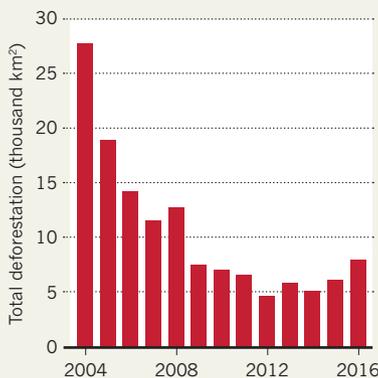
But Brazil's Congress relaxed the country's deforestation protections in 2012, and there is a push among current lawmakers to further loosen environmental laws. The ongoing economic recession and political-corruption scandals have also diverted money and attention away from environmental enforcement.

This has emboldened ranchers and illegal land traders to resume clearing land, says Paulo Barreto, a senior researcher at the Amazon Institute of People and the Environment, an activist group in Belém. ■

SOURCE: INPE

## GOING UP

After nearly 10 years of decline, deforestation in Brazil's Amazon is on the rise.



ERIC GAILLARD/REUTERS

Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front, is challenging the mainstream parties.

## SOCIOLOGY

# Researchers baffled by nationalist surge

*Economic woes wrought by globalization are only part of the cause.*

BY JEFF TOLLEFSON

Waves of nationalist sentiment are reshaping the politics of Western democracies in unexpected ways — carrying Donald Trump to a surprise victory last month in the US presidential election, and pushing the United Kingdom to vote in June to exit the European Union. And nationalist parties are rising in popularity across Europe.

Many economists see this political shift as a consequence of globalization and technological innovation over the past quarter of a century, which have eliminated many jobs in the West. And political scientists are tracing the influence of cultural tensions arising from immigration and from ethnic, racial and sexual diversity. But researchers are struggling to understand why these disparate forces have combined to drive an unpredictable brand of populist politics.

"We have to start worrying about the stability of our democracies," says Yascha Mounk, a political scientist at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He notes that the long-running World Values Survey shows that people are increasingly disaffected with their governments — and more willing to support authoritarian leaders.

But this has played out in different ways

across the West. Austria rejected the extreme-right Freedom Party presidential candidate Norbert Hofer in favour of Alexander Van der Bellen, a former Green Party leader, on 4 December. The same day, anti-establishment forces prevailed in Italy, where Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said he would resign after voters rejected his proposed constitutional reforms.

In France, Marine Le Pen has worked to cleanse the far-right National Front of its anti-Semitic roots and build a broader working-class base. Those efforts could make the party, a minor player in French politics since the 1970s, a force during the presidential elections next year.

The bulk of the party's new support is coming from deindustrialized areas in northern France, says Douglas Webber, a political scientist at the global business school INSEAD's French campus in Fontainebleau. "A lot of the industrial workers arguably have made the transition from the extreme left to the extreme right," he says.

In the United States, the regions hardest hit by globalization have become more politically extreme, according to a working paper published in September by David Autor, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, and his colleagues. They found that these areas elected more hard-line