

Science online eLetter, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adu9113>

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Response to A Corollary to “COP 30: Brazilian policies must change”

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The 4 April 2025 eLetter by Marcelo Gonçalves de Lima (1) suggests that the *Science* editorial “COP 30: Brazilian policies must change” (2) “risks oversimplification” by not mentioning the environmental activities of ministries other than the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MMA). The author emphasizes that the Ministry of Finance leads an agenda that aims to “foster sustainable economic growth” in a “national agenda contending with real developmental imperatives.” This implies he believes that avoiding the escape of global warming from human control, addressed in the editorial, is not a “real” imperative! He does include a mention of the fact that the strategies of the Ministry of Finance “sometimes conflict with environmental objectives,” but he clearly thinks this is a small price to pay for “growth.” Unfortunately, some of the “environmental objectives” that are sacrificed involve climatic tipping points that lead to destruction of both the environment and the economy of Brazil.

The “conflict with environmental objectives,” of course, confirms the editorial’s point that the MMA cannot be expected to contain the damage caused by the myriad actions of the other ministries that are focused on “growth.” Decisions on the issues raised in the editorial, such as those on oil development, highway construction, legalization of illegal claims to government land, and subsidies for transforming cattle pasture to soy are outside of MMA’s purview. Brazil’s president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, must change his administration’s policies.

The eLetter criticizes “simplistic critiques that single out Brazil as uniquely deficient.” If the author is referring to the editorial, he should read it again, as it makes clear that climate change has global causes and requires global action. It also makes clear that it is in Brazil’s own national interest to take the measures suggested, and that action cannot be contingent on the “wealthier nations” taking the lead.

The eLetter cites two papers that the author praises as “nuanced,” implying that the editorial is not “nuanced.” For additional nuance, the author of the eLetter should read the references provided in the editorial. In addition to being strictly limited in length, *Science* editorials permit only 10 references in the form of links in the online version. Nuance aside, what is most lacking is often unambiguous conclusions about what should be done, such as those provided in the editorial, rather than “on the one hand this but on the other hand that” – the butt of jokes about the need for “one-armed economists.”

The eLetter concludes with a call for “sustainable development” and “reconciling economic growth with conservation.” I suggest gaining some nuance on these by reading (3, 4).

References

- 1) de Lima, M.G. 2025. A Corollary to “COP 30: Brazilian policies must change.” *Science* online eLetter. 4 April 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adu9113>
- 2) Fearnside, P.M. & W. Leal Filho. 2025. COP 30: Brazilian policies must change. *Science* 387: 1237. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adu9113>
- 3) Fearnside, P.M. 2018. Challenges for sustainable development in Brazilian Amazonia. *Sustainable Development* 26(2): 141-149. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1725>
- 4) Fearnside, P.M. 2023. Sustainable development. In: *Oxford Bibliographies in Ecology*. D. Gibson (ed.). Oxford University Press, New York, NY. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199830060-0227>