

Advancing climate action within agriculture in a world in turmoil

An outlook from Brazil before COP30

NIELS SØNDERGAARD



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ABOUT THIS STUDY

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1. Introduction

The 30th annual UN Climate Change Conference (COP30), which will be held in Belém, Brazil, will take place against the backdrop of profound global transformations. While climate change accelerates, the post-war order is in a state of upheaval, as increasing geopolitical tensions and great power rivalries reshape the foundations of world politics. With international institutions and cooperation facing serious obstacles, important questions arise about how to confront common challenges, such as contemporary planetary crises, including climate change.

Confronting this situation, the Brazilian COP30 Presidency has called for a global *mutirão*, - an old indigenous expression for a community joining forces to face a common undertaking - for countries to turn the current lack of progress into a new momentum for global climate action (Brazil 2025a). During three years, the COP has been organized by authoritarian regimes. The Brazilian COP Presidency now presents an important opportunity to use the engagement by civil society and social movements to increase pressure on global leaders to deliver results. The relatively meagre outcomes from COP29 raise further demands for COP30 to advance decarbonization and ensure sufficient financing for mitigation and adaptation in the developing world.

The location of the Belém Conference at the entrance of the Amazon serves as a reminder of the importance of reconciling human development with the preservation of crucial global ecosystems. Nowhere is this more apparent than in agriculture, which must overcome the dual challenge of feeding a growing global population while preventing the expansion of production from degrading its own natural resource base. The strategic importance of the agriculture and food sector for Brazil also means that it will play a key role within the COP30. The Conference Action Agenda thereby adopts a strong focus on agro-environmental concerns, such as Stewarding Forests, Oceans and Biodiversity, and Transforming Agriculture and Food Systems (Brazil 2025b). Institutionalization of mitigation obligations within the field of agriculture historically has been rare under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC). Yet, recent years have seen some significant developments. The Brazilian COP30 Presidency thus stands in an important position to pick up on previous developments, while ensuring that they can yield concrete results.

The diplomatic context in which the Brazilian COP Presidency takes place is also marked by significant challenges. The retreat of the United States from the Paris Agreement earlier this year means that one of the largest global emitters and most consequential actors will be absent. Moreover, the wavering European commitment to climate action as the continent faces a range of intertwined social, economic and geopolitical crises also poses a substantial obstacle. Recent European unilateral measures to curb imported deforestation have also strained relations with agricultural exporters in the Global South, which could spill over into negotiations in COP30. Brazil will therefore have to navigate a new and highly dynamic political landscape of global climate politics, in which the vacuum left by retreating participants is filled by new players and actor constellations. In the field of agriculture, which is of great importance to many countries, this poses a significant challenge of striking a balance between deeply rooted interests and politically sensitive issues.

This policy paper examines the challenges to advancing the food and agriculture agenda at COP30. With this aim in mind, it focuses on the role of the Brazilian Presidency, and how the current outlook shapes the scope for agreement. The paper partly draws on conversations with Brazilian stakeholders engaged with agriculture, environment and diplomacy, as well as primary documents, research papers, primary data sources and news reports. Under the current challenges ahead of COP30, it examines the impact of weakening multilateralism, rising protectionism, the United States' retreat from climate politics, and the wavering European commitment to climate action. As part of a set of key objectives which can help unlock important results by fostering sustainable transformation within the field of agriculture, the analysis engages with the role of climate finance, NDCs, food security and social concerns, as well as the decoupling from deforestation. The goal is thereby to provide timely input to debates about the current challenges of advancing within agriculture in the run-up to Belém by highlighting issues with the potential to yield important progress.

2. Background: The bumpy road to Belém

2.1. Where did previous COPs leave the working agenda within agriculture?

With agriculture as a key priority for the Brazilian COP30 Presidency, efforts are being made to follow up upon commitments from previous conferences, with a strong emphasis on implementation. Agricultural production and food systems are central to climate mitigation efforts, which also include important overlaps with energy and land-use change. Although the agricultural sector's connections to climate change were recognized already with the establishment of the UNFCCC in 1992, few formal commitments and agreements were made at subsequent Conferences. In recent years, agriculture and food production has gained increased attention, as more structured attempts have been made to institutionalize agreements. The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) agreed upon at the COP23 in Fiji was a landmark decision which aimed at reconciling the need to ensure food security, while reducing sectorial emissions. The KJWA highlighted the importance of securing increased resilience, adaptation, improved soil health, water management, improved livestock systems, and supporting socioeconomic development. At subsequent COPs, efforts have addressed the implementation of the KJWA and its integration into national climate policies.

Building on the KJWA, the 'Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security' was adopted at COP27 in 2022. The decision called for a holistic perspective on adaptation and mitigation within the field of agriculture. It thereby emphasized the crucial importance of financing and the inclusion of indigenous communities and smallholders. Crucially, the context-specific nature of challenges and solutions, as well as the importance of accounting for national circumstances, was strongly highlighted (UNFCCC 2022). Moreover, COP27 also saw the presentation of the '**Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation Initiative**' (FAST). The FAST Partnership is born out of this initiative, comprising a multistakeholder effort to spur sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems by 2030. With this aim in mind, it builds mainly on finance, knowledge and capacity building, and policy support (FAST 2022).

At the COP28 in Dubai the following year, parties agreed on the ‘**UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action**’. The Declaration highlighted certain key points related to adaptation and resilience, food security and nutrition, agricultural work, water management, and climate and environmental benefits. Importantly, it would gain widespread support from 160 countries (UAE 2022).

COP29 in Baku saw further steps taken within the field of agriculture with the launch of the ‘**Baku Harmoniya Climate Initiative for Farmers**’. As part of the FAST Partnership, the initiative is conceived as an aggregator to encompass diverse efforts, networks and stakeholder groups. Its principal aim is to ensure financing for more resilient and sustainable agri-food systems (Azerbaijan 2023). Moreover, the Baku Conference also led to agreement upon the **New Collective Quantified Goals** (NCQGs) on climate finance. This includes a pledge to allocate at least \$300 billion for developing countries’ climate action by 2035, as well as mobilizing \$1.3 trillion from public and private sources during this period (Alayza & Larsen 2025). Agricultural financing is crucial to support adaptation and mitigation activities, and thereby becomes an essential condition for developing country producers to assume ambitious targets. The NCQGs that came out of the Baku conference have nonetheless been the object of vocal critique from developing countries who stress that they fall short of their needs (UN 2024). This became evident from informal multilateral consultations on taking stock of the COP 29 outcomes (UNFCCC 2025a) and is likely to remain within the agenda. The Brazilian COP30 President, André Corrêa do Lago, has likewise recognized the widespread calls for reopening negotiations on this particular issue (Gabriel 2025a).

Despite some tangible advances through the institutionalization of commitments and goals within the field of agriculture, the post-Baku situation is still uncertain. COP28 and COP29 did not deliver in terms of reaching a consensus about a trajectory to maintain global warming within the 1,5-to-2-degree range. The pre-COP meeting in Bonn in June 2025 was thereby marked by heated discussions and noticeable divergences between the parties, but some advances were also made in relation to the agenda in Belém (Gabriel 2025a). The Brazilian Presidency has sought to link the COP to other multilateral tracks such as the G20 and BRICS+ in the pursuit of positive synergies in the field of climate action. This opportunity has arisen as Brazil hosted the G20 in November 2024 and the BRICS meeting in July 2025. A central focus as part of these efforts has been to define a joint posture amongst developing countries with regards to the controversial issue of climate financing (Campanato 2025). Moreover, the South Africa G20 Summit, set to take place immediately after COP30 has also provides an

opportunity to tackle finance-related mitigation challenges faced by developing states, such as debt and high capital costs (Alayza & Larsen 2025).

2.2. The Pre-COP30 outlook for agriculture

As a country with vast environmental assets and a long-standing diplomatic engagement in climate negotiations, Brazil has invested much in the success of COP30. Brazilian negotiators have a particularly strong interest in influencing the outcome within the field of agriculture, which represents an important source of economic growth and export revenues (Hopewell 2013 & 2014). Considering its traditional diplomatic positioning, Brazil can be expected to highlight the role of agricultural and livestock production as a key to climate mitigation, rather than exclusively as a cause of the problem. This agenda has historically resonated amongst other developing country agricultural producers, who stress the importance of reconciling climate mitigation with economic growth.

In the months leading up to Belém, Brazil's general strategic focus has been on the implementation of existing commitments. This is highlighted by COP30 President, Corrêa do Lago, in his fourth letter to the international community, in which he urged 'all actors to focus on follow-through and implementation of existing initiatives, commitments, and declarations.' (Brazil 2025c), The Brazilian Presidency has emphasized the importance of mitigation initiatives being tailored according to the specific global contexts in which they are implemented. Within agriculture, Brazil has long argued that existing climate models, emissions calculation methodologies and even the basic sustainability conceptions undergirding multilateral discussions have been insensitive to the particular circumstances of tropical agricultural production. This perception is therefore likely to permeate technical discussions in different areas related to agriculture and food systems. This has been reflected in Brazil's emphasis on the importance of restoration of degraded agricultural lands and on supporting diverse sustainable production models through technological dissemination. Brazil has thereby sought to link mitigation strategies within agriculture closely to approaches highlighting adaptation, food security and social development (FAO 2025).

Domestic stakeholders in Brazil have also undertaken different initiatives to shape the agenda within agriculture at COP30. A noticeable example is the Brazilian Forum on Tropical Agriculture, a partnership which englobes private sector entities and different research institutions with the aim of shaping multilateral discussions about tropical

agriculture. The initiative reflects positions of domestic interest groups and other stakeholders with an articulated interest in presenting Brazilian perspectives on agricultural sustainability at international venues (DataAgro 2025). It thereby aligns with positions frequently expressed by public institutions such as the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture. Moreover, in August 2025 the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (ABAG) in cooperation with a wide array of public and private stakeholders published the joint document ‘Agribusiness Confronted with Climate Change’. Herein, they called for the recognition of agribusiness as a key player in the climate agenda, with an active role in reducing emissions and generating carbon sinks (ABAG 2025).

A cornerstone for the Brazilian stakeholder engagement ahead of COP30 is the **Action Agenda**, which aims to mobilize civil society, the private sector, sub-national actors and public entities towards adaptation and mitigation actions. In the current situation marked by international political gridlock, the Action Agenda can pave the way for initiatives in a parallel track to the interstate negotiations. In his fourth letter to the international community, COP30 President Corrêa do Lago underscored the crucial role which the Action Agenda could play to harness momentum by involving a wide array of stakeholders towards ensuring the full implementation of the Global Stocktaking. The **Action Agenda** is organized into 6 thematic axes encompassing 30 key objectives (Brazil 2025b). The third axis, ‘**transforming agriculture and food systems**’ includes objectives such as land restoration and sustainable agriculture (objective 8), more resilient, adaptive and sustainable food systems (objective 9), and equitable access to adequate food and nutrition for all (objective 10). The Action Agenda thereby draws strongly on Brazilian domestic experiences in confronting sustainability challenges in the field of agriculture. It hereby reflects a clear emphasis on coupling climate action with social development and the improvement of rural livelihoods. As such, the Action Agenda also provides an opportunity for Brazil to internationalize successful domestic experiences to foster positive synergies with the efforts to advance climate commitments ahead of the COP.

2.3. How have geopolitics shifted the pre-Belém outlook?

In recent years, multilateral climate negotiations have faced substantial challenges from a backlash against this agenda at both the national and international levels. An influential factor has been the populist turn of domestic politics in the United States, which has resulted in the retreat from important international institutions (Peterson 2018;

Kornprobst & Paul 2021). This has raised the challenge of how to continue cooperation in key spheres of global governance without the direct participation of a player as important as the United States (Fehl & Thimm 2019). Moreover, contemporary events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, including the related economic disruptions, have also posed significant challenges to global climate action. Yet, the most recent setback to this agenda nonetheless came with the inauguration of Donald Trump for a second term in early 2025. As part of the America First vision, the President once again withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement and suspended the country's engagement in international climate cooperation. As the withdrawal would only take effect from early 2026, Brazilian President Lula has nonetheless signaled his intent to invite Trump to the Belém Conference, although it is highly doubtful that he will attend (Godoy 2025).

Beyond the direct impact on global climate negotiations, the global disruptions caused by Trumpean politics also include the tariff war, which has undermined central pillars of the global trading order. This has consumed much political attention and capital from global leaders. These developments have also created uncertainty about the basic trade rules that govern international commercial interactions, thus weakening a regime with important interfaces with the climate agenda. The strain on national budgets and general exhaustion of trust in international cooperation that has marked 2025 thus far also threatens to spill over into COP30 in Belém.

Climate action has also been set back in other global regions due to conflicts, slowing growth and rising debt levels. The European Union, which historically has assumed ambitious climate commitments, currently appears to be consumed by security, political and economic crises, derailing its attention from this issue. Rising military spending also constrains budgets for climate action, and popular discontent with the post-COVID inflation surge has limited support for expenses related to ambitious mitigation efforts (Oliveira 2025).

The challenging global backdrop for the Belém Conference is reflected in the small number of countries that submitted their Nationally Defined Contributions (NDCs) by the deadline in February. By then,, only 12 of the nearly 200 signatories of the Paris Agreement had presented NDCs. As of September, only 28 states had submitted their NDCs. This has been widely interpreted as a consequence of the current geopolitical and economic uncertainty, which has made many states reluctant to make potentially costly commitments in an increasingly risk-prone global context. As host to the COP30, Brazil

presented an updated NDC in late 2024, including absolute limits to its GHG emissions through 2025 (1.32 billion) and 2030 (1.2 billion). Moreover, the country also stated the intent to reduce net emissions between 59% and 67% by 2035 compared to 2005 (Mota da Cruz & Cardoso 2025).

Despite the clear challenges facing negotiators at COP30, some positive signals can also be identified in the current global juncture. After the US' exit from the Paris Agreement, many observers feared that this would lead to cascading effects, with other countries following. Thus far, this scenario has not materialized and does not appear likely before COP30. Moreover, on the background of increasingly severe effects of global climate change, the threats to the key institutions of global climate governance may also galvanize support for accelerated climate action by a critical mass of global actors. A promising sign of this appears to have been the declaration of support for Brazil's priority agenda for COP30 signed by Ministers of Environment of countries in Latin American and Caribbean in late August (Brazil 2025d).

In sum, with little time left to the COP30, the current global outlook presents both challenges as well as opportunities for the Brazilian Presidency. The following sections of this policy paper engage with key factors that have the potential to define the outcome within the field of agriculture and the environment.

3. Analysis: Challenges and opportunities at COP30

3.1. The weakening of multilateralism

Key amongst the challenges facing the Brazilian COP30 Presidency is the general global weakening of multilateralism in recent years. Conceived at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the UNFCCC was established in a very different global context in which liberal international institutions enjoyed strong momentum. Conversely, this regime today faces multiple and interconnected challenges, which pose different obstacles to progress in Belém. This includes bureaucratic inertia and cumbersome decision-making processes within existing UN institutions as well as the growth of transactional diplomacy with the prioritization of short-term national goals over long-term collective interests (Arden et al. 2025). A recent example of this was the failure of the UN-led talks to reach a treaty on plastic pollution due to resistance mainly from large oil-producing countries (McVeigh & Bryce 2025).

The contemporary challenges to multilateralism have been recognized by the Brazilian COP30 President, Corrêa do Lago. In his First Letter to the International Community, he highlighted the crucial importance of upholding multilateralism by building on existing pledges and previous agreements (Brazil 2025a). Ana Toni, Executive Director of COP30, also recognizes the barriers posed by current international political developments, albeit she still underscores the importance of raising global ambitions for climate mitigation (Campanato 2025). In the absence of progress at the international level, the Brazilian Presidency has leveraged broad civil society engagement to encourage governments to increase their climate ambition. This has been the key focus of the Action Agenda as well as the High-level Climate Champions, who play important roles in galvanizing societal engagement in the COP process. This grassroots, bottom-up approach to mobilizing ambitious mitigation commitments aligns with the foundational architecture of the Paris Agreement. It also represents a critical pathway for advancing climate action amid intensifying geopolitical competition and declining multilateral cooperation. In this regard, a key challenge will be to channel multistakeholder efforts towards strengthening the multilateral track, thereby avoiding the fragmentation into different loosely connected initiatives.

3.2. Fracturing of the global trading system

The current setback of multilateralism includes the growing trade barriers and different forms of protectionism, especially through new tariffs as well as non-tariff barriers. In recent decades, Brazil has become an increasingly important player within the global trading system, especially the World Trade Organization. Despite a historically skeptical position regarding free trade, Brazilian governments have committed to the institutions of the international trading system, including governments to the left of the political Centre. The country is thereby likely to use the COP30 Presidency to push back against the recent attacks against the rules-based trade order, but also to counter what is often seen by Brazilian policymakers as veiled protectionism through environmental barriers to trade. This objective is particularly relevant within the field of agriculture, where recent tariff barriers imposed by the Trump Administration have hit Brazilian agricultural producers. Brazilian officials have also frequently framed the importance of open and fungible agricultural markets as crucial to guarantee global food security. Calls by FAO officials stressing how the recent spikes in tariffs could threaten global food security also point to this risk (Amorim 2025). As shown with the wave of attacks against existing multilateralism and the rules undergirding international cooperation and stable economic interactions, tariff barriers are part of the threat nexus which endanger the global climate regime, and which could aggravate the existing impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations and regions. Similar concerns about the impact of tariffs have also been expressed during deliberations with partner countries in the lead-up to the COP30 (Garcia 2025). The simultaneous undercutting of global regimes within the fields of climate, trade, aid, and health thereby poses a general threat, compounded by mutually reinforcing challenges which materialize within and between each of these governance arenas. This also appears to have been the perspective held by Brazilian decision-makers involved in the COP30, which have adopted a holistic view of the interconnected nature of the current risks faced by multilateralism.

For the Brazilian agricultural sector, a strong multilateral framework for dealing with climate change and related governance challenges should be in its interest. Historically, Brazil has prioritized multilateral institutions to advance global market access for agricultural products, while investing significantly in technical discussions on sustainability, food security, food safety, and phytosanitary standards. This reflects a belief in the value of these institutions as instruments to pursue a rules-based trade and governance regime for food and agriculture, based on deliberation and evidence-based negotiations (Soendergaard 2024). In the run-up to the COP30, Brazilian agricultural sectoral organizations have

also stressed the importance of multilateralism in addressing the climate crisis, and for the country to proactively advance solutions based on sustainable tropical agricultural production systems (Roza 2025). In the context of threatened multilateral institutions, an important task for the Brazilian COP30 Presidency will be to channel countervailing pressures towards continued and expanded international climate cooperation in Belém.

3.3. The retreat of the United States from climate politics

With the inauguration of the Second Trump administration, the United States has once again distanced itself from international climate cooperation. On his first day in office on January 20th, 2025, the President signed an executive order to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement. Although it will only become effective a year from that date, this clearly marked a turn away from US' commitment to this agenda. In the following months, climate mitigation was also downgraded and often curtailed within the governmental bureaucracy, which effectively has halted any significant engagement by the US.

There have not been many signs that the United States will participate in COP30. Its absence from the pre-COP 2025 in Bonn, and from other preparatory multilateral meetings, suggests that the same will be the case in Belém Conference (Chaib 2025). By late August, COP30 organizers confirmed that no manifestation of interest in participating had been made by the US (Godoy 2025b). According to COP30 President, Corrêa do Lago, neither would there be much sense in the US participating in the Conference only to leave it less than two months after Belém (Gabriel 2025a). Some observers have noted that the absence of the United States could open an important strategic space for smaller parties to gain a central role within the negotiations, possibly paving the way for faster advances. While recognizing that this might be a likely outcome, Corrêa do Lago nonetheless stresses that the US' exit could pose a range of substantial challenges for the COP, "I gain some room, but due to the absence of a very important actor. It's a questionable victory" (Gabriel 2025a). Concerns have also been raised that if the United States should choose to send a delegation to Belém, it could effectively work to obstruct the negotiations by rallying countries against the agenda defined by the Presidency (Chaib 2025). This is also echoed by the Brazilian Minister of the Environment, Marina Silva, who underscores how the US often has impeded progress in international climate negotiations (Azevedo 2025). The general perception in Brazil in the lead-up to the COP30 is nonetheless that the vacuum left by the United States is likely to be occupied by other countries. This will invariably generate a new equilibrium

in the constellation of forces within the negotiations. Consequently, the two predominant scenarios outlined are: (1) accelerated mitigation efforts in the absence of U.S. opposition; and (2) diminished ambition due to the vacuum created by the United States' reduced engagement (Azevedo 2024). The only certainty thus far is that the events of 2025 have fundamentally reshaped the context for negotiations, compelling the Brazilian Presidency to reassess its diplomatic strategy from the outset.

The outlook created by the US' withdrawal has thereby altered the expectations and ambitions for the COP30. Brazilian authorities have recognized that the situation at hand makes it unlikely that it will be possible to reach a substantial agreement within certain areas, namely, the further reduction of fossil fuel consumption (Lovisi 2025). In response to the difficulty of achieving a broad consensus on raising overall ambition, Brazil has adopted a strategy of advancing parallel, non-binding pledges and voluntary commitments alongside the legally binding treaty framework (Lovisi 2025). Two of the Brazilian key proposals in that regard are 1) the plans for a fund for the preservation of tropical forests, the so-called Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), as well as 2) the further integration of global carbon markets. Both of these proposals clearly reflect a Brazilian interest in exploring the country's agro-environmental potential through the monetization of its extensive tropical forest carbon sinks, and its mitigation potential through afforestation, pasture restoration and sustainable intensification within agriculture. Brazil hereby uses the agenda-setting power of the COP30 Presidency to advance and institutionalize global solutions for areas in which the country itself has a significant stake.

Finally, some voices have suggested that the US' retreat from the Paris Agreement could even have the effect of raising ambitions and multilateral efforts towards mitigation. In that regard, Brazil has been active in coupling processes within the G20 and BRICS+, including by linking the issue of climate action with poverty reduction and food security, which is key to the Brazilian agenda. Moreover, the fact that no other countries have left the Paris Agreement in the wake of the US' retreat as initially feared, has also been a reason for optimism. In a similar vein, while many countries have delayed submitting their updated NDCs, those that have done so have often signaled a notable increase in ambition. The joint Declaration between the EU and China, made in July 2025, also stresses a mutual understanding of the need to demonstrate leadership ahead of the COP30 (Hancock & Mooney 2025). This is highly significant, as the two together represent some 40% of global GHG emissions. The Declaration also suggests that COP30's shifting negotiation architecture could yield important outcomes even absent US' participation, provided key actors prioritize climate cooperation over competing geopolitical interests.

3.4. Wavering European green agendas

Apart from the United States' retreat from the Paris process, another reason for substantial concern amongst Brazilian stakeholders relates to the European commitment. Europe has historically been one of the most engaged parties in climate negotiations and among the first to submit its NDCs. Yet, because of the economic crisis and the scaling down of ambitions within the EU Green Deal, it has been hesitant in the lead-up to COP30, stating its intent to finally submit its NDC by September 30th, 2025 (Arbach & Hourdin 2025). The internal crises faced by the EU, which have affected its mitigation ambitions, such as elevated consumer prices, elections, and the rise of climate-sceptic political movements, has also been noted by Brazilian observers as a challenge to the COP30 (Miranda 2025). In a similar vein, COP30 President Corrêa do Lago underscored the fact that rising military expenditures are likely to compromise the fiscal space available for mitigation action. He also underscores that the absence of the United States could compel a shift in the EU's negotiating stance, as the bloc of developed countries will need to cede greater influence to developing states (Gabriel 2025a).

The Second Trump Administration's MAGA agenda and its repercussions on global norms and institutions have also impacted the EU, which in large measure has chosen to accommodate Washington - even in areas where this diverges from traditional European positions. This has caused some degree of perplexity and concern in Brazil, which historically has viewed the EU as a responsible stakeholder in defense of multilateralism. The European concessions to President Trump's trade demands, including its promises to purchase large volumes of LNG imports years into the future, is viewed as inconsistent with the role as a climate leader. Coupled with the reluctance to present an updated NDC, as well as the watering down of the Green Deal, this could undermine EU credibility as a committed party within climate negotiations in the eyes of its partners. This becomes further accentuated by the EU's historically strong defense of the climate agenda, and especially by its practice of presenting rigid environmental demands to third countries, for example, within the EU-Mercosur trade agreement. The disconnect between principles and practice, which has become evident in the run-up to Belém thereby appears to have been aggravated by previous European attempts to claim a moral high ground within this field.

The weakening of European commitment has had particularly negative repercussions for agriculture in its relationship with Brazil. The Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (EUDR) has already strained relations between Brazil and the EU. The legislation, meant to

curb European imports of embodied deforestation, which entered into force in June 2023, has nonetheless been met with strong criticism from Brazilian agricultural producers, public officials and even from parts of civil society. As many Brazilian stakeholders resent what they see as the EU's forceful imposition of environmental demands through the EUDR, the EU's wavering climate commitment appears even more problematic. The unilateral nature of the EUDR, and the lack of meaningful consultations with producer countries during its elaboration (Soendergaard & De Sá 2023), is thereby viewed as a challenge to multilateralism, undermining trust between the parties. For some Brazilian stakeholders, this disagreement about the appropriate processes to advance the climate agenda within agriculture could spill over negatively into the Belém negotiations.

3.5. Financing the transition within agriculture

A key point within the COP negotiations regards financing pledges for mitigation and adaptation by developed countries. This is also crucial with respect to agriculture, where important GHG reductions and resilience improvements can be made if sufficient capital is made available. Currently, climate finance for agrifood systems amounts to only US\$28.5 billion, which is less than 5% of total climate finance at the global level, and only 23% of total climate-related development finance (FAO 2025). FAO analyses suggest that the annual financing needed to achieve the necessary emission reductions and climate resilience would amount to US\$1.1 trillion. This is approximately 40 times the level of current investment (CPI & FAO 2025). Increasing the amount of climate financing will thereby demand substantially more ambitious commitments by developed countries, and maybe even alternative sources of financing, such as international taxes (Alayza & Larsen 2025). The Baku to Belém Roadmap (UN 2025) is thereby likely to gain a key role in discussions about financing at COP30, as developing countries will make increased commitments contingent upon effective financial pledges from developed states.

The issue of finance has also been central to multilateral consultations leading up to COP30, in which many countries have voiced the urgency of implementing the NCQG decision and of operationalizing the Paris Agreement's Article 9 on finance (UNFCCC 2025a). In this regard, some parties have also stressed the need for the Roadmap to present a clearer plan for the realization of the US\$300 billion and the US\$1.3 trillion targets presented in the NCQG. Within the agro-environmental field, the Roadmap includes results-based payments and payments for environmental services; debt for climate and nature swaps, and; environmental and climate bonds such as green and blue bonds,

including NDC bonds (UNFCCC 2025b). As a developing country with extensive natural resources and mitigation potential within agriculture and forestry, Brazil is likely to prioritize advancements within this field, as it would stand to gain much from potential positive outcomes.

For the Brazilian Presidency, ensuring adherence to the TFFF constitutes a key priority as a concrete deliverable from the COP. The TFFF is an innovative financial mechanism proposed by Brazil, meant to compensate countries that preserve their forests. It is structured as an investment fund, hosted by a multilateral development bank based on deposits from public and private sources. Proceeds from investments in Global South sovereign bonds are distributed to tropical forest countries proportionate to the area preserved, provided they maintain deforestation within a maximum of 0,5% of their forested areas. The Brazilian Ministry of Finance is actively engaged in capturing resources for the TFFF, with the goal of reaching an amount of US\$25 billion in junior capital in three years (Wiziack 2025).

Civil society organizations have also been active within the finance agenda for the COP30. In July, a group of Brazilian and international NGOs, research institutions and environmental leaders presented a joint demand for US\$7 billion meant for conservation projects in the Amazon. They highlight the biome's wider importance due to the environmental services, which have been calculated to amount to approximately US\$280 billion annually, as well as its total carbon stock of 150-200 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent (Altino 2025).

Financing agricultural mitigation and adaptation efforts is also a key issue for the Brazilian agri-food sector, which is where some of the most low-hanging fruits can be found in terms of both economic and rapidly impactful mitigation projects. With a large potential to reduce emissions while improving agricultural productivity (Mota da Cruz & Cardoso 2025), projects such as pasture restoration, integration of production systems and agro-forestry often depend on access to capital. The Brazilian private sector has therefore also expressed its intent to use COP30 as a platform to further advance the climate finance agenda for agriculture (Maciel (2025); Adrien (2025)). Brazil has highlighted adaptation and sustainable transformation of agricultural production as a win-win agenda, as part of which the creation of international financing instruments is an essential interest for domestic stakeholders. This win-win framing also helps shield this important economic sector against accusations that expansion of agricultural and livestock production is incompatible with climate mitigation. Crucially, within the negotiations,

demands for increased financing provide an important conditionality and point of leverage for developing states to highlight developed countries' obligation to support global decarbonization efforts in line with the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). The perception in Brazil ahead of COP30 is therefore that the issue of financing is likely to be pivotal to unlock progress within other fields, such as raising the general level of mitigation commitments among developing countries.

3.6. Delivering on NDCs

Ahead of COP30, there are high global expectations of taking stock of countries' NDCs, as recognized by the Brazilian COP30 Presidency (Brazil 2025a). These expectations have been further raised by the pronouncement of an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which highlighted UNFCCC member states' obligation to adopt climate mitigation measures consistent with the underlying objective of the Convention (ICJ 2025). In his inaugural address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025, President Lula da Silva thus also stressed developed countries' historical responsibility, and their need to raise mitigation ambitions (Brazil 2025g). Despite this, parties have been remarkably hesitant to publish their updated NDCs ahead of COP30. Thus, by the deadline in February 2025, only 13 countries had done so – including Brazil. By September, only 29 countries had submitted their NDCs (Brazil 2025e). Moreover, as highlighted in multilateral consultations on stock taking preceding COP30, there is a broad understanding of the need for parties to submit ambitious NDCs that align with the mitigation goals set out in the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC 2025). As stressed by the troika of COP Presidencies, together, the new NDCs will need to pave the way for global emission reductions of 43% by 2023 and 60% by 2035 (Campanato 2025). NDCs are also important instruments to institutionalize pledges related to food and agricultural production. A FAO study thus finds that issues such as food insecurity and biodiversity loss feature within 88% of NDCs, especially those of Least-Developed Countries, which tend to prioritize issues such as livelihoods, poverty and inequality. Substantial mitigation gaps are nonetheless evident within NDCs, which only address 40% of emissions generated within agriculture and food systems (FAO 2024).

The wavering global commitment to presenting updated NDCs constitutes both a substantial challenge for the Brazilian COP30 Presidency, but also a potential opportunity to transform the demand for action into a new momentum. The US' exit from the Paris Agreement has been widely interpreted as a central factor behind the inaction by many

countries ahead of the COP30. This has increased pressure on the Brazilian Presidency to produce a substantial outcome in a situation in which most countries prefer to adopt a wait-and-see approach. On the other hand, some voices in Brazil suggest that inaction and gridlock can reach a level at which the evident need for leadership - and the vacuum left by the US and Europe - could make way for players such as Brazil (Miranda 2025). For Brazil to assume a leading role through its NDC commitments, the country would likely also need to create a credible and specific roadmap for how to reach its own mitigation target. As NDCs are intrinsically linked to countries' wider development strategies, including energy, industry, commodity production and trade-related issues, the definition of mitigation commitments within them becomes a high-stakes process. This also helps to explain the cautious position of many parties, given the rapidly rising global uncertainties regarding these issues. However, by laying out a clear path and timetable for how to comply with its own NDC, Brazil could help spur an important movement towards raising countries' climate ambitions.

3.7. Reconciling climate and social development concerns within agriculture

Linking climate challenges with those related to food security and social development stands as a key objective for the Brazilian COP Presidency. This has also been emphasized by COP30 President, Corrêa do Lago, who points to the combating of food and hunger as an essential part of ensuring long-term resilience. The focus on food security also involves linking this action track with other priority initiatives for the Brazilian COP30 Presidency, such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger, launched by the Brazilian government as part of the G20 process in 2024 (Brazil 2025c). The Ministers of Environment, Marina Silva, and Agrarian Development, Paulo Teixeira, have emphasized the importance of a socially inclusive approach to climate adaptation and mitigation. As part of these efforts, outreach has been made to civil society, smallholders and vulnerable rural communities to include them in the discussions leading up to COP30 (FAO 2025). Multilateral deliberations ahead of Belém have also included the issue of just transition and principles of fairness and equity in climate action, as well as international cooperation in confronting socioeconomic challenges (UNFCCC 2025). Some progress has been made in linking social concerns to climate mitigation. By 2021, the references to women and/or marginalized groups within NDCs have increased from an initial level of only 9% to 38% (Azerbaijan 2024). The Brazilian COP30 Presidency can thereby be expected to seize upon this agenda, which also resonates strongly amongst many developing countries.

The continental dimensions of a country such as Brazil mean that the food-climate-environment nexus is particularly relevant as agricultural production is inextricably dependent on a stable environmental basis (Rattis et al. 2021). As underscored by Brazilian observers, issues such as food security, environmental conservation and climate mitigation will necessarily have to be treated in conjunction. Brazil is thereby likely to seek to create further momentum for the integration of these agendas. This also includes climate adaptation within the agricultural sector, which estimates suggest suffered a loss of R\$290 billion due to extreme climatic events during the past decade (Adrien 2025). Some voices thereby defend an approach to sustainable transformation of tropical agriculture, which as its entry point, prioritizes adaptation rather than mitigation. This is based on the premise that adaptation and climate resilience in a tropical context will lead to the generation of a range of co-benefits and environmental services, which in turn also yield important mitigation benefits. Crucially, in a situation where local farmers and traditional populations depend on a functional ecosystem for their basic livelihoods, a holistic approach to climate action is needed where GHG mitigation is only one amongst many important concerns to be considered.

3.8. Promoting sustainable pathways to decouple agriculture from deforestation

With its vast tropical forests and historical deforestation challenges, GHG reductions in Brazil are fundamentally dependent on conservation of native vegetation (Lovejoy & Nobre (2019); Arima et al. (2014)). In 2023, Land Use Change (LUC) accounted for emissions of 1061 million tons of CO₂ equivalents (MtCO₂e), and the agricultural sector for 631 MtCO₂e of a total of approximately 2300 MtCO₂e (SEEG 2025). Decoupling agricultural production from deforestation, thereby stands at the core of both Brazilian mitigation efforts and the COP30 Agenda. In his Third Letter to the International Community, COP30 President Corrêa do Lago reiterated existing global commitments to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 (Brazil 2025f). Brazilian authorities have thereby stressed the viability and importance of reconciling expansion of agricultural outputs with progress in environmental preservation, framing this in terms of a positive-sum outcome, rather than as a tradeoff between conservation and food production (FAO 2025).

As host of COP30, Brazil's ability to confront deforestation as the country's main climate-related challenge will also affect its ability to credibly present its agenda to the parties. Deforestation rates have historically oscillated in Brazil, with a noticeable increase during the former Bolsonaro administration. The current Lula Government has prioritized environmental conservation, which is reflected in a drop in deforestation rates within the main biomes of the Amazon and the Cerrado (Gabriel 205b). Yet, despite federal authorities' commitment, legislative moves towards the dismantling of Brazilian environmental legislation have threatened progress made in recent years. This could reverberate negatively on the country ahead of COP30 (Observatório do Clima 2024).

Forest conservation is also key to some of the high-profile Brazilian initiatives ahead of Belém. Apart from the TFFF, Brazil aims at advancing the integration and consolidation of global carbon markets. Due to the country's great potential to reduce GHG emissions through different types of nature-based solutions, Brazilian stakeholders have articulated their interest in further progress within this field (Azevedo 2024). The Ministry of Finance is currently working on a proposal based on voluntary adherence, which thereby averts the challenge of reaching consensus amongst all parties. In line with the proposal, a global carbon budget would be defined and emission quotas distributed amongst states, with low-income countries receiving relatively more than others. For non-members, a border adjustment tax would be instituted to level the playing field (Lovisi 2025). The idea of such 'carbon clubs' has been present in policy debates and academic discussions for some time, and has generated some controversies, especially concerning its effects on non-members (Overland & Huda (2022); Keohane (2017)). Compared to the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism¹ CBAM, which has been met with similar criticism, Brazilian officials stress that the creation of this mechanism at the multilateral level would give it greater legitimacy compared to the unilateralism of the former (Lovisi (2025)).

Finally, a crucial point in question concerns the sustainability conceptions and technical definitions underpinning discussions within the field of agriculture. As a tropical agricultural producer, Brazil has frequently defended that the geographical and agronomic particularities of each country can lead to very different sustainability outcomes, which preclude sweeping cross-regional generalizations about which production models and

¹ Regulation meant to tax imports to the EU based on their GHG to ensure that they pay the same carbon price as those produced within the Union.



methods can be considered sustainable. For example, while agricultural intensification in the context of temperate agriculture often is associated with environmental problems, in Brazil, where the countryside often is dominated by degraded pastures and extensive livestock production, intensification and integration with other production systems can yield important sustainability outcomes (De Oliveira et al. 2017). Another example is the so-called food-versus-fuel dilemma, which often is rejected in Brazil where land abundance and highly efficient sugarcane production means that there is a much smaller risk of biofuels displacing essential food crops. In discussions about sustainable food systems, Brazilian stakeholders have therefore strongly emphasized the importance of contemplating the particularities of tropical production systems and specific national contexts. Negotiators are therefore expected to emphasize definitions and frameworks for agriculture and food systems that reflect diverse global production contexts, moving beyond Northern and temperate models.

4. Key points and policy recommendations

1. In the current situation when broad consensus on landmark agreements may be difficult to reach, the initiatives based on voluntary adherence advanced by Brazil could yield important concrete outcomes of COP30. These proposals aim to guarantee essential financing for agricultural mitigation initiatives and could create critical incentives for conservation in tropical forest countries.
2. As the second-largest global GHG emitter, the US' exit from the Paris Agreement invariably poses many challenges for global climate action. On the other hand, the leadership vacuum left by the US and a procrastinating EU will open a space for new players at COP30, namely for large developing states such as Brazil.
3. It is crucial that the parties at COP30 seek to insulate existing disagreements to avoid negative spillovers into climate negotiations. Experiences from the successful G20 meeting in Brazil in 2024 show that the decoupling of geopolitical grievances from other thematic areas, such as agriculture and development, was pivotal to reaching joint declarations in these fields.
4. Unilateral trade barriers affecting agriculture threaten food security, and more broadly, also the confidence in multilateralism. The breakdown of a rules-based trading system weakens the trust in international cooperation and commitments and is also highly likely to reverberate negatively within climate negotiations.
5. The Brazilian COP30 Presidency has focused on strengthening positive synergies for climate cooperation with other multilateral forums such as the G20 and BRICS+. It is worthwhile exploring how such strategies could help build a wider momentum for accelerated mitigation actions based on new institutions and actor constellations, including within specific thematic areas such as agriculture.
6. The Action Agenda presented by the Brazilian COP30 Presidency provides an essential platform for mobilizing non-state actor engagement to press for increased ambition. Especially points 2 and 3 include important issues related to conservation,

biodiversity preservation and sustainable food systems, which should spur engagement by civil society and private actors to work towards concrete solutions and agreements within the field of food and agriculture.

7. Making sure that existing pledges of financing for mitigation and adaptation action are met is key to unlocking further commitments by many developing countries. Within agriculture, financing is crucial to support comparatively quick GHG reductions relative to other economic sectors, and to reaching other crucial outcomes related to environmental services, food security, and social development.
8. Existing disagreements between the EU and Brazil concerning sustainability governance within the agriculture and food sector could affect discussions during COP30. To attenuate this risk, good-faith dialogue about the proper governance frameworks and procedural approaches to guide sustainability cooperation in agriculture could help pave the way for a constructive outcome.
9. Brazil has strongly emphasized that sustainability transitions within the field of agriculture cannot rely on one-size-fits-all production models. Brazil is therefore likely to highlight the importance of contemplating the characteristics of tropical agriculture, which suggests that accepting many different paths towards sustainability is most likely to facilitate constructive interactions.
10. The Brazilian COP30 Presidency has strongly stressed the interconnectedness of climate mitigation, food security and rural livelihoods. Adoption of this holistic approach to climate action within agriculture is also likely to result in important convergences between developed and developing countries.

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