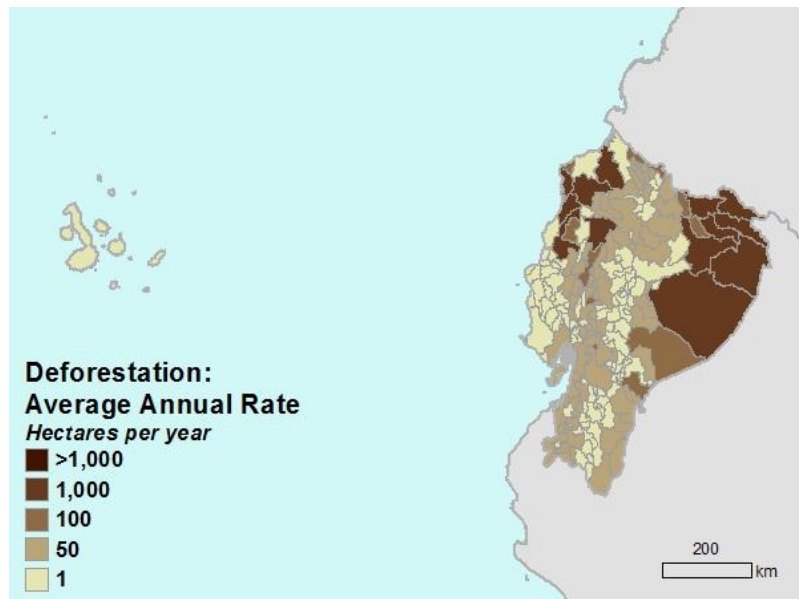


# Ecuador



National deforestation estimates in percent per year and agricultural statistics are from FAO (2010).

Mapped sub-national estimates of the Deforestation Indicator in hectares are indicative only, given the resolution of the data source, and are from CI (2011), derived from the MODIS percent tree-cover change product for 2000 to 2005 (Hansen, et al 2009).

## Deforestation<sup>1</sup>

Forest area (2010): **36%**  
 Primary forest area (2010): **17%**  
 1990-2000: **-1.53 %y<sup>-1</sup>**  
 2000-2005: **-1.73 %y<sup>-1</sup>**  
 2005-2010: **-1.89 %y<sup>-1</sup>**

## Agriculture<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture as % of GDP (2011): **7%**  
 Agricultural land (2009): **30.3%**  
 Top 3 commodities, by footprint (2010):  
*Maize: 0.5m ha*  
*Rice: 0.4m ha*  
*Cocoa: 0.4m ha*  
 Employment in agriculture (2009): **29%**

\*Rates at sub-national level are for indicative purposes only given use of relatively coarse MODIS data

Sub-national Region	Hectares per Year (indicative)
La Libertad	1,434
Aguarico	444
Pastaza	437
Quinindé	330
Orellana	318

## Context

### Political Context

Although Ecuador is currently witnessing a period of relative political and economic stability,<sup>3</sup> the last decade was characterized by political instability and an economic crisis, culminating in the adoption of the U.S dollar as its official currency. In 2008, the government of Ecuador passed a new Constitution, national development plan and launched a payment-based forest conservation incentive program. Although Ecuador's national policy framework has a strong mandate with specific goals to reduce deforestation rates,<sup>4</sup> its forest cover continues to diminish as the government exhibits poor land management.<sup>5</sup> High oil prices and a favorable external environment have allowed the country to increase fiscal spending, and public investment<sup>6</sup> in programs and projects, particularly around infrastructure development and social advancement are the priorities.<sup>7</sup>

### Socio-economic Context

Ecuador has many areas that are densely populated and very poor.<sup>8</sup> The highlands are home to Andean populations, among the poorest in South America.<sup>9</sup> The government's forest conservation program includes an objective to alleviate poverty by making payments directly to local communities and traditional peoples who have voluntarily agreed to preserve the forest resources.<sup>10</sup> Ecuador has a large indigenous population (25% of the total) who has prioritized the protection of natural resources critical to their livelihoods.<sup>11</sup> Ecuador's economy is greatly dependent on its natural resources, mainly for petroleum exploration which has contributed to over half of its export income.<sup>12</sup>

### Deforestation Drivers

Ecuador is a highly forested country, with an estimated 9.6 million hectares of forest cover.<sup>13</sup> Ecuador is also considered one of the world's "mega diverse" countries<sup>14</sup> and the Amazonian region in particular includes large tracts of intact natural forest of global conservation significance.<sup>15</sup> Forest conversion to agriculture is the major driver of deforestation, followed by regional drivers including: agroindustry (oil palm), logging, mining and infrastructure development.<sup>16</sup> Most of the country's coastal forests have already been deforested for agriculture, and fragile habitats such as dry forests, mangroves and other wetlands have been lost or severely degraded.<sup>17</sup> More specifically, in the eastern Napo River basin, large areas of forest were converted to oil palm, while in coastal regions logging companies and shrimp farmers have destroyed almost all of the dry forests and coastal mangroves.<sup>18</sup> In the Oriente region, oil discovery and extraction has diminished forest cover as drilling sites converted forests to production zones and roads built for pipelines attracted new settlement of Andean migrants. This also meant the expansion of land use for cropland cultivation and increased cattle density.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the increased number of palm oil plantations, gold mining has also decimated natural forests near the northwest coast, causing habitat degradation and water contamination.<sup>20</sup>

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