

Crapo Statement at Hearing on Cattle Supply Chains and Amazon Deforestation
June 22, 2023

Washington, D.C.--U.S. Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following remarks at a hearing entitled "Cattle Supply Chains and Amazon Deforestation."

As prepared for delivery:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

"Over the years, you and I have done a lot of good forest work in our own backyards, particularly with respect to improvements to forest management and wildfire budgeting.

"I appreciate the time and effort you and your staff have put in to assess the root causes of deforestation in the Amazon. The Amazon rainforest, with most of it sitting literally in Brazil's backyard, is the largest remaining tropical forest and one of the most biodiverse places on Earth.

"Scientists and governments say that its overall importance to the world cannot even be measured just by its more than 3 million plant and animal species, or the over 20 million people who call it home, including some 50 remote tribes, which have not even made first contact with modern civilization.

"In fact, the world is still learning about all of the benefits that the Amazon rainforest may bring to the planet and its people, both natural and as a means to elevate the economy and standard of living of its residents.

"In response to an alarming rate of deforestation, Brazil was prompted to construct a legal framework, between the 1980s and into the early 2000s, to protect half of its Amazon lands as either indigenous territories or conservation units.

"Through the evolution of its laws, Brazil's goal is to balance its environmental, security and economic demands for the Amazon. But, the issue is not the number or quality of its laws so much as it is the lack of enforcement, resources, and personnel required to effectively protect the vast lands of the Amazon.

"Countless studies, spanning a decade, chronical illegal land-grabbing activities of various enterprises as the main accelerators of deforestation.

"More specifically, these studies point to the economic success of such enterprises as empowering various illicit actors to burrow into and hide within complex supply chains and function with near impunity across regions where accountability is limited by the vagaries of national and local political will against the sheer size of the Amazon, which is itself governed, in Brazil, by a unique and highly independent constituent state system.

“Conservation and progress do not need to be at odds. Measures can respect the rights of legitimate property owners and balance the needs for conservation and community, even one as large as the Amazon.

“I look forward to our witnesses’ testimonies today, which will prove particularly useful to the Chairman as he continues his investigation into ways that may abate Brazil’s deforestation of the Amazon.

“One thing we must all keep in mind before any actions are taken for the purposes of helping Brazil manage its problems in the Amazon, is the potential for unintended consequences that may arise, a concern which was highlighted in a June 15th letter sent to the Chairman and me, from Minister-Counselor Velloso at the Brazilian Embassy.

“President Teddy Roosevelt, who provided the impetus early in our country’s history for establishing both the U.S. Forest and National Park Services, had it exactly right: ‘the nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value. Conservation means development as much as it does protection.’

“I would like to introduce into the record, the letter of June 15, 2023, to the Chairman and me, from the Brazilian Embassy.”