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# THE FINANCIERS OF DESTRUCTION

HOW MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES SPONSOR  
AGRIBUSINESS LOBBY AND SUSTAIN THE DISMANTLING OF  
SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION IN BRAZIL



**DE OLHO  
NOS RURALISTAS**  
Observatório do agronegócio no Brasil

## CONTENT

ABBREVIATION LIST	3
KEY FINDINGS	4
FOREWORD	5
<b>1. THE PENSAR AGRO INSTITUTE</b>	<b>8</b>
“Our government belongs to you”	8
JBS, BASF, Bayer and Cargill lead funding	10
US, China, Japan and Europe: the companies’ headquarters	13
Where do these companies stand?	13
<b>2. THE LOBBYING CHAMPIONS</b>	<b>14</b>
Poison Bill is the industry’s priority	14
Multinationals’ influence reaches high-level officials	16
Bayer participated in secret meetings	17
<b>3. FINANCE INDUSTRY IS BEHIND THE DESTRUCTION</b>	<b>18</b>
US and EU keep the agribusiness lobby afloat	18
JBS receives investments from tax havens	20
Companies’ revenue reaches US\$ 273B	20
“Green” speech hampered by IPA financing	21
<b>4. RESISTING THE DESTRUCTION</b>	<b>22</b>
REFERENCES	24

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Agribusiness Watch (De Olho nos Ruralistas) is a non-profit organization dedicated to research and investigative journalism about the social, environmental, political and economic impacts of the agribusiness industry in Brazil. From deforestation to human rights violations against indigenous peoples, peasants and other traditional communities. From pesticide overuse to the influence of landowner politicians in the Congress. We believe independent critical journalism plays a vital role in Brazilian democracy as it contributes to build a renewed and more humane treatment towards its people and environment.

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## ABBREVIATIONS LIST

ABAG - Brazilian Association of Agribusiness  
ABBA - Brazilian Potato Association  
ABCS - Brazilian Association of Pig Breeders  
ABCZ - Brazilian Zebu Breeders Association  
ABIA - Brazilian Food Industry Association  
ABIEC - Brazilian Beef Exporters' Association  
ABIFUMO - Brazilian Association of the Tobacco Industry  
ABIMAQ - Machinery Builders' Association  
ABIOVE - Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries  
ABIPESCA - Brazilian Association of the Fishing Industry  
ABISOLO - Brazilian Association of Plant Nutrition Technology Industries  
ABPA - Brazilian Association of Animal Protein  
ABRABOR - Brazilian Association of Natural Rubber Producers  
ABARFRIGO - Brazilian Association of Meatpacking Companies  
ABRAMILHO - Brazilian Association of Corn Producers  
ABRAPA - Brazilian Cotton Producers Association  
ABRASS - Brazilian Association of Soy Seed Producers  
ACRIMAT - Association of Mato Grosso Breeders  
ALCOPAR - Bioenergy Producers Association of Parana  
AMPA - Mato Grosso Association of Cotton Producers  
ANAPA - Brazilian Association of Garlic Producers  
APIB - Indigenous Peoples' from Brazil Articulation  
APROSOJA BR - Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers  
APROSOJA MS - Association of Soybean Producers of Mato Grosso do Sul  
APROSOJA MT - Association of Soybean and Corn Producers of Mato Grosso  
CECAFÉ - Brazilian Coffee Exporters Council  
CITRUSBR - Brazilian Association of Citrus Exporters  
CNA - Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Confederation  
COIAB - Brazilian Amazon Indigenous Organization Coordination  
CTNBIO - National Technical Commission on Biosafety  
FAEP - Agricultural Federation of Paraná  
FAESP - Agricultural Federation of São Paulo  
FAMATO - Agriculture and Livestock Federation of Mato Grosso  
FENSEG - Brazilian Federation of General Insurance  
FEPLANA - Brazilian Federation of Cane Growers  
FIESP - Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo  
FNS - National Ethanol Forum  
FPA - Agricultural Parliamentary Front  
IBÁ - Brazilian Tree Industry Association  
IPA - Pensar Agro Institute  
LAI - Access to Information Law  
MAPA - Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply  
MMA - Ministry of the Environment  
MRE - Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
MST - Brazilian Landless Workers Movement  
OCB - Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives  
ORPLANA - Southern Brazilian Organization of Cane Producers  
SICREDI - Confederation of Credit Cooperatives  
SINDAN - National Animal Health Products Industry Union  
SINDICERV - National Beer Industry Union  
SINDIRAÇÕES - Brazil's Feed Industry Association  
SINDIVEG - National Vegetal Defense Products Industry Union  
SRB - Brazilian Rural Society  
UNEM - Brazilian Corn Ethanol Union  
UNICA - Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association  
UNIPASTO - Association for the Promotion of Research in Forage Breeding  
VIVA LÁCTEOS - Brazilian Association of Dairy Products

## KEY FINDINGS



The Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA, in the Portuguese acronym) is the strongest lobby group in the Brazilian Congress; it controls nearly half the seats in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate.



The Pensar Agro Institute (IPA) is a think tank that provides technical advisory for the FPA and intermediates its relations with the private sector. IPA also writes drafts and reports for anti-environmental bills submitted by FPA politicians, such as the Poison Bill, the Environmental Licensing Bill and the project that authorizes mining activities inside Indigenous Peoples' territories.



IPA's structure is maintained by 48 agribusiness associations that contribute with a monthly fee to support lobbying expenses. This structure includes a luxury mansion in Lago Sul, a high-end neighborhood in Brasília, where FPA politicians meet with government officials and businessmen for weekly lunches, held on Tuesdays.



These associations gather more than 1,000 companies and 69,000 farmers, including different sectors such as soybean, maize, cotton, beef industry, seafood, pulp & paper, citrus, dairy products, beer, pesticides, GM seeds, biofuels, sugarcane, finance and machinery.



Multinational companies are the leaders behind the agribusiness lobby: JBS, BASF, Cargill, Bayer, Syngenta, Nestlé, Bunge and LDC are affiliated to multiple associations, where their executives occupy top-rank positions.



During the Bolsonaro administration, IPA executives and FPA politicians held at least 160 meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, including 20 audiences with minister Tereza Cristina, who was formerly president of the FPA.



Companies also perform individual lobby: Syngenta held 81 meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture, JBS 75, Bayer 60, BASF 26, Nestlé 23 and Cargill 13.



Bayer, the leading producer of pesticides in Brazil, held 16 meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture "off the record", i.e. they didn't appear on the official agenda of government officials. The company also met with the president Jair Bolsonaro and published an institutional video with a speech by Tereza Cristina.



Syngenta maintained business relations with federal deputy Luiz Nishimori, the rapporteur of the Poison Bill, whose favorable report on flexibilizing pesticide laws was approved in February 2022.



Blackrock, JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Barclays and Santander invested **US\$ 273 billion** in companies linked to IPA.

## FOREWORD



*Credit: Felipe Weneck/Ibama*

### “Change all the rules”

“We need to make an effort while we are in this calm moment in terms of press coverage, because they are only talking about COVID, and change all the rules and simplify norms”, said former minister of Environment, Ricardo Salles. In that sentence, Salles claimed the Brazilian government had to push through and dismantle the federal regulation devised to contain socio-environmental crimes. The date was April 22nd, 2020. The world was living the first year of the pandemic and Brazil, at that point, had already lost 3,000 lives to COVID. It was under Salles management that deforestation in the Amazon rainforest rose to its highest level in the last twelve years.<sup>1</sup>

The infamous speech happened behind closed doors, in Brasília, during a meeting between president Jair Bolsonaro and his ministers. Investigated by the Supreme Court about his participation in a scheme of illegal logging, Salles left the government. But the task of “changing all the rules” passed into the hands of the agribusiness lobby.

Organized by the Agricultural Parliamentary Front (FPA), the most articulated and active of all interest groups in the Brazilian Congress, this bloc occupies half the seats in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. Working as a fundamental support to the Bolsonaro administration, FPA has easily succeeded to set their political agenda to dismantle socio-environmental protection.<sup>2</sup>

Known as the “Destruction Package”, this set of proposals advocated by the FPA includes bills 2633/2020 and 510/2021, of “green land grabbing” (or *grilagem* in Portuguese), that concedes amnesty to irregular occupation of public lands up to 2,500 hectares;<sup>3</sup> 2.159/2021, that loosens environmental licensing rules;<sup>4</sup> 6.299/2002, known as “Poison Bill”, that makes Brazilian Health Regulation Agency and the federal environmental agency (Ibama) to lose their veto power in matters of pesticide evaluation;<sup>5</sup> and finally, the bills 490/2007 and 191/2020 that fix 1988 as the cut-off date for the demarcation of Indigenous Peoples’ territories and opens up protected lands to mining and commercial agriculture.<sup>6</sup>

All of those bills, strongly backed up by the Bolsonaro administration, saw their support ramping up during the first semester of 2022: the bills regarding Environmental Licensing and the “Poison Bill” were approved in the Chamber of Deputies and are waiting to be voted in the Federal Senate, where it is expected they will have an easy pass.

Those bills, however, were not spontaneous ideas that came from the inspired minds of members of parliament. Behind the FPA, there is a web of private interests structured around the Pensar Agro Institute (IPA). More than a structure: there is a whole ecosystem of agribusiness lobby installed in Brasilia.



**Former minister Ricardo Salles has lunch with the Agricultural Parliamentary Front, in February 23rd 2021. (Agência FPA)**

## **From the think tank to the companies**

Created in 2011 with the sole purpose of rendering technical assistance to formulate legislative agendas for the FPA, IPA is a think tank sponsored through monthly fees paid by 48 agribusiness associations. These class entities assemble slaughterhouses and meat packing companies, pesticide and genetically-modified (GM) seed producers, biofuel plants, tobacco producers, paper and pulp industries, maize and soybean processors, seafood companies, breweries, among others. The IPA organizes the demands of Brazilian agricultural and livestock chains within the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary branches of government, introducing their members and representatives to the CEOs of private companies.

De Olho nos Ruralistas has published, in May 2019, the first investigation made until then regarding this complex chain of financing, responsible for maintaining the activities of the agribusiness lobby in the Congress.<sup>7</sup> Back then, IPA still did not have an official website and did not appear publicly in FPA's documents. However, these two institutions share the same email, logo and mailing address — a house in a high-end neighborhood in Brasilia, Lago Sul, the same in which the members of Congress recurrently meet, every Tuesday.<sup>8</sup>

From the identification of the associations integrating the IPA, our team has, for the first time, named the companies who sustain the agribusiness lobby, commonly known in Brazil as “ruralista”. They are multinationals and large-scale Brazilian corporations who were responsible, at the time, for 22 of the 50 biggest agribusiness companies operating in the country: Bayer, Basf, BRF, JBS, Syngenta, Bunge e Cargill were among them.

Since then, the think tank has grown. Between 2019 and 2022, the IPA has attracted 10 new associations. Among the newcomers are some of the main class entities of the agribusiness sector, such as the Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Confederation (CNA)<sup>10</sup> — which now occupies the presidency of IPA's Administration Board —; the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (Fiesp), a main articulator in former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, which occurred in 2016;<sup>11</sup> the Machinery Builders' Association (Abimaq), with more than 1,600 manufacturers and currently presided by a farm machinery supplier;<sup>12</sup> the Brazilian Food Industry Association (Abia), that assembles the 100 largest food companies in the country, including big players such as Nestlé, Danone, Mondeléz, Pepsico and Coca-Cola.<sup>13</sup>

The data collected on our first research, in 2019, sets the basis for this report, that broadens the diagnosis on the agribusiness lobby mechanism operating in Brasília. Which companies and groups are the strongest within the Pensar Agro Institute? In which spaces do they circulate? Who are the closest and most frequent within Bolsonaro administration? What are the benefits they gain with those relations?

## **Multinationals lead agribusiness' lobby**

The answer to these questions opens up the main contradiction within the nationalist propaganda spread by Brazilian agribusiness: national companies do not lead the political influence among the sector. Their leaders are, mostly, multinationals. Recently acquired by ChemChina, Syngenta leads the number of official meetings held with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA). The German company Bayer also appears at the top notch: their executives have met at least 60 times with MAPA staff between January 2019 and April 2022. They also have met with government staff outside the official schedule.

This group is also formed by United States grain processors such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Bunge, **the Swiss multinational Cargill** and the French Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC). They are followed by the Chinese state-owned trader Cofco and the South-Korean CJ Selecta. Still, there are companies from the food sector such as Nestlé and Ajinomoto, the Brazilian meatpackers JBS and BRF, pesticide and transgenic seed producers like Corteva, Alltech, FMC, Helm, Ihara, Sumitomo and Stoller, or the animal feed industries Elanco and Mars.<sup>14</sup>

The history of agribusiness lobby in Brazil is, first and foremost, a history of privileged access to the spaces of power. Even though there is no regulation for lobbying in Brazil, it can be defined as the actions of individuals or companies that seek to influence political decisions made by the public authorities in the Executive and Legislative branches. Lobbying is a part of the democratic play. Environmentalists and social movements also use this form of direct action.

The problem resides in the disparity between those two fields. While indigenous, peasant farmers and black rural communities (known as quilombolas) are put on the sidelines of debates that directly impact their livelihoods and land rights, the agribusiness' economic power has a free pass to define the country's political agenda, which ultimately aggravates the socio-environmental crisis faced by Brazil nowadays. It is paramount, therefore, to understand not only that socio-environmental public policies and legislation are gravely under attack, but also the process that made this assault on human rights even possible. To recreate the possibilities of social participation it is necessary to know the ongoing length of the influence and access to government that the agribusiness players have in this present day.

## 1. THE PENSAR AGRO INSTITUTE



*Credit: Alan Santos/PR*

### “Our government belongs to you”

Pensar Agro is a think tank institute formed by 48 agriculture and livestock class entities that congregate different economic sectors and interests. The main challenge faced by IPA is to filter the sector’s demands, steering them to deputies and senators who integrate the agri-business bloc — also known as the FPA. The main associations within the IPA do not always agree on their demands: they also have their commercial quarrels, especially when competing for tax incentives.

For instance, the Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers (Aprosoja), formed by big and medium farmers from 16 states, has interests that diverge from the Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (Abiove), that gathers the country’s 17 largest grain processors and traders. Likewise, the sugarcane-based biofuel sector, represented by the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association (Unica) e by the Brazilian Federation of Sugarcane Growers (Feplana), has an ongoing dispute with the sector who represents corn ethanol, led by Brazilian Corn Ethanol Union (Unem). There are also differences between the associations’ sizes, for example comparing the Brazilian Beef Exporters’ Association (Abiec), that gathers the 39 biggest meat packer plants of the country, and the Brazilian Association of Meatpacking Companies (Abraf-rigo), that encompasses only medium-sized companies. Furthermore, there are regional differences in agricultural federations ranging from old agricultural frontiers such as the states of São Paulo and Paraná, to newly opened regions, such as the Northern part of Mato Grosso and the savanna areas of Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia — a region known by the acronym Matopiba.



# PENSAR AGRO INSTITUTE'S MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS, PER SECTOR



SOURCES: IPA AND ASSOCIATIONS' WEBSITES | BY: DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

The 48 associations that form IPA gather a total sum of 1,078 affiliated companies and 69,000 individual farmers. This “private face” of IPA is composed by a myriad of actors, while their public interface lies within their symbiotic relationship with government representatives, which was intensified after the election of Jair Bolsonaro as president, and after he nominated the deputy Tereza Cristina (DEM-MS) as minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply (MAPA). She was the president of the FPA during Bolsonaro’s victorious campaign, in 2018, and belongs to a long lineage of land-owners from the Midwest Brazilian states. She also has direct connections with JBS, to whom she owed a R\$ 14 million debt, originated from a leased land. When Tereza Cristina was Secretary of Production and Agricultural Development in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, she conceded tax incentives to JBS.<sup>15</sup>

Under Tereza Cristina’s management, IPA lobbyists’ presence became a constant inside the Ministry. A survey made by De Olho nos Ruralistas has identified, between January 2019 and June 2022, at least 160 official meetings between MAPA staff workers and IPA/FPA executives.<sup>16</sup> The most sought-after public officers are the secretary of Agricultural Policy, José Angleo Mazzillo Junio, and the secretary of Agriculture and Livestock Defense, José Guilherme Tollstadius Leal.

In this same period, peasant farmers social movements were welcomed in the Ministry in only two occasions: in March 2021, a representative of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) was present in an online hearing; and in November 2019, there was a meeting between the Carta de Belém Group and the head of the Brazilian Forest Service Regulation. Indigenous peoples’ movements such as the Indigenous Peoples’ from Brazil Articulation (Apib) and the Brazilian Amazon Indigenous Organization Coordination (Coiab), were not heard at all, not even once.

This occurs while MAPA promotes illegal land-leasing for soybean producers inside indigenous protected lands, with the endorsement of the Secretary of Land Affairs Luiz Antonio Nabhan Garcia — former president of the Ruralist Democratic Union, an organization investigated for promoting rural militias in the countryside — and the president of the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples (Funai), Marcelo Xavier, a notorious defender of agribusiness and mining interests.

Tereza Cristina has also personally welcomed her former FPA colleagues in 16 opportunities. On the other hand, government staff have visited FPA headquarters 12 times in meetings that took place in their mansion in Lago Sul, four of which with Tereza Cristina herself present. During her predecessor's mandate (from 2016 to 2018), the Ministry only held 36 meetings with agribusiness lobbyists.

Besides the Ministry of Agriculture, IPA executives and FPA parliamentarians also participated in official meetings at the Ministries of Economy (33), Environment (4), Justice and Public Security (1) and Education (1). Three other meetings took place with vice-president Hamilton Mourão and one with president Jair Bolsonaro, in July 2019. On that occasion, Bolsonaro reinforced his explicit coalition with the sector: "Our government belongs to you", he said.<sup>17</sup>

In March 2020, a pro-agribusiness video produced by the IPA itself was posted by the president in his social network. According to information obtained through Information Access Law (LAI), MAPA was responsible of providing the information used on the production.<sup>18</sup>

When questioned, the Press Coordination of MAPA answered that "the relationship between the IPA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply exists to provide subsidies and relevant information to the public policy-making in order to develop the field". On the same note: "The Ministry periodically holds technical meetings with representatives of public and private entities from the agriculture and livestock productive sector in order to collect relevant information to formulate public policies in order to develop the sector".

## **JBS, BASF, Bayer and Cargill lead funding**

João Henrique Hummel Vieira is an agronomer who is in charge of the IPA coordination. He is also the institute's executive chief since 2008 — three years before its official foundation. Owner of an governmental relations consultancy firm, Hummel was responsible for expelling De Olho nos Ruralistas' reporting team from the IPA mansion after parliamentarians felt unease because of questions regarding climate change, in December 2017. Today the house is occupied by Aprosoja.<sup>19</sup>

Running a simple search in the social networks, it is not hard to find Hummel's name in relation to the entity, whether as a technical consultant to the parliamentary front or as the chief of the institute. But his activities are explicit in Congress' Committees as well as in the press. They are also very apparent in the federal government: Hummel has participated in 35 official meetings with the ministries of Agriculture, Economy, Environment and Education. In some of those, his participation took place as a "special consultant" for other associations.

Behind this charade, however, is hidden a concentration of power and influence that falls upon a handful of large corporations. There are 105 companies among the total sum within IPA's funding network — which has over a thousand companies — that act in more than one entity at the same time. Of those, 35 are in at least three associations simultaneously. In other words, these companies represent a heavier weight in IPA's chain of financing. Firstly, because they contribute financially to numerous sector entities that, as we analyzed above, help maintain the ruralista lobby in Brasília with a monthly quota. Secondly, because their interests have multiplied influence inside this structure, exercising their political leverage on multiple fronts.

Such is the case of the Brazilian meatpacking plant JBS, the largest animal protein producer of the world, affiliated to seven associations. They are Abag, Abiove, Abia, Abiec, Abisoló, ABPA and Sindirações. Among those, the strongest ties are maintained with Abiec, currently presided by Antônio Jorge Camardelli, a former director of JBS and member of IPA's Administration Board.

Following JBS, there is Agroceres, a Brazilian company active in six entities: Abag, ABPA, Abisoló, CropLife, Sindan and Sindirações. On the latest, the group is also occupant of the executive presidential chair, dictating which path the animal food lobby will follow. Agroceres' CEO, Ricardo Araújo Ribeiral,<sup>20</sup> is also a member of Fiesp's Superior Agribusiness Board, one of the most influential groups within Brazilian agribusiness. It is also important to remember the central role Fiesp has played in Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. After that, the federation has become a right-hand ally to Jair Bolsonaro, joining IPA in 2019.

The next large company is BASF: the German agrochemical industry is present in Abag, ABBA, CropLife, Sindirações and Unem. In April 2022, during a shareholder meeting, it was discussed the reputational impacts the company would suffer by staying in IPA.<sup>21</sup> There was a report published in German mentioning De Olho nos Ruralistas' 2019 survey, that exposed a "double standard" given to European and Global South markets, the latter being flooded by products with high level of pesticides, and the first being more regulated. BASF has admitted to act in favor of dismantling Brazilian legislation on pesticides.<sup>22</sup>

The Swiss grain processor Cargill has been operating in Brazil since 1965. Today, the company is the main soybean exporter in the country, responsible for the brands Elefante and Liza, very popular in Brazilian supermarkets. Cargill participates in four associations: Abag, Abiove, Abia and ABPA. With a verticalized model of business, their operation encompasses the transport and commercialization of goods. In the first segment, the company owns four docks and participates in three joint ventures. In 2020, the report *Complicity in Destruction*, a partnership between the NGO Amazon Watch with De Olho nos Ruralistas, has revealed that Cargill maintained within its registered suppliers farmers who were accused of land grabbing in the cities of Santarém and Mojuí dos Campos (PA), in territories that belong to the indigenous land Munduruku do Planalto.<sup>23</sup> Large-scale farmers in the region have contested the territories' demarcation process because of their interests in broadening soybean crops, which started with the construction of Cargill's bulk carrier grain terminal. The company has stated that they are not involved with contesting Munduruku indigenous people claims to the right of the land, and that they work towards building "sustainability in the whole chain of supplying of soybean".<sup>24</sup>

In June 2019, Cargill has announced the creation of a US\$ 30 million plan to fight deforestation linked to the soybean chain in the Matopiba region. The project was supposed to signalize the trader's adhesion to an old demand made by socio-environmentalists working in the area, the idea of a "Soybean Moratorium" for the Cerrado, the world's most biodiverse savanna. However, the proposal was promptly quashed by an articulation led by Aprosoja that, through Abiove — in which Cargill seats as vice-president —, has forced the multinational to retreat. Since then, the company has adopted a contrary position regarding the topic.

# PENSAR AGRO INSTITUTE'S LINKED COMPANIES, BY FILIATION



**SOURCES:** IPA AND ASSOCIATIONS' WEBSITES | **BY:** DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

With the same number of affiliations as Cargill, there are three companies based in the United States: Alltech, a pesticide producer; Stoller, a fertilizer company; and Elanco, from the animal health sector. The latter has concluded, in 2020, the purchase of Bayer's animal health unity, a deal worth US\$ 5.17 billions.<sup>25</sup>

The German chemical conglomerate succeeds the thread of companies that are linked to the IPA. Besides Bayer, 26 other corporations are affiliated in three associations. The list includes the soybean processors Bunge, Cofco and LDC, the food industries Nestlé and BRF, and also the pesticide and GM seed producers Syngenta, Corteva and Sumitomo.

## US, China, Japan and Europe: the companies' headquarters

Overall, there are 40 seats occupied by US' capital companies in entities connected to Pensar Agro Institute. Among those, there are traditional companies, such as Archer-Midland Daniels (ADM) that, beyond processing and selling soybeans and corn, acts also in the biofuel sector. According to their most recent report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, the company has US\$ 781 millions in assets located in Brazil.<sup>26</sup> From the United States, there is also FMC, a pesticide producer involved in violations to the environmental regulations regarding pesticides in the United States;<sup>27</sup> Mars Petcare, a pet products producer who owns Pedigree and Whiskas brands; and even insurance companies such as the subsidiaries of AIG and Liberty Group in Brazil.

Companies from China and Japan totalize 31 participations, and there is a spotlight to the tobacco companies from these countries in the IPA, like JTI International from Japan, who holds the cigarette brands Camel and Winston, and the biggest cigarette company in the planet, China Tobacco, accused of labor violations in Brazil.<sup>28</sup>

German and French companies are the main European presence in the IPA. Together they have 29 seats in associations linked to Pensar Agro. In the list, besides the previously mentioned BASF and Bayer, there are Danone and Louis-Dreyfus Company from France. European companies that fund the dismantling of socio-environmental regulation are also agricultural machinery builders, such as the Italian CNH Industrial, who owns CASE, Iveco and New Holland brands; besides financial institutions like the Spanish bank Santander, and UBS, from Switzerland, who are both creditors of meat, soybeans and pesticide companies in Brazil.

## Where do these companies stand?

De Olho nos Ruralistas has sought the companies cited so that they could comment on the data gathered here. BASF has also asserted that it seeks a constructive dialogue with the involved parties, being a member of multiple associations, such as CropLife International and its national representatives of CropLife Brazil. Regarding their relationship to the lobbying in Brasília, the company has stated that “the public policy-makers actively seek experts’ opinions and the sectorial entities and enterprises who are involved in the agricultural sector, on their end, are one of the multiple voices that they hear”. They further add that: “In this context, we strictly follow our Global Code of Conduct, its fundamental values, rules and principles”.

Bayer, in its turn, informed that the company “keeps a transparent dialog with public authorities from the countries where it operates and with the entities that represent your clients and the other links in the agricultural chain, as well it also takes part actively in the debates in the society and follows closely the development of public policy”. The German corporation also states that its interactions with government officials are “standardized by federal laws and by its internal policies”.

JBS has stated that the company “participates in various associations and understands it is important to contribute to the debate on the sector’s development”. The note proceeds as follows: “As a part of this dialogue we gather with public authorities always according to the present legislation”. About their participation in IPA, JBS informs that questions regarding their acting within the Institute “must be forwarded to the entities who fund it”.

In the same line, Cargill forwarded the request for information about its relationship with IPA to the press office of Abiove, entity in which the US trader occupies the vice-presidency.

The full replies by the mentioned companies can be found [here](#).

## 2. THE LOBBYING CHAMPIONS



*Credit: Brasil de Fato*

### Poison Bill is the industry's priority

Apart from their participation in the associations that finance the activities from IPA and the FPA, agribusiness multinationals are also lobbyists by themselves. The meetings included in the official schedule of public authorities are a way of measuring the influence these groups hold in the Executive branch. It is not rare or illegal that the private sector meets with members of the government, but the frequency of these gatherings and the hierarchical spheres involved denote who possesses the bigger power of negotiation within the Federal Government.

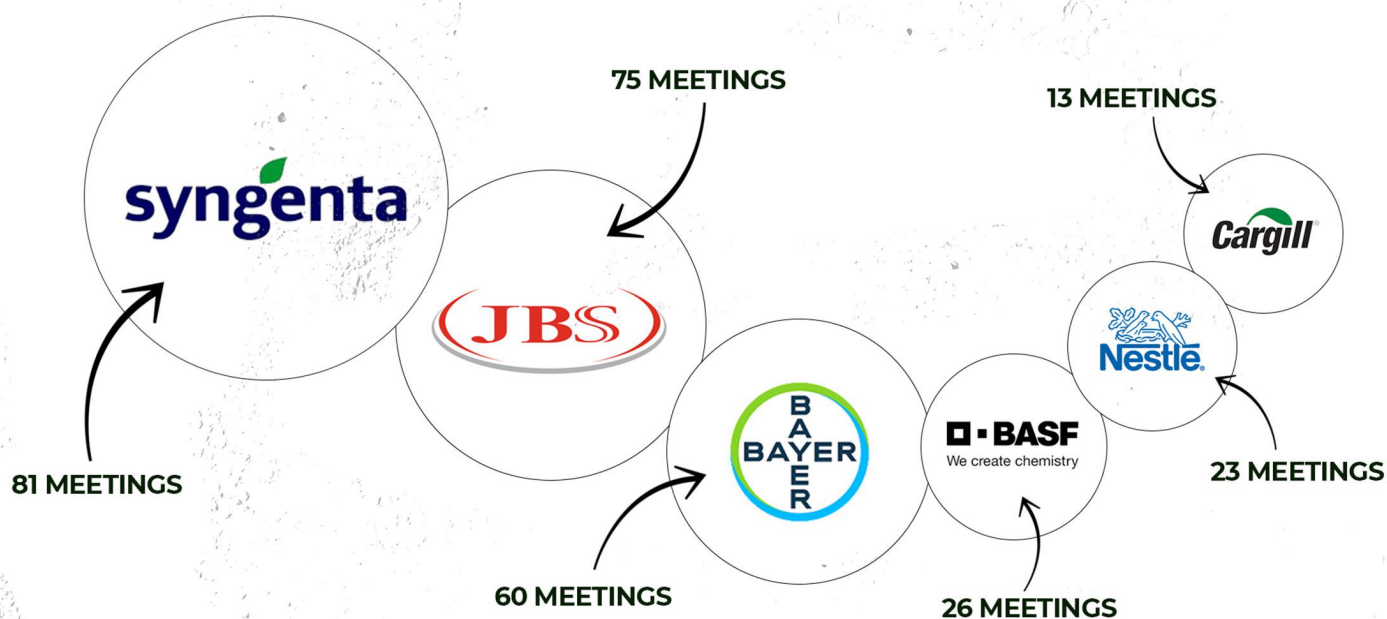
According to the survey conducted by De Olho nos Ruralistas, the champion of meetings with the federal government, between January 2019 and June 2022, was the pesticide and GM seed manufacturer Syngenta. Overall, there were 81 meetings to deal with regulatory subjects and topics related to the innovation and sustainability agenda, like the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (PEPs) and the extension of the use of fungicides on the cocoa cultivation.

Acquired by the state-owned ChemChina in 2017, Syngenta is directly connected to the "Poison Bill". This is because the federal deputy Luiz Nishimori (PL-PR), rapporteur of the bill 6.299/2002, signed in December 2020 an agreement to end a debt of R\$ 1.5 million (US\$ 278,000) that his company had with the multinational.

The representation of agrochemical industries is a chapter on its own. With 1,682 new pesticides approved since the beginning of his administration, Jair Bolsonaro maintains a friendly relation with the main association from this sector, CropLife Brasil. On July 6th, 2021, the group had a meeting with the secretary of Agriculture and Livestock Defense of MAPA, José Guilherme Tollstadius Leal, to discuss a new “self-control policy” by the companies of the sector. In other words, the manufacturers themselves would be responsible for supervising the fulfillment of the sanitary norms, reporting to MAPA directly and dispensing mandatory periodic inspections in the manufacturing plants. Two months earlier, in May, the president of the association, Christian Lohbauer, went to the Ministry accompanied by representatives from the multinationals BASF, Bayer, Corteva, Ihera and Syngenta to discuss the authorization for field experimentation in the initial phase of research on new molecules. By Brazilian legislation, the initial phase of research and tests of new pesticides is restricted to laboratorial analysis. Lohbauer, by the way, was Bayer’s vice-president of corporate affairs until 2018.

Another strategic field of operation of the sector is the National Technical Commission of Biosafety (CTNBio), an authority responsible for the approval of genetically modified organisms in Brazil. In August 2020, for example, minister Tereza Cristina summoned the formation of a triple list to designate a lead expert in biotechnology for the agency. In less than a month, BASF and Bayer were granted, together, a meeting with the government to “deal with information regarding the ordinance 252”. The meeting occurred with the director of the Department of Vegetal Health from the Ministry, which integrates the same section responsible for indicating the names that compose the CTNBio. In the end, Hugo Molinari, a researcher in the Brazilian Enterprise of Agricultural and Livestock Research (Embrapa) and director of technology in Sempre AgTech, producer of hybrid corn seeds, was appointed for the position of biotechnology specialist.

## OFFICIAL MEETINGS WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, 2019-2022



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND SUPPLY (MAPA) | BY: DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

## Multinationals' influence reaches high-level officials

The second place among the most influential companies with MAPA between January 2019 and June 2022 belongs to the Brazilian meatpacker JBS. With 75 meetings with members of the government, the meat packer has a direct interest in the approval of PL 1293/2021, a bill that determines the “self-control” of private companies for agricultural defense, subject of one of the meetings. Besides this topic, JBS also held meetings to deal with an incident of ammonia leak in one of its factories, in Pimenta Bueno (RO). At that time, the contaminated meat was destined for commercialization, being apprehended just before coming to the shelves. The company responds to a judicial process about the case in the State Court of Justice of Rondônia, and is under investigation by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

In 2017, the company was one of the investigated meatpackers during the “Weak Meat” Operation (Operação Carne Fraca, in Portuguese), that uncovered the payment of bribes to agricultural inspectors from MAPA with the intent to liberate the commercialization of adulterated products and expired meat.<sup>35</sup> The increase in sanitary fraud cases is one of the main complaints of civil society regarding the project of “self-control” endorsed by the meatpacker sector.<sup>36</sup>

Next in line, in the third position, is the German corporation Bayer. Between January 2019 and April 2022, representatives of the multinational gathered at least 60 times with employees from MAPA. A quite superior number to the competitor BASF, which had 26 official meetings. However, Bayer’s proximity with the government and agribusiness associations cannot be measured only by the number of meetings, but by the prestige of the correspondents.

In addition to the meetings within the scope of MAPA, in October 2019, the company had a face-to-face appointment with the president Jair Bolsonaro, in São Paulo, in which were present the global CEO of the company, Werner Baumann. The meeting occurred during an event promoted by Apex-Brazil, in which both the President and the CEO were speakers. A month earlier, the president’s special advisor Filipe Garcia Martins Pereira reunited with Bayer’s former Chief of Public Affairs, Silvia Menicucci. In July 2020, executives of the company held a video conference with the vice-president Hamilton Mourão. The subject was not made public in Mourão’s official schedule.

In 2022, it was the turn of the minister Tereza Cristina to honor the company by taking part in a video produced by Bayer, posted in one of the company’s official channels, to talk about rural insurance. Also participated in the video the director of the Department of Agricultural Policy and Rural Insurance from MAPA, Pedro Loyola. When questioned, the Press Coordination of the Ministry had few words to say, only stating that the interview given by the former minister aimed to “provide information about public policies conducted by this ministry, particularly about the Rural Insurance Program”.

Bayer also turned out to be the only private company invited to an event promoted by the Ministry of the Environment in MAPA headquarters. On October 27th, 2021, Silvia Menicucci reunited with representatives from Banco do Brasil, IPA, CNA and ABRAPA for the release of the program Floresta+ AGRO. The official registry was made in the front desk of the private entrance of MAPA, it was “apparently an event promoted by the Minister’s Office”, as informed by the Ministry through the Information Access Law (LAI).



## Bayer participated in secret meetings

The data collected by the observatory to formulate the ranking took into account only the meetings that are included in the official public schedule. Entrance and exit records from the Ministry's cabinet obtained through LAI, nonetheless, show that these meetings occur, sometimes, out of the official sphere.

Silvia Menicucci, who was the Chief of the Public Affairs Office and Sustainability from Bayer in Brasília, acted as a lobbyist for the company and was present in countless meetings from the official schedule of MAPA. However, she has also appeared in "off the record" face-to-face visits to the Ministry.

Between 2018 and February 2022, when she left the position in the multinational to assume oversight of the institutional relations of the bank Santander, the lobbyist was in person in the Ministry of Agriculture 31 times — being 25 since 2019 — as is shown by the entry and exit records from the Ministry's front desk, obtained by LAI. Of this total, 16 does not show in the records of the official schedule. Yet in the Chamber of Deputies, the executive was 14 times between 2018 and 2019.

Another important factor in the lobby of a company is the so-called "revolving door effect": when members who already worked in the government become employees of the company, taking advantage of the knowledge of the State mechanisms to navigate more easily. Before working for Bayer, Menicucci worked in the federal government. She was employee of the Apex-Brazil, an agency connected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), between 2008 and 2014.<sup>37</sup>

About the audiences of Bayer's Public Affairs professionals, the company informed that "whether face-to-face or virtual, they are formally requested from the interlocutors with which the company maintains interactions". The note follows: "These requests are made through the company's and the public agency's institutional channels of communication, and in them are included the names of the company representatives which will take part in the meeting, as well the topic to be discussed. These interactions are standardized by the federal legislation and the internal policies of the company".

The Ministry of Agriculture did not respond when inquired about this topic.

### 3. FINANCE INDUSTRY IS BEHIND THE DESTRUCTION



*Credit: Waldemir Barreto/Agência Senado*

#### US and EU keep the agribusiness lobby afloat

Since 2019, with the sharp increase in deforestation and fire levels in the Amazon, world financial capital has been trying, without success, to slow down the anti-environment drive of president Jair Bolsonaro. There's been no lack of harsh editorials against the Brazilian government in the influential Financial Times, neither promises of boycotts against the country if Amazon's deforestation wasn't reversed.<sup>38</sup> However, the transactions history of big banks, investment funds and brokers shows another side of this story.

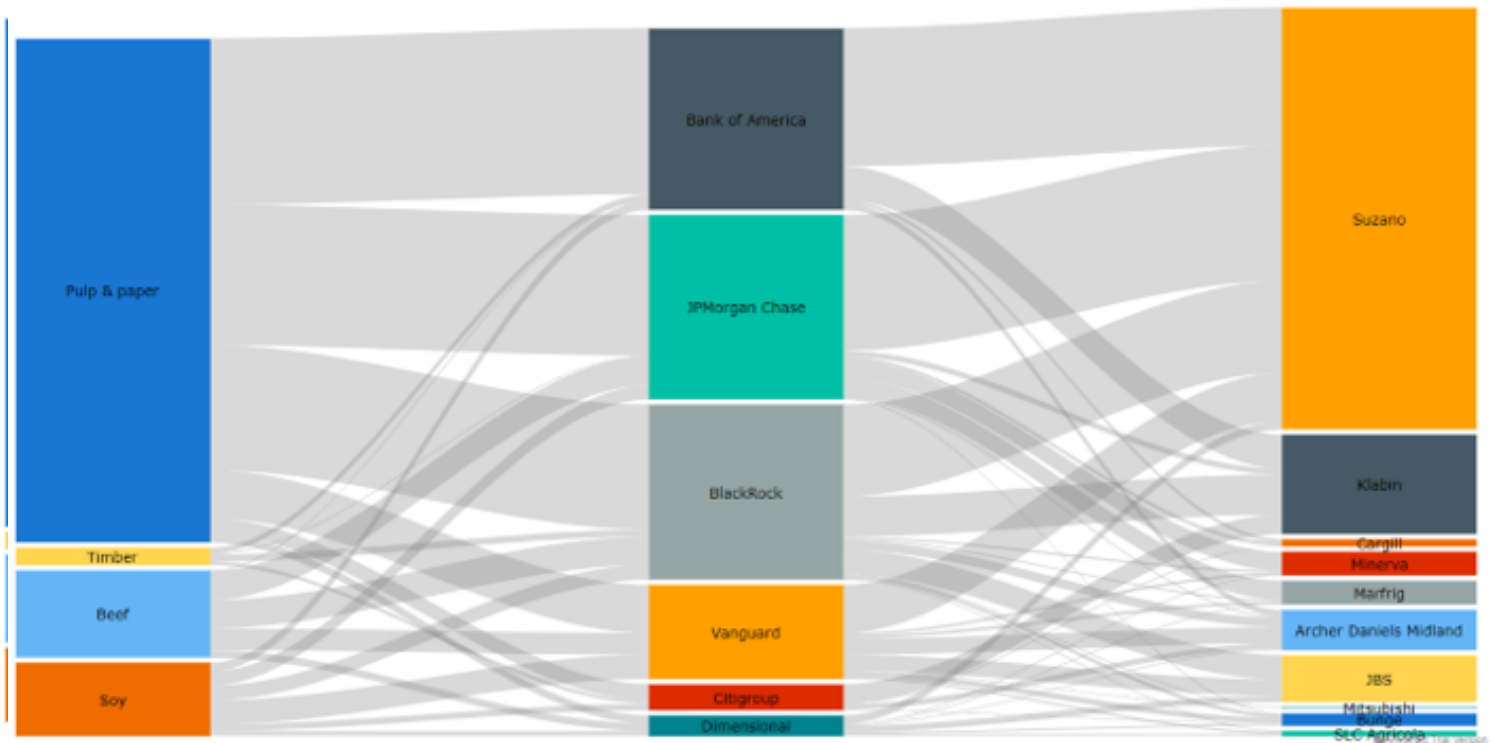
Between 2019 and 2020, big global investors injected more than US\$ 27 billion in companies associated with IPA. This billionaire figure comprises stock purchases by sovereign funds, loans by big banks, debt restructure, issue of bonds based on ESG principles, among other financial operations. Based on data gathered by the Forests & Finance Coalition, De Olho nos Ruralistas has identified the main investment funds related to the ruralista lobby ecosystem in Brasília<sup>39</sup>

Between Jair Bolsonaro's inauguration in January 2019 and April 2021, US groups dealt US\$ 7.4 billion in business with IPA companies. JP Morgan Chase leads with over US\$ 1.1 billion in deals in the observed period, followed by Bank of America and BlackRock, with US\$ 1 billion each.

Investment boomed in 2021, especially in meat packers and soy harvesters. In the first four months of the year, American groups injected more than a billion dollars in grain processors like Archer-Midland Daniels (ADM). This figure surpasses the 2019 investment total by more than 500%. The meat packer investment boom is focused on JBS. The group attracted little more than US\$ 624 million in deals with big investors in the first trimester of 2021. This sum compasses resources destined to both the agricultural and livestock activities of the group and its financial arm responsible for global operations, JBS Investments.

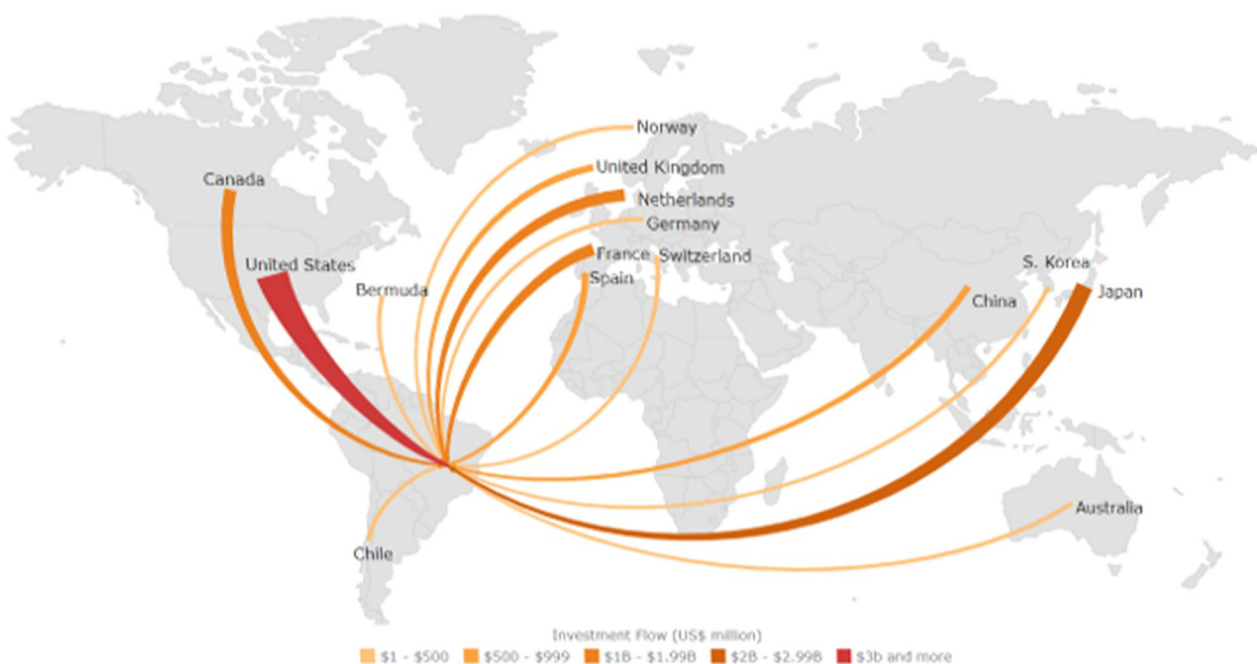
In the same period, European groups negotiated little more than US\$ 5.5 billion, mostly from investors from Spain, France, Norway and the United Kingdom. Fined by the Brazilian government in 2016 for financing soybean and corn producers in protected areas of the Amazon<sup>40</sup>, Santander, a member of Abag, dealt more than US\$ 250 million just in shares and bonds of JBS and Marfrig. Taking other sectors in, such as cellulose and soy, the Spanish bank dealt more than US\$ 700 million in shares, credit, loans and ESG bonds. British banks Barclays and Standard Chartered invested more than US\$ 200 million in Cargill and Chinese state-owned Cofco operations in Brazil. Besides these, the Government Pension Fund of Norway stands out for having injected more than US\$ 416 million in Suzano and grain processor ADM. Similar funds from neighbor Sweden also dealt with Bunge and JBS. AP7 and KLP are the same funds that signed a letter, in May 2021, demanding immediate action to curb deforestation in the Amazon, prepared by the Retail Soy Group.<sup>41</sup>

# FINANCING TO IPA COMPANIES, BY BANK (IN US\$ MILLIONS)



SOURCE: FORESTS & FINANCE | BY HUGO NICOLAU BARBOSA DE GUSMÃO/DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

# FINANCING TO IPA COMPANIES, BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (IN US\$ MILLIONS)



SOURCE: FORESTS & FINANCE | BY HUGO NICOLAU BARBOSA DE GUSMÃO/DE OLHO NOS RURALISTAS

## **JBS receives investments from tax havens**

The flurry of dollars injected by the financial market in companies associated with IPA also goes through tax havens. These are countries with less transparent fiscal laws, suitable for currency evasion, money laundering and asset concealment on a global scale. On IPA's web of companies there are businesses with investors registered in famous tax havens, such as Bermuda, and also in countries with similar laws, considered less demanding by economists — such as the Netherlands.

A business center since the 15th Century, the European country houses investors responsible for more than US\$ 1.2 billion in business with IPA companies. Between January 2019 and April 2021, Dutch bank ING Group alone injected more than US\$ 175 million in indirect financiers of IPA, with emphasis on Cofco. ABP, the main Dutch pension fund, injected another US\$ 130 million in IPA companies, mostly in meat packers like JBS, Marfrig and Minerva.

JBS capital also has investments intermediated in the archipelago of Bermuda. There are registered private brokers such as Fidelity International and Lazard, responsible for more than US\$ 60 million in JBS stock and bonds. In a lesser amount, both also negotiated Bunge stocks in 2021.

## **Companies' revenue reaches US\$ 273B**

The companies and associations that make up the financial structure are not mere side actors in global markets. De Olho nos Ruralistas analyzed the financial results published for the fiscal years of 2019 and 2020 by 128 companies that make up the funding chain of IPA. Summed up, these have an annual combined revenue of nearly US\$ 273 billion.<sup>42</sup>

The figure does not include revenues obtained by these companies in the other countries where they act. Some, even those that are publicly traded, detail only global or continental sales and profits. This sum also does not include numbers related to financial institutions.

Still, this revenue is greater than the GDP of Portugal, 47th in the world and estimated in US\$ 240.9 billions, according to 2020 data by the International Monetary Fund. To standardize the data, the observatory used average exchange rates provided by the Brazilian Central Bank for the given years.<sup>43</sup>

Among the analyzed companies, 47 are on the "100 greatest of agribusiness" list, compiled by Forbes magazine.<sup>44</sup> According to this study, they represent, in total, an annual net revenue of over US\$ 185 billion. Forbes's survey is based on data by the Standard & Poors agency, the Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Confederation (CNA) and Economática, a consultancy firm.

The list of indirect financiers of IPA includes the top 10 companies in the Forbes' survey. The first amongst them is JBS, which in 2020 hit record revenue of US\$ 5 billion, an increase of 32% relative to 2019. Next are Raízen (US\$ 22.0B), Cosan (US\$ 12.6B), Marfrig (US\$ 12.5B), Cargill (US\$ 12.4B), Ambev (US\$ 10.8B), Bunge (US\$ 9.3B), Copersucar (US\$ 7.2B) BRF (US\$ 6.2B) and Cofco (US\$ 6.1B).

## **“Green” speech hampered by IPA’s financing**

The direct participation of international corporations in the agribusiness lobby through the Pensar Agro Institute collides directly with the sustainability speech adopted by these companies.

In total, 30 of them are part of the Brazil Climate, Forests and Agriculture Coalition, an alliance between the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reduce greenhouse gases emissions caused by deforestation and intense economic activities such as agriculture and livestock.<sup>46</sup>

Part of this list includes soy traders Cargill, ADM and Amaggi, meat packers JBS and Marfrig, pesticide manufacturers Bayer and BASF, in addition to cellulose makers associated with Ibá (Suzano, Cenibra, CMPC Celulose Riograndense, Duratex, Eldorado Brasil, Gerdau, Klabin, Melhoramentos and Veracel). Financial institutions affiliated to the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness (Abag) are also members of the Coalition, such as Itaú BBA, Santander and Rabobank.

In addition to Abag, five other class entities are members of the Brazil Climate, Forests and Agriculture Coalition: the Brazilian Beef Exporters' Association (Abiec), Brazilian Food Industry Association (Abia), Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (Abiove), Brazilian Association of Citrus Exporters (CitrusBR) and the Brazilian Tree Industry Association (Ibá).

The dialogue with environmental NGOs is one of the main causes of attrition within IPA. In November 2020, for example, an official letter delivered to president Jair Bolsonaro by the Coalition, demanding a more rigid control over deforestation in the Amazon, led to a split between Abag and the Brazilian Association of Soybean Producers (Aprosoja), even though both entities maintained their activities within the Pensar Agro Institute.<sup>47</sup>

Traditionally, the presidents of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front are invited to speak in Abag's annual Agribusiness Congress. In the 2021 edition, sponsored by B3 Bovespa (the Brazilian Stock Exchange), the theme was “Our Carbon is Green”. The serving president of the FPA, deputy Sérgio Souza made a speech about sustainability, repeating the sector's buzzwords about “green agribusiness” and advocating for the approval of both “milestone thesis” — that restricts the demarcation of indigenous lands to those areas that were under the “proven possession” of traditional communities on October 5th, 1988, date of the promulgation of the Federal Constitution — and the “green land grabbing” bill, to ensure “legal guarantees” to the sector.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of wide repercussion of the data gathered in 2019 by De Olho nos Ruralistas, only one company responded at the time: in a public statement, the processed meat manufacturer Ceratti declared to be unaware of the Brazilian Association of Animal Protein's participation in the Pensar Agro Institute. According to the company, after the information was made public, commercial relations with the entity were terminated.<sup>49</sup>

## 4. RESISTING THE DESTRUCTION



*Credit: Divulgação/Anmiga*

The data presented in this report unveils the deep connection between agribusiness companies and the political lobby in Brasília. This connection goes beyond the indirect financing passed through the sector's associations. As seen, big agriculture and livestock companies, multinationals in particular, are not passive actors within IPA's structure. They preside over advocacy actions, be it through the entities in which they have more influence, or meeting directly with government officials and congressmen.

Since 2018, with the ban on political campaign financing by private companies, these power and influence relations have become much more subjective. After all, it is not illegal for a public agent to meet and hear demands from the private sector. The difference is, mainly, in the ease in which these companies have access to top-notch members of the Executive power, while social movements hardly are listened to. This distinction was accentuated in the administration of president Jair Bolsonaro, during which the indigenous peoples, peasants, quilombolas and environmentalists are seen as enemies of progress — which, in Bolsonaro's view, is represented by agribusiness.

This lack of transparency is also seen in the relations with the Legislative branch. The structure of indirect financing to the IPA, intermediated by the associations, hides the real role of companies in the agribusiness lobby. Although the reason class entities exist is solely to represent the interests of a sector and its actors, oftentimes they are seen as autonomous players, which does not correspond to the reality.

The organizations that make up IPA exist only to attend to the interests of its associates. More than that: whatever decisions made must pass by the companies that are part of its board. Such is the case of Abiove, representative of grain processors, whose board is chaired by former Minister of Agriculture and owner of Amaggi, Blairo Maggi, and Cargill president Paulo Sousa. Another case is that of Abimaq: even though it represents hundreds of machinery and equipment industries, it joined IPA under the presidency of João Carlos Marchesan, a bulldozer manufacturer, and whose board is made up of executives from Caterpillar and Jacto — the latter known for sponsoring the antidemocratic acts of September 7th, 2021.<sup>50</sup>

These companies are not just IPA financiers, they **are** the IPA. And, in turn, are also responsible for the agenda of setbacks engineered by the Agricultural Parliamentary Front in the Congress. Therefore, the fight to stop the approval of the Environmental Licensing Bill, the Milestone Bill, the Poison Bill, the Mining in Indigenous Lands Bill and many others that have a direct impact on environmental protection must take into account the corporate support for these proposals. It must also consider that the role of agribusiness multinationals goes beyond lobbying: they are also financiers of the destruction.

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