



A court in Ecuador has fined US oil giant Chevron a reported \$8bn (£5bn) for polluting a large part of the country's Amazon region. The oil firm Texaco, which merged with Chevron in 2001, was accused of dumping billions of gallons of toxic materials into unlined pits and Amazon rivers.

Campaigners say crops were damaged and farm animals killed, and that local cancer rates increased. Condemning the ruling as fraudulent, Chevron said it would appeal. The lawsuit was brought on behalf of 30,000 Ecuadoreans, in a case which dragged on for nearly two decades.

The plaintiffs said the company's activities had destroyed large areas of rainforest and also led to an increased risk of cancer among the local population.

The trial began in 2003 after almost a decade of legal battles in the US. At that time, a US appeals court ruled that the case should be heard in Ecuador.

Environmentalists hope the case will set a precedent, forcing companies operating in developing countries to comply with the same anti-pollution standards as in the industrialised world.

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