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COVER

Slash-and-burn agriculture in the Amazon rainforest. Tropical forests often mask nutrient-poor soils with high levels of toxic aluminum. Ashes released after burning the vegetation provide a temporary layer of fertilizer that is soon removed by leaching, erosion, and crop harvesting. These marginal lands are nevertheless the focus of increasingly intense settlement by pioneers. Several international agricultural research centers are investigating ways of boosting food production from such problem areas. See page 215. [Nigel J. H. Smith, University of Florida, Gainesville 32611]