
Chile: Campaign against tree monoculture expansion

In Chile, the onslaught of big forestry business groups backed by the state means more than 3 million hectares covered with industrial monocultures of pines and eucalyptus.

Industrial plantations have reported multimillion profits to groups such as Matte, owner of Forestal Mininco CMPC, or Angelini, owner of Forestal Arauco. This has been at the expense of having usurped Mapuche lands and caused havoc with the aforementioned exotic species that have reduced the water of streams and groundwater by increasing the incidence of drought, have eroded the soils and replaced farmland and forests. The result is that, given the lack of arable land and water loss, much of the rural population migrates to cities, often collapsing due to lack of employment and real opportunities.

The regions where there are more areas occupied by tree plantations are the ones that concentrate the highest rates of migration and impoverishment of the population. In particular, the south-central region of Chile has been the scenario for plantations expansion, mainly over the ancestral territory of the Mapuche, who have defended their land rights resisting the advance of forest plantations, facing repression, prison and death.

There is now a new offensive of the forestry sector, which is seeking to double the area of plantations in the short-term. For such a purpose they seek to annex the lands of "smallholders," meaning land of peasants and Mapuche communities.

Organizations throughout Chile have denounced these intentions through a public letter (1) in which they call on peasants and Mapuche communities to be alert to the attempts by forestry companies and government agents and not allowing the introduction of pine and eucalyptus plantations over their territory.

Mapuexpress and Adkimvn Communications have adhered to the call by organizing an information campaign for which they have prepared audiovisual and audio spots (2) to contribute to the generation of information and raise alarm and awareness for the protection of life and livelihoods, inviting to disseminate and replicate these materials.

Mapuexpress warn that in "these days, representatives from the forestry corporations and government agents will visit rural families homes praising the supposed benefits that pine and eucalyptus would bring and offering plants FOR FREE! They would even offer money bonuses. We need to be on the alert and defend our territories and our traditional practices ... the Earth". As Mapuexpress says: "Allowing the introduction of pine and eucalyptus is in any case short-term gain, long term pain. And allowing tree monocultures is allowing the pulp industry that always comes along with plantation and is one of the most polluting industries on earth".

So as the organizations say in the public letter, "to say no to the introduction of pine and eucalyptus is about defending life, agricultural land, food sovereignty; diversity and equality, culture, dignity for the people ... "

(1) Public letter from Chilean organizations, available in Spanish at <http://www.mapuexpress.net/content/news/print.php?id=8073> (Organizaciones de todo Chile hacen un llamado a Sectores Campesinos y Comunidades Mapuche a No introducir más Pinos y Eucaliptus en los territorios)

(2) The campaign video spots are available in Spanish at: , ,