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OUR VIEWPOINT

- Certification is definitely not the right path to follow

For many years now, WRM has stressed that it is unacceptable to certify large-scale industrial monoculture tree plantations. The main target has been the FSC, because it portrays itself to the world as the most reliable and respected label for wood products, and also because its members include numerous non-governmental organizations.

The FSC has already certified millions of hectares of monoculture tree plantations and continues to do so. One example is the certification scheduled for this

February/March of Chikweti Forests of Niassa, a company that has caused major problems for peasant farmer communities in the province of Niassa, in northern Mozambique (see www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/161/Mozambique.html).

Overall, the communities that are directly affected unanimously agree that it is impossible to certify large-scale monoculture tree plantations. For many years they have experienced first hand the damage and destruction caused by these plantations. Some of these communities were able to talk about their experiences in a recent film made by two Belgian journalists about the FSC certification of Veracel Celulose (read more in the article on Veracel and the FSC in this issue of the bulletin). Mapuche indigenous communities in Chile are also suffering the impacts of plantations, as described in another article in this edition, which notes that the main problem is that certified companies have no interest in changing their “model” of production, which “large-scale, monoculture, expansive and exclusive.”

Nevertheless, the subject of the certification of monoculture tree plantations continues to divide activists, NGOs and consumers in the industrialized countries, where the majority of paper products are consumed. Many say they recognize that there are problems, but that the FSC is still the best option, because at least some things in a certified company are a bit better. But is this really the right path to follow?

It is worth remembering how the idea of certification first arose. To do this, we would need to go back to the 1980s in Europe, when the environment emerged as a major political issue. Back then, European NGOs organized a wide-scale boycott on tropical wood, as they believed that the trade and consumption of tropical wood was causing the destruction of forests around the world. It was also around this time that it became clear that the exploitation of natural resources in the countries of the South to supply the North and its patterns of production and consumption was causing irreversible damage, such as global warming, a phenomenon that will affect everyone everywhere, but will particularly affect the poor.

One outcome of the global concern over the environment was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – more commonly known as the Earth Summit – held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where one of the topics of discussion was the need to make production more “sustainable”. From that point on, instead of accepting their responsibility and radically changing their production patterns, companies began to propose their own style of “sustainable production”. The problems identified were, almost miraculously, transformed into “opportunities” for a new cycle of growth, but now in a “sustainable” way. For companies that promote the spread of large-scale plantations, certification was the perfect solution, because they could define their practices as “sustainable”, increase the value of their products, and ease the concerns of consumers worried about the global environment – all without affecting their plans for expansion and, above all, their profits. On the contrary, certification means that they can charge even more for their products.

Governments and some NGOs provided their backing for this “positive message” that it was possible to “ecologically modernize” the means of production. First came certification for wood products (FSC) and subsequently, throughout the years, for other monoculture plantation products, thanks to organizations like the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS). As

certification gained force, so did the idea among consumers that it's okay to consume now, as long as the products consumed are "sustainable" and "certified". Boycotts became a thing of the past.

But while an ever larger number of monoculture plantations were being certified, ever greater criticism began to be voiced as well. It is interesting to note that these criticisms did not come only from the South, but also from the North. Numerous NGOs have now pulled out of the FSC, such as the German environmental organization Robin Wood. Even a recent study published by the European Commission (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/226na6.pdf>) recognizes that the FSC has not necessarily reduced deforestation, although this is an argument frequently used by those who defend FSC certification.

Meanwhile, a project for young people from Belgian and Finnish organizations, called Fair Move, recently focused on the issue of labels and certifications as a topic for discussion and reflection. They wanted to know if the labels currently used on the market, such as the FSC label, are really reliable. It's good to know that young people are questioning a label which for more than 10 years (!) has guaranteed "sustainability".

Other labels, such as the one for "sustainable" soy, have also been targeted for criticism. One example is an open letter recently published in a Belgian newspaper by a group of activists from Belgian organizations, addressed to Dutch NGOs that participate in the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS). The activists state in their letter that "a label from the RTRS for industrial soy does nothing relevant for human beings or for the environment. It deceives consumers who buy products with the RTRS label, in Belgium as well. And it offers a means of greenwashing for corporations like Monsanto, Cargill and Unilever."

The criticisms of labelling schemes like the FSC lead us back to a discussion of an issue that was pushed to the background by the practice of certification: excessive consumption patterns. There is an urgent need to reduce paper consumption and to encourage recycling and regional production on a smaller scale with a greater diversity of tree species and benefits for local communities.

The FSC does not question the need for countless disposable products manufactured with trees from certified plantations to enhance people's well-being. And the certified companies are of course even less likely to question it, since they are primarily concerned with increasing their sales and profits. Half of the paper consumed in the world is disposable, in other words, not really sustainable and questionable in terms of improving "quality of life". Moreover, it would be impossible to universalize the Western pattern of consumption, even if the products are certified. Nevertheless, companies continue to promote consumption, even introducing new products, now called "sustainable", as if excessive consumption had not led to grave problems, such as global warming. And if all of this were not enough, the FSC is also certifying monoculture plantations that are meant to serve as carbon sinks, thereby colluding in the false solutions put forward to fight global warming, as noted in the article on the company Plantar in this issue of the WRM bulletin.

In conclusion, our first task, which leads us back to the reason for devoting some articles of this bulletin to the subject of certification, is to alert readers and to encourage NGOs and consumers in general to take a stance on this issue. What is needed is a critical assessment of what certification has actually achieved over the years: the weakening of the struggles of local communities for their rights and natural resources and the strengthening of corporations that promote excessive consumption as a means of boosting their own profits. The time has come to pursue new paths that do not include certification.

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FSC CONTINUES CERTIFYING THE UNCERTIFIABLE

In today's system of certification almost any project can end up receiving a "green label", as long as it complies with certain formalities.

But the essence, the basic characteristics of destructive projects remain unquestioned. In the case of tree plantations, these characteristics include their large scale, the continuous drive towards their further expansion, the monoculture of a single species, and the consequent use of dangerous chemical products. This all adds up to a model that leads to destruction, the extinction of biodiversity, the exclusion and marginalization of local communities, and the alteration of the climate.

This is why we must go back and ask ourselves time and again, what has certification actually achieved? In the case of monoculture tree plantations, our answer is that it has contributed to strengthening companies that promote excessive consumption, with no regard for the consequences, as a means of increasing their profits. At the same time, certification weakens the struggles of local communities to defend their rights and natural resources as they stand up against the big companies that continue to advance with their "green labels".

Within the system of the certification of wood products, the FSC bears particular responsibility for the spread of millions of hectares of monoculture tree plantations around the world.

It is time that this fact was made crystal clear, and that is the aim of the following articles in this month's bulletin.

- FSC and Veracel Celulose: Certification that is neither reliable nor independent

In 2007, FSC certifying body SGS began the certification process for Veracel Celulose in Bahia, Brazil, in accordance with the FSC's principles and criteria. Veracel is a joint venture between the Swedish-Finnish transnational Stora Enso and Brazilian-based Fibria (formerly Aracruz). It controls some 100,000 hectares of monoculture eucalyptus plantations geared to the production of pulp for export, within a total area of over 200,000 hectares. It is currently working on doubling its pulp mill production capacity and plantations.

Back in 2004, the FSC had initiated a review of its practice of certifying monoculture tree plantations, a practice that was harshly criticized by social movements and NGOs, including the WRM. This opposition was based on the fact that these plantations cause serious negative impacts, as demonstrated for years by the testimony of communities living near plantations and research and studies in all of the countries where monoculture tree plantations have been established. As a result, the 2007 certification process involving Veracel, a leading company in the plantation sector, was viewed as a “test case” by these social movements and NGOs to determine whether the FSC had changed its practice.

But the FSC had not changed. In 2008, SGS granted Veracel FSC certification, ignoring the various demonstrations and protests waged by social movements and NGOs in Bahia, the rest of the Brazil and around the world, before, during and after the certification. This opposition was spurred by Veracel’s well-documented violation of FSC principles and criteria. (1) Nevertheless, through the certifying body SGS, which according to the FSC is an “independent” organization, Veracel obtained the FSC label and has consequently been able to export millions of tons of FSC-certified pulp since 2008.

In 2010, two Belgian journalists, Leopold Broers and An-Katrien Lecluyse, decided to undertake three months of fieldwork in the areas surrounding Veracel plantations. Their goal was to determine whether or not the company genuinely deserved the FSC label. Unlike SGS and many journalists who devote only a few days to fieldwork, these two journalists spent several months visiting the communities and talking with local inhabitants, in addition to listening to the company’s side.

The result of this extensive fieldwork was an article in the Belgian socio-environmental publication MO-Magazine and a 40-minute documentary that was premiered this January in the Belgian city of Gand. The premiere was attended by 250 people. The screening of the documentary was followed by a debate, with the participation of the FSC and WWF-Belgium, among others.

Both the article and the film represented a major contribution to the communities and social movements who resist and/or struggle against the power and the impacts of Veracel. Representatives of these communities and social movements were given a voice in both the film and the article, which is very different from the way they are normally treated by the authorities, and even by the FSC certifying body SGS. Through the work of these journalists, they have been able to make themselves heard in Europe. And their message to consumers is very clear: you are being duped.

What those who were present at the debate following the documentary screening found particularly striking was that the representatives who spoke out in defence of the FSC talked about the “independence” of the certifying body, in this case SGS, and the reliability of the label, even though the serious denunciations presented by the film had very clearly demonstrated that the label is far from reliable. As a result, it is difficult to consider the SGS as an “independent” organization, especially knowing that it is the company seeking certification – in this case, Veracel – that hires the certifying body. In other words, Veracel paid SGS for this service.

The certifying body's lack of independence was made even more evident after the journalists submitted an official complaint to the FSC based on the denunciations they had documented. In response, the FSC ordered an audit of the work done by SGS. The findings of the audit were released in January 2011, curiously coinciding with the premiere of the journalists' film. The audit recommended the suspension of SGS accreditation to conduct FSC certifications in Brazil, due to its "unsatisfactory" performance.

In spite of this positive outcome for the communities and movements involved, a number of questions remain unanswered. Will Veracel be able to keep the FSC label? And why is it only now, after Veracel has already been certified for almost three years, that an FSC audit has finally declared that SGS did its job incorrectly, indicating as well that this FSC certifying body does not in fact comply with FSC principles and standards? Did it take a magazine article, a film, and a complaint lodged in Europe to make this happen? How much longer will the FSC continue to let organizations like SGS carry out certification assessments, while being paid by the companies seeking certification? And what does the FSC plan to do in the cases of other certified plantations where local communities have no possibility of making their voices heard internationally?

All of this leads to the conclusion that revoking the FSC label from Veracel and all other FSC-certified companies that operate large-scale tree plantations is crucial in order for the FSC to genuinely differentiate itself from the various other labels of "sustainability". On the contrary, if Veracel Celulose and other companies like it are able to maintain the FSC label, this will merely prove to the world that the FSC partakes in "greenwashing" and is therefore not reliable.

(1) http://www.wrm.org.uy/actores/FSC/Veracel_Certidao_Obito.html

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- Brazil: The case of Plantar – the FSC at the service of the sale of carbon credits

Companies that promote large-scale monoculture tree plantations do not seek the FSC label solely to increase the value of their final products. There are also companies that use the FSC for a very specific and very different purpose: obtaining certification to sell carbon credits. This is the case of Plantar, a company based in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil.

Over 10 years ago, Plantar presented a carbon trade project proposal to the World Bank's Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF). The Fund was seeking carbon trade pilot projects to be executed through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in various sectors of production, so that these "good" examples could later be replicated.

In its original project proposal, Plantar argued that it needed money from the sale of carbon credits to plant 23,100 hectares of monoculture eucalyptus plantations. Otherwise, it would be "forced" to use coal, another source of energy which,

according to Plantar, provided a much cheaper way to smelt pig iron at its plant in the city of Sete Lagoas. Plantar stated that using coal, a fossil fuel, would produce more carbon emissions than the use of plant-based charcoal. The latter, according to the company, is a “renewable” source of energy, since it would be made from the eucalyptus trees, which would be replanted numerous times. Since the project involved eucalyptus plantations and would serve as a model project for the World Bank, it obtained the FSC label, which served as a guarantee that it was a “good project” that would practice “good forest management” on those 23,100 hectares.

Plantar first received FSC certification in 1997. It should be mentioned that at that time, it was reported that Plantar was seeking this certification to produce barbecue charcoal. This claim seemed odd, however, since only a small portion of the charcoal produced from the certified plantation areas would be used for this purpose, while the majority was intended for the Plantar iron and steel works in Sete Lagoas. Moreover, this certification, like the certification of many other monoculture tree plantations, was highly criticized because of the negative impacts of Plantar plantations on the environment and local communities. (1) Plantar’s interest in selling carbon credits became increasingly evident, and for this it needed the FSC.

It is rather interesting that on its website, the FSC states that it “provides a credible link between responsible production and consumption of forest products, enabling consumers and businesses to make purchasing decisions that benefit people and the environment (...).” Despite this claim, up until now, the FSC has not adopted a clear position regarding companies like Plantar, which have been using the FSC for years to guarantee the sale of their carbon credits. Carbon credits cannot really be considered under the category of “responsible consumption”. Carbon trade projects fall under a completely different category: that of false solutions to the climate crisis.

In a paper that specifically addresses “forest carbon”, the FSC stated in December 2010 that “FSC should not prevent its certified beneficiaries access to carbon markets, but will have to ensure that this does not bring about reputational risks for FSC.” (2) In the meantime, however, Plantar’s sale of carbon credits from its FSC-certified plantations is yet another factor contributing to the erosion of the FSC’s credibility.

In September 2010, dozens of NGOs and social movements from Brazil and around the world submitted another letter to the Executive Board of the CDM – a mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – to protest this UN body’s official registration of the Plantar project as a CDM project. The organizations highlighted the negative impacts of eucalyptus plantations and further stressed that these eucalyptus trees only store carbon temporarily, which is why “it is unacceptable that the carbon stored in eucalyptus trees be used to justify the emission of an equivalent amount of carbon through the burning of fossil fuels by polluting companies in Europe.” The result is a net increase in carbon emissions, which demonstrates that this is a false solution for the problem of climate change. Despite this new letter, Plantar succeeded last September in registering the last and most controversial component of its CDM project with the CDM Executive Board: the use of its eucalyptus plantations as carbon sinks.

Just recently, on 14 February 2011, the CDM Executive Board responded to the

letter that had been submitted by NGOs and social movements regarding the Plantar project. According to the Board, the letter expressed concern that the Plantar project did not contribute to sustainable development in Brazil, but this sort of assessment is the responsibility of the Brazilian government. In other words, the CDM Executive Board is hiding behind the Brazilian government's perverse official policy of promoting the expansion of monoculture tree plantations to satisfy business interests, causing numerous conflicts and negative impacts in the country. Moreover, the Board completely disregarded the argument put forward by the NGOs and social movements who signed the letter regarding the fact that the Plantar project merely aggravates the climate crisis. Given their role as "experts" on the subject of climate change, this is something the Board members obviously should have addressed in their response, and yet they did not acknowledge it whatsoever. This can only be interpreted as a total lack of consideration for civil society.

Plantar and other companies in the sector will now undoubtedly attempt to register more carbon projects to seek increased funds and profits for their business operations. Lorentzen Empreendimentos, a company run by Haakkon Lorentzen, son of the founder of Aracruz Celulose – now Fibria – has joined forces with Plantar in a new joint venture called Aflopar. This company has already acquired at least 60,000 hectares of land in the state of Minas Gerais. (3)

Aflopar's objective, according to Lorentzen, is to produce charcoal, but the company also plans to operate in the carbon trade sector, in other words, to sell carbon credits to polluting companies interested in buying them. For his part, the owner of Plantar, Geraldo Moura, after noting the difference in costs between using coal and plant-based charcoal, declared: "When the iron and steel companies that switch to charcoal start to compensate for that difference by selling carbon credits, they will realize that this substitution is a good business move." (4)

We have long denounced the lack of credibility of the FSC as it ultimately legitimates monoculture tree plantations and weakens the resistance struggles of impacted communities. If the FSC starts certifying tree plantations that want to profit also from carbon credits, it will only confirm that FSC's "green" label just helps to increase corporate profits and further exacerbate the climate crisis.

(1) www.wrm.org.uy/actores/FSC/certificaport.html

(2) http://www.fsc.org/fileadmin/web-data/public/document_center/News/Climate_change_news/FSC_FCWG_Issue_Paper_Carbon_FINAL.pdf.

(3) Ferreira, Rodrigo, "Bioenergia e o mercado de carbono: oportunidades para a cadeia produtiva da siderurgia", presentación powerpoint durante el "Seminário Bases Bioenergéticas para uma Indústria Verde", 6 April 2010.

(4) Herzog, Ana Luísa, "Agronegócio, eles querem florestas...", http://planetasustentavel.abril.com.br/noticia/desenvolvimento/conteudo_270602.shtml?func=1&pag=0&fnt=9pt, Revista Exame, February 2008.

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Since 1974, industrial monoculture tree plantations have spread throughout Chile, and are particularly concentrated in the regions of Bío-Bío and Araucanía, although they are also found in the regions of Maule, Los Ríos and Los Lagos.

Decree Law 701, passed by the Pinochet military dictatorship and still in force today, granted state subsidies to private companies as a means of promoting the forestry industry. Large tracts of land and state-owned plantations were privatized and gradually ended up in the hands of powerful economic groups, like the Matte and Angelini Groups, effectively dismantling the advances achieved by Agrarian Reform in the redistribution of land ownership. Of the 10 million hectares of land that had been expropriated, three million were sold at low prices and under highly favourable conditions. (1) Private companies obtained financing for up to 75% of the costs of planting pine and eucalyptus trees on Mapuche indigenous territory for 37 years.

Since then, forestry sector exports have been given high priority by successive Chilean governments, which have continued to support and promote the sector. The drastic expansion of industrial tree plantations has not only infringed on agricultural land and native ecosystems like forests, but also on the traditional territory of the Mapuche people, which provides the material and spiritual support for their very existence.

Throughout this time, territorial conflicts between Mapuche communities and plantation companies, especially Forestal Mininco and the companies grouped under Bosques Arauco, have been a constant occurrence. As explained by Alfredo Seguel of the Konapewman Mapuche Association, “for Mapuche organizations, the conflict with forestry companies is not merely a dispute over land.” According to the forestry commission of the Coordinating Committee of Mapuche Territorial Organizations and Identities, “the territorial conflict with the forestry companies is a fight for survival, for rights, dignity, recognition, and the possibility of autonomous development. For the coordinating committee, stopping the expansion of the forestry sector is also a means of preventing this activity from provoking even greater impoverishment, environmental damage and cultural deterioration for the Mapuche people and vast sectors of society.” (2)

These ongoing conflicts have resulted in a long list of Mapuche people wounded, killed, harassed, arrested, tried and sentenced with the full weight of the law in civilian and military courts, often under laws created during the military dictatorship which remain in force, for their participation in protests in urban and rural areas aimed at recovering their land and halting the further spread of tree plantations.

In the meantime, as revealed by a recent report on independent forestry monitoring of river basins in the Los Ríos region, “the increase in the emigration of the rural population to cities is a consequence of the new land ownership regime in rural areas, with the expansion of tree plantations being a significant factor in this process.” (3)

Another ongoing problem is the growing scarcity of water in rural areas in south-central Chile, where “the vast areas of tree plantations and the methods of harvesting used alter the normal levels and water quality of rivers, which means that the decisions adopted by the forestry companies on the land where their assets are

located affect all of the area's inhabitants." This is particularly true for the Mapuche people, "who have lived in these territories since time immemorial, and maintained a harmonious interrelation with the water and land until the European invasion." The companies do not consider the effects of the huge volumes of water consumed by fast-growing tree species in areas where water is scarce, which prevent water from being used for other productive activities, among other impacts. This problem is also ignored by the government policies that promote the spread of tree plantations." (4)

The water shortages provoked by monoculture plantations of fast-growing exotic tree species have worsened the conditions faced by Mapuche communities, who organized a massive march against the expansion of tree plantations in Araucanía, among other regions, in 2006. The Ñancuichew Association of Lumaco, together with Mapuche communities in Lumaco, Purén, Los Sauces, Traiguén, Victoria and Ercilla, declared that the reason behind the protest march was "the presence of privately owned pine and eucalyptus plantations on their territory, among other problems." They also described the plantation companies' actions as "environmental terrorism." (5)

Recently, the mayor of the commune of Antuco, in the province of Bío-Bío, blamed monoculture pine and eucalyptus plantations for aggravating the drought currently affecting peasant farming communities in the region. The mayor stated that intensive cultivation of these trees is "using up the water sources in rural areas, which is further accentuated in the summer season in the Precordillera region." (6)

Despite the well-documented impacts of the industrial and intensive cultivation of trees, forestry sector companies are now attempting to obtain the "green label" of FSC certification for their plantations. During a recent visit to a number of communes in Araucanía (Nueva Imperial, Chol Chol, Galvarino, Traiguén, Lumaco, Los Sauces, Purén, Angol and Renaico), Claudio Donoso Hiriart told WRM about the "devastation and desolation" caused by pine and eucalyptus plantations, which "have replaced native forests and highly fertile agriculture land and are finishing off the water and land." He commented that "the most striking commune is Lumaco, where plantations occupy 52.5% of the total land area of what is the poorest commune in the region (Mininco is the largest landowner)." He also showed us a video of a eucalyptus plantation established on what was once prime agricultural land in the commune of Chol Chol, which is now facing severe water shortages, and where there is a sign posted with the FSC certification label.

Forestal Mininco is currently seeking FSC certification for a total of 666,581 hectares of plantations spread across the regions of El Maule, Bío-Bío, Araucanía, Los Ríos and Los Lagos.

In response, this past January in Temuco, the Mapuche organizations and communities gathered together in the Wallmapu Futa Trawun – an autonomous and self-organized body made up by ancestral community authorities, group leaders, community members, young people and students from throughout the Mapuche nation – addressed the national and international public through a press release in which they declared:

"Today, January 25, we held a meeting with Mr. Freddy Peña, the head of the

auditing commission from the United States (FSC) certifying body Smartwood, who is gathering information and background for the certification of the wood produced by the company Forestal Mininco.

“This certification is very important in order for Forestal Mininco to sell its products in vital markets, mainly in Europe, Asia and the United States. The company must fulfil a series of requirements related to the protection of the environment, good relations with local communities, respect for laws, conventions and the culture of indigenous peoples, not infringing directly or indirectly on the resources and land rights of indigenous peoples, respect for sacred places, compensation for damages, respecting traditional knowledge, providing nearby communities with skilled employment and training opportunities, respect for labour legislation in accordance with ILO conventions, etc.

“The Lonko, Machi and Werken participants and Mapuche leaders and community members from different territories wish to express our profound concern to this auditing commission with regard to all of the damage that this company has caused in our territories. The cultural and environmental genocide and criminalization of our social demands which it has carried out against our nation, and all of the suffering caused to thousands of our families. At the same time, we have submitted to them a file of background material gathered by our leadership and professionals, which provides evidence of all the environmental, cultural, social and economic impacts, as well as the criminalization, sentencing, imprisonment and murder of community members fighting to recover their territory, for which Forestal Mininco is responsible.”

The Wallmapu Futa Trawun stresses that the “predatory company Forestal Mininco” should not be certified, and calls on the different Mapuche communities to “be aware and informed of events that have a bearing on our individual rights and the customary rights of the Mapuche nation and the intentions of these companies that destroy our territory, our Itrofilmongén, with all of the life forms that our nation has defended and protected throughout the thousands of years of our history.” (7)

The plantation companies could try to improve the way they carry out their business, but they have no intention of changing their model of production: large-scale, monoculture, expansive and exclusive. This model is uncertifiable, as well as incompatible with a policy of territorial sustainability for Mapuche communities in La Araucanía.

(1) “Modelo forestal chileno y Movimiento autónomo Mapuche: Las posiciones irreconciliables de un conflicto territorial”, Alfredo Seguel, 2005, http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Chile/modelo_forestal_chileno.html

(2) “Conflicto público de tierras y Recursos naturales”: Expansión forestal y territorialidad Mapuche (Chile), Alfredo Seguel, Agrupación Mapuche Konapewman, <http://www.mapuche.nl/doc/seguel0906.pdf>

(3) “Informe Nacional, Monitoreo Forestal Independiente en Cuencas Hidrográficas Abastecedoras de Agua de la XIV Región de Los Ríos”; ONG-Forestales por el Bosque Nativo.

(4) “Gran marcha mapuche en contra de expansión forestal en La Araucanía”, Aldea Comunicaciones, <http://www.olca.cl/oaca/chile/region08/forestales01.htm>

(5) Ibid.

(6) “Antuco: Alcalde considera que plantaciones de pino y eucaliptos agudizan la sequía”, Bío-Bío La Radio, <http://www.radiobiobio.cl/2011/02/01/antuco-alcalde-considera-que-plantaciones-de-pino-y-eucaliptos-agudizan-la-sequia/>

(7) “Declaración de Fvta Xawun Mapuche por certificación de Forestal Mininco”, national and international press release, <http://www.observatorio.cl/node/1326>

This article was based on the references cited above, which were sent by Paulina Veloso, Colectivo VientoSur, e-mail: paulina.veloso@gmail.com, and comments by Claudio Donoso Hiriart.

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- South Africa: The killing of Baboon in FSC-certified timber plantations

GeaSphere is an environmental pressure group working towards a more sustainable model of living based on lower impact agriculture practices that are environmentally sustainable, socially just and which ensures food security and promotes locally based economies and poverty alleviation in the southern African region. A major threat to the local integrated environment is the large scale industrial timber plantation industry, responsible for the transformation of millions of hectares of bio diverse grasslands, the primary vegetation type in most of Southern Africa’s timber growing regions.

One of the most destructive impacts of industrial timber plantations is on biodiversity. Non native timber species utilized outcompete the indigenous vegetation by utilizing vast quantities of scarce water and by ‘shading out’ the life-giving sun which grassland species depend upon. By managing for timber, the industry protects the plantations from fire. Excluding this vital element delivers the final nail in the coffin of grassland biodiversity. (Grassland plants are dependent on fire).

‘Fast Wood’ plantations are harvested frequently and the resulting ‘clear cuts’, combined with the practise of ‘burning slash (branches not utilized)’ negatively impacts on the soil resource, causing hydrophobic conditions and exasperating soil erosion. The monoculture model destroys soil biodiversity, resulting in soil being ‘mined’ of its vitality. Long term soil nutrient impoverishment is inevitable.

FSC Principle 6 states that:

"Forest management shall conserve biodiversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintains the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest."

According to Dr. John Scotcher, FSC S.A. Contact Person:

“The focus of this principle in the South African context is on conserving representative portions of biodiversity within the forestry landscape and ensuring that ecological functions of these ecosystems are maintained. Conservation of biodiversity within planted compartments is not a primary objective, with these areas being managed to maximise economic returns”.

GeaSphere is of the opinion that these critically important principles MUST be made

applicable WITHIN the FSC certified production compartments. Bio diversity is an essential element of sustainability, and there should be urgent efforts by industry to establish diversity and promote holistic eco system functioning.

Biodiversity impoverishment in timber plantations has recently come under the spotlight, epitomized by the drastic measures employed by industry to control 'pest animals'.

On the 11th of January 2011, GeaSphere lodged a formal complaint to FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) International under the heading "the killing of Baboons in FSC-certified timber plantations in South Africa". According to unofficial numbers, 14 permits, allowing for almost 2000 Baboons to be 'captured and culled' were issued by the authority to the timber industry over the past two years only.

The timber industry does not have any other validation for this practice than the economical damage that Baboons allegedly cause to the industry by stripping off the bark of some of the timber trees and causing them to die. Yet, what gives the profit-hungry managers and directors of the timber industry the right to decide upon the lives of hundreds of Baboons which are being forced into plantations due to the lack of natural habitat?

It is concerning that most of the plantations in which Baboons are being shot are certified under the FSC certification system. John Scotcher, main FSC contact person in South Africa and at the same time main environmental consultant for Forestry South Africa, states that FSC, as a supposedly independent supervisory body for the plantation industry, was aware of the culling prior to GeaSphere's complaint. It is obvious that FSC failed to react on its own to save the lives of innocent Baboons. This is despite the fact that, in addition to the widely spread ethical and emotional concerns that are being raised, even the professional scientific community regards the current practice of extirpation as not viable, unsustainable and seemingly ineffective with regards to the actual decrease in Baboon damage.

During the process of investigating the case further, GeaSphere came across a research document from 2006, which has been hidden away by the industry for more than two years from the general public and interested and affected parties. Professor Leslie Brown, chair of the research unit that conducted the research, says that "the timber industry was not happy at all when the research team presented the actual result of the study to the foresters". Although the study has been uploaded to the official Baboon Damage Working Group website in 2008, the industry left out crucial parts of the study – obviously on purpose as those parts are the most significant on the issue and the most devastating with regards to the industry's 'trap and shoot' practice.

The dissertation for instance results that the researcher's "professional, scientific opinion is that, at present, it is simply not possible to say that control procedures [trap and shoot] work, or that they represent a cost-effective use of GFP/KLF resources." Furthermore, the final paper gives a number of recommendations to the industry, including "the introduction of buffer zones of natural vegetation" and "presenting baboons with better quality foods that require less energetic effort to access". The study has found that in areas where cages have been set and Baboons

have been baited by feeding with maize, the damage to trees increases enormously. It is clear from the study that the current lethal 'capture and cull' method used by the industry to control the Baboon damage is not working and is not sustainable as "the large take-off has conservation implications not only locally but also for surrounding areas."

In light of the scientific evidence revealed by GeaSphere, FSC cannot but act immediately. It is unclear however at this stage if FSC knew about the scientific study mentioned above since 2006 or if the timber industry also decisively kept the Stewardship in the dark. It can yet be expected that John Scotcher, being the main environmental consultant for Forestry South Africa, was aware of the document. "This is just one example where the conflict of interest between Forestry South Africa and FSC becomes clear." GeaSphere immediately acted upon the appearance of the scientific study and demanded Andre de Freitas, Executive Director of FSC International, to make use of his position and to place an immediate moratorium on the killing. They are awaiting reply.

GeaSphere has reason to expect the independent complaints panel, which is formed by FSC at present, to investigate in all directions and to take appropriate action against the parties involved. According to official FSC guidelines the complaints panel will come to a final and binding decision latest in May this year. The FSC will then be responsible to implement any follow-up actions.

By Philip Owen, e-mail owen@soft.co.za, and Tim Strupat, e-mail tim@strupat.de -
For more information visit our "Baboon Information Package",
www.geasphere.co.za/articles/fsc_baboons.htm

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- The world is watching as the Indonesia-Norway REDD deal stalls

Indonesia is a crucial country for REDD. It has one of the fastest rates of deforestation in the world. And, as a direct result of this deforestation (particularly the destruction of peat swamp forests) Indonesia is the world's third highest emitter of carbon dioxide. There is currently a battle going on over Indonesia's forests between the industries that have long benefited from forest destruction and those who want to see the forest sector overhauled. While REDD is often described as a win-win arrangement, the battle in Indonesia is a distinctly win-lose battle. If the industry wins, the forests and the people living in and near forests lose.

In May 2010, Norway and Indonesia signed a Letter of Intent for a US\$1 billion deal (1) aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation. An important part of the deal is a two-year logging moratorium, which was supposed to start at the beginning of January 2011. In order for the moratorium to be legally binding, Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has to sign a decree. Unfortunately, he was presented with not one, but several draft decrees. The moratorium is currently stalled, waiting for Yudhoyono's decision on which decree to sign.

There are at least three draft decrees (2) currently in the running to be signed by Yudhoyono. The first was produced on 21 December 2010 by the Ministry of Forestry. The second appeared two days later, written by the REDD-Plus task force (the task force was created in September 2010 as part of the Norway-Indonesia REDD deal). Early in January 2011, the Coordinating Minister for the Economy produced a third draft decree.

There are important differences between the draft decrees. The Ministry of Forestry's draft decree would apply only to primary forests. The Ministry of Economy draft decree follows the Ministry of Forestry's example and also applies only to primary forest.

This would make the moratorium effectively meaningless, as Bernadinus Steni, the program coordinator for climate change and REDD at the Indonesian NGO Huma (Association for Community and Ecology-Based Law Reform), points out. "There would be no changes if the moratorium would only be for primary forests. Even without the moratorium, primary forests have been declared as protected areas," he told (3) the Jakarta Post.

The draft decree from the Ministry of Forestry allows conversion of forests on peat that is less than three metres deep. This means no change from business as usual, as it is already illegal to convert forest on peat deeper than three metres in Indonesia, although this law is often broken by the palm oil and pulp and paper industries.

It gets worse. The Ministry of Forestry draft decree only applies to new contracts. The moratorium applies to "new conversion permits for primary forests and peatland for two years". Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan appears to have already decided which of the draft decrees will be signed. In January 2011, he told (4) Antara News that "The moratorium will apply to primary and peat forests," although he did not clarify that forests on peat less than three metres deep could still be destroyed.

Another important part of the Indonesia-Norway REDD deal involves establishing a "degraded lands database". This is no easy task, because what may appear to one person (a forester, for example) as "degraded forest" may be "recovering forest" to another person (a villager managing their community forest or rotational swidden fields, for example).

But even before work on the degraded lands database has started, the Ministry of Forestry's Hadi Daryanto has already decided how much "degraded land" can be destroyed and converted to industrial tree plantations. While the discussion about the various draft decrees was in full flow, he announced (5) that "Indonesia has 35.4 million hectares of degraded forest that we can designate as agricultural and forest concessions."

On 2 January 2011, the Jakarta Globe reported that the Ministry had already decided (6) that 500,000 hectares of concessions are to be issued this year in "previously logged areas".

According to the head of the REDD-plus task force, Kuntoro Mungkusubroto, part of the reason for the delay in implementing the moratorium was lobbying by business interests. He told (7) Antara News that "Our move [on the forest moratorium] has been sharply observed by lobbyists such as mining companies and oil palm plantations." On 14 January 2011, a group of nine Indonesian-based NGOs put out a press release (8) demanding that the moratorium "be freed from the intervention and pressure of business, politics and corporations." The NGOs are calling for a review of all forest concessions: "100% of the issued permits of forestry business and forestry-related sectors".

Three years ago, Indonesia's President Yudhoyono spoke at the UN climate conference in Bali. "The world is watching," he said. "I beg you, do not let them down." Now the world is watching Yudhoyono to see whether he signs a decree for a two-year logging moratorium or allows loopholes in the legislation big enough to drive a fleet of bulldozers through.

By Chris Lang, <http://chrislang.org>

* This article was written one month ago. The Indonesian government has failed to make any progress on implementing the moratorium since then.

(1) <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2010/05/28/norway-indonesia-forest-deal-us1-billion-dollars-worth-of-continued-deforestation/>

(2) <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2011/01/12/indonesia-the-two-draft-decrees/>

(3) <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/01/17/moratorium-won't-hamper-investment.html>

(4) <http://www.antaranews.com/en/news/66951/govt-to-implement-forest-conversion-moratorium-in-january>

(5) <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/forest-concessions-to-be-granted-in-logged-land/414654>

(6) <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/forest-concessions-to-be-granted-in-logged-land/414654>

(7) <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/01/12/business-interests-blamed-forest-moratorium-delay.html>

(8) <http://chrislang.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/press-release-english-version.pdf>

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- India: POSCO project approved but the struggle continues

On January 31, 2011, the Indian movement POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (POSCO Resistance Struggle Movement) issued a press release to denounce Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh's decision to approve the POSCO India Steel-Power Production-Captive Port project (http://wrm.org.uy/countries/India/OK_POSCO_project.pdf).

In previous bulletins (see WRM Bulletins 147, 155, 157) we have disseminated the struggle of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti against the massive project of Pohang Steel Company (POSCO), a Korean concern largely held by US financial institutions

already infamous for their lack of social responsibility: Citigroup, Credit Suisse, JP Morgan and Chase.

As the press release of the Indian social movement describes, the company plans to establish “the largest industrial project ever conceived in human history: a 12 MTPA steel plant backed by captive power plant; a captive port (described as “small” but designed to receive the largest commercial ships ever built - of Capesize variety); a large township to accommodate over 100,000 people; a large captive mine in Kandadhar endangering the lives and livelihoods of one of the most traditional tribal communities among many, the Paudi Bhuiyan, (600 MT for local processing and 400 MT for export over 30 years); fresh water intake from over 100 kms away (while denying drinking water to many towns and cities and denying water to large areas of farmland) and extensive road and rail infrastructure to support the project”.

The impacts of the megaproject are huge: it will occupy 4,000 acres of pristine coastal and deltaic ecosystems in Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa State including coastal forests. Over 22,000 people will be directly displaced by the steel plant alone. More than 50,000 livelihoods will be affected. Meanwhile POSCO will pay a pittance royalty for the iron ore extracted and will get unprecedented profits from the plunder of India's natural resources. The amount of loss will be huge in the mining area if the permission for mining is given.

There have been tremendous solidarity processes for the ground resistance that the POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti has been spearheading for more than five years now often facing state repression. This has helped in building a strong pressure group at national and international levels. More recently, two studies looking at the technical sides of the project vis-à-vis its impact on the people and biodiversity carried out by Mining Zone Peoples' Solidarity Group and Environmental Support Group brought out major loopholes not only in the planning of the project but also in the whole intent of the project. Various social formations such as POSCO Pratirodh Solidarity with activists, academics, journalists, researchers and others has been providing much needed inputs to the struggle on a sustained basis. The National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW) and Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) have been bringing forth the issue of non-implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 in the project area by the state and have condemned the decision by the MoEF clearing the project despite two of its own committees recommending against it. This permission goes against the letter and spirit of the so called historic Forest Rights Act of 2006.

The Indian communities in Orissa are well aware that with this steel project, POSCO would regain its total investment in only 8 years while precious resources – fertile farmland, iron ore and water – will be plundered. “What India would be left with is the toxic residue of its dirty ore processing, while the refined ore (perhaps not even the finished steel) would be exported to Korea and elsewhere to add more value to POSCO's profits. This is not merely a flight of the nation's natural wealth but also a massive planned political exercise for erosion of financial resources with questionable legal sanction” claim POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti.

That is why even though POSCO's project in Orissa has been approved, Pratirodh Sangram Samiti announces that "the struggle against POSCO in Jagatsinghpur will continue. The struggle against exploitation of tribal, farming and fishing communities of Orissa will continue".

Indian social movements across the country have initiated multiple actions at various levels, showing solidarity to the movement against POSCO and press the Government to scrap the project.

Article based on information provided by Mamata Dash, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), e-mail: mamata68@gmail.com

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- APP and Cartiere Pigna try to intimidate social denounces in Italy of deforestation in Indonesia

Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) is a giant pulp and paper company with a notorious eco-criminal record. It is responsible of deforesting Indonesian forests and peatlands in Riau province, Sumatra, destroying the territory and livelihoods of indigenous communities who have been living there for centuries and threatening the survival of some of them as well as leading Sumatran tigers, elephants and orangutans to the verge of extinction. On top of that APP has been causing the emission of millions of tons of greenhouse gas liberated from the clearance of peat forests that once the soil is drained it oxidizes. As a result Indonesia occupies the third place (behind China and the U.S.) of greenhouse gas emitters. All this destruction serves the purpose of supplying wood to markets mainly in Northern countries.

Aware that consumption is equally responsible for the state of forests, forest people and global climate, last year the Italian environmental organization Terra! exposed the link between the Italian paper manufacturer Cartiere Pigna and the deforestation of Indonesian rainforests carried out by APP (<http://www.terraonlus.it/en/forests/274-pigna-foreste> and <http://www.terraonlus.it/en/forests/314-cartiere-pigna-legate-al-colosso-cartario-asiatico-app>).

Cartiere Pigna's reaction was to deny any link with the Indonesian company APP and to sue Terra! for slander and damages to its corporate reputation. Terra! produced not only details of billing documents that prove that Pigna is a customer of APP but also test results (via IPS testing) proving that Pigna's products contain fibres coming from tropical deforestation (mixed tropical hardwood) and from plantations related to deforestation (acacia).

Despite Pigna had to admit it was a customer of APP, due to technicalities and convoluted laws Terra! was convicted for having told the truth and sentenced to pay €20,000 plus expenses, thereby putting the association at risk of closure.

Behind Pigna, APP is trying to intimidate any critical voice and this sets a very dangerous precedent for the social groups and movements as well as the civil society as a whole who has to watch every corporate activity that puts in peril the

whole world.

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DEFINING FORESTS

- Let's say it in every language

In our first bulletin of the year, in light of the fact that 2011 has been declared the International Year of Forests, we shared with you the idea of defining the forest by its true meaning, as a diverse ecosystem that sustains countless forms and ways of life, rich in colours, textures, aromas and sounds.

We're not looking for a technical, dictionary definition. Our idea is to collectively construct a mosaic of meanings, experiences and dreams, images, poems and songs, and even fears, that speak about forests. A friend of WRM from Chile wrote to tell us, "If the forests ever disappear, that is when we will know true hell on earth."

We've posted a short video on our website (<http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests.html>) that vividly illustrates what is NOT a forest. Perhaps it will serve as inspiration. We'd like it to reach as many people as possible, by translating it into as many languages as possible, and that's where you come in.

How would you say it in Guaraní, in Mandarin, in Quechua, in Japanese, in Russian, in Arabic, in German, in Hindi, in Thai, in Catalan, in Aymara, in Euskara, in Malay, in Swahili, in Bahasa Indonesia, in...? Send us your translation at wrm@wrm.org.uy !

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