



## Issue 171 - October 2011

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### OUR VIEWPOINT

#### **- Food sovereignty and the new “discovery” of biodiversity**

For thousands of years, different peoples in the most disparate parts of the world – especially women, but also men – have guaranteed food sovereignty based on the biodiversity of the regions where they live. Through their wisdom and knowledge, they were able to distinguish and use an abundance of seeds, roots, fruits, leaves, trees, shrubs, medicinal plants, animals, fish and much more.

But our so-called modern world has managed to drastically reduce the world's wealth of biodiversity, by introducing large-scale monoculture plantations for the production

of food and products such as timber.

While those who defend the monoculture model argue that it has led to the production of more grains, and more food, there has also been a clear loss of food sovereignty.

It seems rather odd that over the last few decades, and especially more recently, biodiversity has once again captured the interest of the big corporations who so vigorously defend monocultures and who have largely contributed to reducing biodiversity. Why?

In addition to the patenting of seeds, which has been underway for years, big capital has set its sights on other elements of biodiversity more recently – particularly as these elements grow increasingly scarce, such as water, climate regulation, soil conservation, etc.

The different articles in this month's bulletin address the new threat posed by the “rediscovery” of biodiversity by transnational corporations, for example, as they seek to cash in on the sale of environmental services. This can have profound impacts on people's lives, as we see in the case of the UK-based New Forests Company and its activities in Uganda, which are even backed with the “green label” of FSC certification. To make way for the company's monoculture tree plantations, no fewer than 22,000 people were evicted from their lands, all for the ulterior motive of selling carbon credits, thereby drastically compromising the food sovereignty of an entire population.

We dedicate this bulletin to the communities who are fighting back against the attempts to commodify nature and to defend their territories with all of their biodiversity. We support La Via Campesina which, earlier in this month of October, together with other organizations, pressured FAO and especially the Committee on World Food Security to prohibit land grabbing, the large-scale appropriation of land by investors, governments and foreign companies, which is happening primarily in Africa. This perverse process promotes monoculture agriculture, agrofuel production and the appropriation and sale of environmental services. According to Oxfam, some 227 million hectares of land have already been sold, leased or licensed, an area the size of northwest Europe, demonstrating the profound social and environmental injustice of this model. We firmly back the call for FAO to adopt measures to guarantee the rights of small farmers to the land and natural resources.

We will wrap up with a piece of good news that is motivating and encouraging: we congratulate our sister organization GRAIN, which has worked for many years to denounce the destruction of biodiversity and defend food sovereignty, for being recognized with the 2011 Right Livelihood Award for its ongoing efforts against land grabbing and in defence of small farmers.

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## **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND BIODIVERSITY**

### **- Forests and food sovereignty: Voices of the sons and daughters of the forest**

Food sovereignty, which is centred on local autonomy, local markets and community

action, and encompasses issues like agrarian reform, territorial control, biodiversity, cooperation, health and many others connected to food production, has become a process of grassroots resistance. And, as we noted in WRM Bulletin 115, its conceptualization is not only deeply rooted in the social movements fuelling these struggles, but is also an opportunity to bind them together in a common agreement over objectives and actions.

We also stressed that the same processes that are threatening peasant farming – the advance of agroindustry and large-scale monoculture plantations for export; the destruction of biodiversity through the imposition of transgenic crops; the oil-dependent energy model involving production processes that poison and destroy everything around them; the fencing in of areas of high biodiversity for use in the tourism industry or for biopiracy (the appropriation of the knowledge and genetic resources of local communities by corporations who seek exclusive monopoly control over these resources and knowledge through patents or intellectual property) – also threaten and impact on forest communities. And when a forest is destroyed, a space for food sovereignty is also destroyed.

This means that the struggle in defence of forests also becomes a struggle for food sovereignty, because for forest communities, the forest is everything. Among other things, it is the place where they obtain food, in ways that are environmentally, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their particular circumstances, as recognized by the concept of food sovereignty.

At WRM, for many years we have denounced the fatal deception initially put forward by FAO, and then endorsed by other international agencies, of classifying industrial monoculture tree plantations as a type of “forest”. While this could seem to be a simple error in its definition, it has extremely serious consequences, because it has paved the way for replacing valuable and biodiverse ecosystems, including real forests, with alleged “planted forests”, that is, monoculture tree plantations.

This year we undertook a campaign to “define forests by their real meaning”, which included the production of a testimonial video to record the voices of people who live in and from the forest in different countries and continents – men and women, indigenous people and peasant farmers – who talk about the importance of forests in their own lives. We consider it to be a faithful reflection of the voices of the forest.

And these voices need to be heard. From the rainforest (in the state of Paraná , Brazil), Jonas Aparecido de Souza tells us:

*“The forest gives the community everything it needs, from good quality water, and the food that can be gathered from it, to the wood from the forest that is used to build the homes of most of the families. The forest gives plants that can be used as medicine, for communities who have the knowledge of how to use them. It gives seeds for making crafts, which means it generates income for families. It also gives soil. Its soil is always enriched by the way the families use the forest to grow their own food. And so the forest is everything that is good for the community. (...) If they take the forest away from us, these families will completely lose their autonomy, they will not be able to survive here. They will have to leave, to move somewhere else that is not compatible with their way of life, they will have to migrate to the city, move to the outskirts of the city and build a*

*new way of life that they are not accustomed to. (...) When these families leave the forest areas and move to other places that are not in harmony with their way of life, their culture, they go through a process of dehumanization, they lose their identity as forest peoples.”*

The chief of a Bakumbule community in the Walikale territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) tells us:

*“The forest has many benefits for us. The forest protects us, it gives us air; we cultivate the land there and this allows us to feed ourselves. In the forest we eat meat, the meat of wild animals. There is meat of all kinds, and all types of edible plants. We eat all of this and we also gather other things to be well nourished and get all the proteins we need. After eating, we go to the forest to wash ourselves. When we look at the forest, we know that our happiness is there. Right now our situation is difficult because there was a war and we are going through a very complicated time, but as soon as I can get back to my forest, we will all be healthy, because there we will find everything we need to feed ourselves and live well.”*

For Francisca, an Arara indigenous woman from the rainforest in Acre, Brazil,

*“the forest is important because it is where we get our fruit, our food. It is where we get our clean drinking water, and where we raise our children. Our parents raised us here all together, getting our sustenance from the forest. (...) We are very frightened that the forest will disappear and the Arara will have to move to the city. Life is very difficult there. We will have to buy industrialized food, or beg or prostitute ourselves because we don't have enough money to buy food. Today we breathe the clean air from the forest and we have clean water and food, and what we need to build our houses. (...) Even though we still have a big forest, we can feel the effects on our land of other forests being cut down, of the plantations, of the changes that are taking place. The rivers are already not like they used to be. We are worried, we don't know what we are going to do even if we preserve this small amount of forest compared to all the trees that are being cut down. Some say that they are going to reforest, but we know that a reforested area can never be like the virgin forest that was born there. It is very different.”*

On different continents, from different communities, in different languages, the feelings and visions they express are nonetheless very similar.

From a Pygmy indigenous community in the province of Kivu Norte, in the Walikale territory of the DRC, a community leader who works in defence of the province's indigenous peoples tells us that the forest and the indigenous peoples could be described as “inseparable friends” because:

*“the life of a Pygmy depends 100 percent on the forest, because the forest is our home par excellence. I can state that without the forest, there can be no life for indigenous peoples. In addition to all of the activities for the production of food, we indigenous peoples use our traditional knowledge to protect and manage the forest, and we carry out activities in the forest that are part of our own unique culture. This means that the disappearance of the forest would mean the total disappearance of the indigenous peoples.”*

Lucas, of the Manchineri indigenous people, lives in the rainforest in Acre, Brazil. For him, the forest is important because:

*“it is where we live, it is where we get our sustenance. The forest is life for us. (...) While the forest is standing, there are various types of animals that we can eat, and we also have our crops that we carefully manage.”*

If the forest disappears, he says,

*“we will have nowhere left to go to look for the resources we need, we will be left without a protector, because for the Manchineri people, the forest is our protector. There will be a lot of health problems and a shortage of food in our indigenous territory.”*

Mijak is an “Orang Rimbo”, which in the Jambi language means forest people. He lives in Makekal Ulu, one of the areas inhabited by the Orang Rimbo around Bukit 12 National Park in Indonesia. Mijak believes that:

*“our community life depends on the forest. If it is damaged or destroyed, then our traditions and our culture will disappear.”*

Finally, a woman from the community of Katobo in the Walikale territory of the DRC stresses why women especially need the forest:

*“Because that is where we find everything we need to feed our families. And if someone tells us to leave the forest, we would be very angry, because we can't imagine a life that is not in the forest or next to it. In the forest we gather firewood, we plant crops. We have different types of vegetables, and also edible plants and fruit. Women catch crabs and fish in the streams. There are all kinds of animals to hunt and all kinds of things that we eat and which give us strength and energy, proteins and everything else we need to live well.”*

The concept of food sovereignty has grown, deepened and transcended beyond agriculture to reach the forest, one of the most diverse and prolific land ecosystems, a source of nutrition and food for the people who live with the forests and for the entire planet. That is why the struggle for food sovereignty is also the struggle for the defence of forests. And defending the forests requires, among other things, defining them by their true meaning.

We invite you to watch and share the video produced for the WRM campaign for a true definition of forests – “Forests, Much More Than A Lot of Trees” – at:

[http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/Forests\\_Much\\_more\\_than\\_a%20lot\\_of\\_trees.html](http://www.wrm.org.uy/forests/Forests_Much_more_than_a%20lot_of_trees.html)

(currently subtitled in English, available soon in other languages)

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## **- Food sovereignty is not possible without biodiversity**

Over the years, the establishment of large-scale monoculture plantations for food production has been accompanied by the so-called Green Revolution “technology package”, leading to the poisoning and impoverishment of biodiversity. This has had

particularly serious impacts on women, because in many communities around the world, they are primarily responsible for providing their families with health care, water and food – activities that are closely linked to the conservation of biodiversity.

At the same time that a large part of this biodiversity has been lost, monoculture plantations of genetically modified soy, corn, eucalyptus trees, etc. have been introduced and expanded. Through the definitions they use, official organizations like FAO have supported and strengthened the monoculture plantation model, by qualifying genetically engineered eucalyptus plantations as “forests”, showing a total lack of consideration of the enormous biodiversity of a real forest.

The large-scale monoculture plantation model has been promoted on the basis of its alleged “productivity”, which has nonetheless not succeeded in preventing approximately one billion people from suffering from hunger in the world today. It should also be stressed that this “productivity” has been seriously called into question, even by the scientific community. The largest study on this issue carried out in the United States found that organic agriculture, without the use of chemical products, is far superior to the conventional model in terms of crop yields and viability (1). What's more, it is a fact that small-scale peasant farmers, despite all of the pressures they face, continue to produce most of the food consumed by the world's population.

And it was precisely those small-scale peasant farmers, gathered together in the international organization La Via Campesina, who developed the concept of food sovereignty in the early 1990s. Food sovereignty is an umbrella concept that encompasses approaches aimed at confronting and creating alternatives to the neoliberal policies that sustain the mainstream development paradigm, based on trade and industrial agriculture and food production. These policies, largely channelled through the international “framework” established by the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other international bodies responsible for global economic and financial policy-making, have been responsible for, among other things, the ongoing expulsion of small-scale farmers from the countryside and the growing control wielded by a few transnational corporations over the entire production chain, from the production of seeds to the sale of grains – factors that have severely undermined food sovereignty.

Under the same logic, a process has been underway for several decades that involves the appropriation and privatization of the world's seeds by a handful of transnational Western corporations, known as “patenting”. Today, many peasant farmers are forced to purchase seeds, paying royalties to the corporations that “own” them. This means the loss of their autonomy in the reproduction of life on the land, and bigger profits for the corporations. And for the corporations it is strategic to gain control over all of the seeds to continue guaranteeing their supply to farmers.

More recently we have seen the emergence of the concept of so-called “environmental services”, which entails the commercialization of elements of biodiversity such as water, climate regulation and soil conservation, and even their incorporation into stock markets, opening the way to “speculation” with nature. The fact that the value of these services will necessarily depend on supply and demand leads to an especially perverse logic: the greater the destruction of the environment, the

greater the demand for and profitability of an “environmental service”. And all of this is called the “green economy”.

What does this mean for local communities, and above all, for biodiversity and food sovereignty?

It means more pressure on the natural resources and biodiversity on which these communities depend, and in turn, the further expulsion of thousands more people. And even in cases when they are allowed to remain, these communities are cut off from access to these natural resources and biodiversity. It is a lack of respect for their culture and a threat to their food sovereignty when, for example, they are prohibited from planting subsistence crops – something that is already happening in various parts of the world. The result is the loss of control over their territory and the loss of their autonomy.

That is why today, it is extremely important for communities to fully understand the “green” proposals made to them, from the REDD+ forest carbon mechanism to the sale of environmental services. These initiatives are generally presented as something good, which will supposedly benefit the community and improve the environment. In reality, they are mechanisms which, through their very logic, tend to worsen the global environment, and which, because of the control they seek to exercise over the territories of indigenous, traditional and rural communities, profoundly impact on the food sovereignty of millions of people throughout the world who want to preserve their ways of life.

( 1) See <http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/fst30years>

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### **- Nyéléni: A woman's name for the struggle for Food Sovereignty**

In Africa there is a story that has been passed down through the years about a woman from Mali named Nyéléni, who challenged patriarchal power by excelling at something that was considered “men's work”: agriculture. As well as defeating her male opponents in farming competitions, she also managed to overcome the arid climate and domesticate crops like fonio and samio, which made it possible to feed the whole population of Mali .

The Forums on Food Sovereignty, first organized in 2007 in Mali by La Via Campesina and other social organizations to reaffirm the foundations of the concept of food sovereignty, are called Nyéléni Forums in her honour. Her name has also been given to the newsletter created as a tool for communication and exchange to support the struggle for food sovereignty.

The Nyéléni Newsletter ([www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)) has now reached its first anniversary, and marked it by recalling, “Day by day, women face problems due to the fact of being women. Either in the countryside or in the city, they are faced with an economic system that discriminates them since it is both a capitalist and patriarchal system. This system is based on the division between production and reproduction. Market

activities are considered part of the production, and the tasks usually done by women are considered part of the reproduction, thus making invisible the link between both.”

However, it goes on to stress, “In contrast with this division, feminist economy broadens the notion of *labor* (1) once again and differentiates it from the notion of *employment* (paid work or market work) in order to include the biological and social reproduction tasks in the definition of *labor*, i.e. housework, community work, care. Food Sovereignty is also part of this notion, since it recognizes the fundamental work done by women, and it also implies the redistribution and equality of tasks between all the household members.”

From this perspective, agribusiness is a highly illustrative example of how the patriarchal and capitalist economy, based on a corporate model of exploitation and concentration, causes impacts on the lives of women, “from the most evident social costs, such as the displacement of peasants, or the ones related to labor exploitation in general, to the most invisible ones, that are related – for example – to the sexual division of labor. In the highly mechanized sectors, like soy and sugar cane production, the most qualified jobs are done by men, while women do support tasks, such as cleaning or cooking. Meanwhile, in intensive sectors like fruit and flowers, women are hired for their ability to carry out delicate tasks (such as fruit packaging) without there being a specific economic retribution for that: in fact, young women are usually hired for a meagre salary without enjoying workers' rights.”

On industrial eucalyptus plantations, women are typically hired to work with the seedlings in nurseries – a delicate task – or in the application of chemical herbicides and pesticides, since they are considered to be more “responsible” than men, even though this poses greater health risks for them.

One of the articles in Nyéléni Newsletter Number 6 ([http://www.nyeleni.org/DOWNLOADS/newsletters/Nyeleni Newsletter Num 6 EN.pdf](http://www.nyeleni.org/DOWNLOADS/newsletters/Nyeleni%20Newsletter%20Num%206%20EN.pdf)) notes that in practice, the growing market economy tends to exacerbate already existing inequalities, both with regard to the labour exploitation associated with agribusiness and to differential access to land between men and women. According to FAO (2), as land becomes a marketable asset and available land becomes scarcer, male household and community members may undermine the access women previously enjoyed, particularly in the case of widowed and divorced women. Although on average they make up 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries (3), women own less than 15% of land worldwide (4). By denying women equal access to land – which should not necessarily be limited to private property, since it is possible to have rights over land through the lease of state land or through community land – their economic, social and political situation is negatively affected. This is directly linked with the patriarchal system, which provides that land is inherited on the father's side, and that women can only access land through their male children, husbands or their male relatives.

In the case of forest women, their eviction from their territories to make way for commercial projects and “protected area” initiatives has also led to their relative disempowerment, compared to their situation in the times when their peoples lived as hunters and gatherers. In those times, it is likely that collective rights over large areas of forest allowed women to exercise autonomy in their use of the land, and their



hunting or gathering rights did not depend on men. Today, in many situations the loss of access to the food resources formerly provided by the forest has had a heavy impact on women, who are primarily responsible for providing food for their families on a daily basis. This means that these projects not only impact on the situation of women, but also on the food sovereignty of their communities as a whole.

But women are fighting back, with Nyéléni as a symbol of the difficulties they must confront and overcome. Landless rural women workers of Brazil, expatriated in their own country and tired of living precariously, have stood up against the “green deserts” of eucalyptus plantations operated by Stora Enso, Fibria, Suzano and ArcelorMittal, financed by BNDES (see WRM Bulletin 165); in India, around 100 women leaders from seven states gathered in Dumka, in the state of Jharkhand, to hold a consultation on women's rights under the Forest Rights Act and to call for community governance, led by women, over the 7.5 million hectares of forest land (see WRM Bulletin 165); in Papua New Guinea, women have organized to more effectively fight back against the expansion of oil palm plantations (see WRM Bulletin 152); in Africa, they created the African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF) to promote women's rights to land and forest resources in West and Central Africa.

The struggle continues, and, as women in Argentina have declared (see WRM Bulletin Nº 158), “We will keep up our resistance and our struggle for as long as necessary, not only against the expansion of monoculture exotic tree plantations and pulp and paper industry megaprojects, but against all processes that entail the commodification of living beings and the disempowerment of women. We, the women, have the power to bring about something new, and we are doing it.”

1 – Since industrial development, “only paid work or freelance work is considered as labour, and therefore all non-paid activities done by household members to meet their own needs are not considered labour. This in fact restricts the original definition of labour to activities related with market labour.” (Cristina Carrasco, *La sostenibilidad de la vida humana, ¿un asunto de mujeres?*, 2001).

2 – A gender perspective on land rights: Equal footing, FAO, 2007

3 – FAO, 2011

4 – International Center for Research on Women, 2006

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## **- Terminator technology in agricultural crops and GEtrees: A threat to food sovereignty**

*I come from a family that considers seeds as something sacred. Back in my father's day, our neighbours could sleep peacefully, because they knew that my father had a safe supply of seeds to plant. (Family farmer, Paraíba)*

Seeds are a farmer's greatest heritage. They are the basis of agricultural production, and therefore, of the food supply of any nation. For ten thousand years, communities of small farmers, indigenous peoples and traditional peoples have freely improved

and multiplied their seeds, making the exchange of seeds a moment of joining together and sharing between peoples and nations.

It is for this very reason that international agreements like the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) (Articles 5, 6 and 9) and the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) (Articles 10 c and 8 j) protect and encourage the strengthening of customary practices such as the on-farm storage, exchange, sale and improvement of seeds by farmers, practices that are fundamental for the conservation of the biodiversity and agrobiodiversity of the world's countries.

It is only over the last 40 to 50 years that seeds have become a big business; minor changes made by multinationals can now be patented, and seeds, which were always freely traded, have been privatized, and transferred from the hands of farmers – and therefore, the citizens of each country – into the hands of big corporations.

Today, with the development of genetically engineered (GE) seeds, corporations have developed a technology that gives them total and absolute control over seeds, turning small farmers and even large agro-industrial producers into hostages of the multinationals in order to obtain their seeds. Our food supply will be controlled by four or five companies that control more than 60% of the world seed market. This new technology is called Terminator.

*My father always had the custom of storing seeds. He would plant one year, and then he would select seeds and shell them, all by hand. I remember that I used to help him, it was nice shelling the seeds like that. So imagine, with seeds like those, it would mean the end of a tradition that goes back years and years, because they couldn't be used again. (Family farmer, Paraná)*

Terminator technology involves the genetic engineering of plants so that they produce seeds with sterile offspring, which therefore cannot reproduce. The scientific name for this is Genetic Use Restriction Technologies, or GURTs. Terminator seeds cannot be saved from one harvest and used to plant the next season, since they will not germinate, because they are dead.

*It's as if we were also programmed to die. As if we knew that we were going to die at a determined moment. As if we were only here for a short time; once the harvest was finished, we would die. That's the way they're programming the seeds. (Family farmer, São Paulo )*

### ***What are the possible consequences of this technology?***

An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group was established by the United Nations to assess the potential impacts of GURTs on small farmers and indigenous and traditional communities, and concluded that they pose a serious threat to the food sovereignty and food security of these communities.

The possible impacts of Terminator technology identified in the group's report include the following:

- May reduce and limit traditional seed exchange practices
- May reduce the knowledge and local innovation capacity of local and

- indigenous communities for crop improvement
- Could reduce or negatively affect local agrobiodiversity, and result in a deterioration of indigenous knowledge systems
- May cause seed dependency or crop failure
- Could negatively and irreversibly create changes in the environment caused by gene flow between Terminator varieties and normal plants.

The most recent justification for the use of GURTs is that they can serve as a “biosecurity measure” to prevent the cross-contamination of conventional or organic plants by transgenic varieties.

This proposal is particularly perverse, since it could lead to the following scenario for small farmers and local communities. Even if we accept that there will be no continuity of contamination, the fact is that there is contamination in the first generation, and conventional or organic farmers whose crops are affected will lose their seeds from that point onwards, since they would be contaminated by Terminator varieties. In other words, while the contamination will not be passed on, it is precisely because the farmer's seeds that have been contaminated will also become sterile.

For these and other reasons, the 193 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity established an international moratorium on Terminator technology or GURTs through Decision V/5 of the year 2000. This moratorium has been renewed in subsequent meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) and its maintenance was supported by the Brazilian government at the last meeting, COP 10 in Nagoya, Japan in 2010, in line with Notice No. 10/DEMA/CGFOME/AFEPA/SEAN BRAS, issued by the Environment Division of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry on April 23, 2010.

*This is a technology that takes away the autonomy of small farmers, because it will only strengthen the big companies that will produce the seeds. It will take away the possibility for farmers to select seeds and save them in the way they have traditionally done, the way they learned from their fathers, from their mothers, from their grandparents. (Family farmer, Maranhão)*

### **What is the status of Terminator technology in Brazil ?**

Brazil 's Biosecurity Law currently prohibits “the use, sale, registration, patenting and licensing of genetic use restriction technologies” (Law 11.105, Article 6) which involve the production of sterile reproductive structures or the activation or deactivation of fertility-related plant genes by external chemical inducers.

Nevertheless, despite the international moratorium and the current national prohibition, there are two bills in the Brazilian Congress aimed at authorizing the release of Terminator seeds in Brazil . Bill 268/07 was originally tabled by Senator Katia Abreu (Democratic Party-State of Goias) and is now sponsored by Deputy Eduardo Sciarra (Democratic Party-State of Parana). In 2009, Deputy Cândido Vacarezza (Workers' Party PT-State of Sao Paulo), who had never before been involved in the agricultural sector, introduced Bill 5575/09 which would allow the release of Terminator seeds. Last year, the Campaign for a GMO-Free Brazil revealed that the file of the text of the bill available on the Chamber of Deputies website had been originally drafted on the computer of an attorney from the Monsanto corporation! This clearly demonstrates the

interests that are pushing for this proposed legislation. The bill has been highly challenged while making its way through the Chamber of Deputies, and now the creation of a special commission has been proposed to speed up the process.

*First of all, there will be poverty. Because, just think about it, think about us, the small farmers, how do we make a living? From our own seeds! We can't buy seeds, we produce our own seeds, ourselves. So imagine the poverty this could bring about. Because farmers will not be able to plant the seeds they have, their own seeds. Instead of helping farmers, this will only bring more poverty. (Family farmer, Paraná)*

*I think that in Brazil there would be a very big impact from the loss of our seeds. Above all it would create dependence, since farmers would have to buy seeds every year from the multinationals. For us this would be a major step back in the cultural progress of our communities. And also because today, it is small farmers who sustain Brazil, and for us, who store seeds as soon as we harvest them, it isn't possible to buy new seeds every year. (Family farmer, Paraná)*

In Brazil there is ever growing pressure for the approval of GE trees. Although these are viewed warily by the majority of parties to the CBD, the pressure exerted by a few countries succeeded in opening up the possibility for each country to decide on its own account and at its own risk whether to authorize their release. The risks are even greater, since the pollen from the trees travels much greater distances, increasing the threat of contamination. The increasingly greater demand for wood pulp and the advances in synthetic biology for research into the use of pulp as agrofuel has led the transnationals to further step up the pressure for the approval of transgenic eucalyptus, which is already under consideration by the National Biosafety Technical Commission (CTNBio).

The approval of Terminator technology could be linked to this process, since one of the “arguments” for it, as we mentioned earlier, is that if all GE trees were also Terminator trees, this could prevent the contamination of other trees. However, according to researchers, the technology is highly unstable and subject to many flaws, and so even specimens programmed not to germinate could germinate anyway, maintaining the risk of contamination.

In both Brazil and other countries, there is a need for widespread social mobilization to stop the release of this technology at all costs. Beyond the obvious risks posed by genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in environmental, social and human health terms, the release of Terminator technology could represent a final sentence in terms of the total dependence of farmers on transnationals and the total control of the latter over agricultural and timber production in our countries, leaving the fate of our agriculture, our farmers and our food at the mercy of their economic interests.

*The impact will be felt by the entire country, because it is a question of food security. Everything will be in the hands of a half dozen corporations in the world that dominate this technology, which places millions of people under dependency on this technology, and they are going to do whatever they want. We have never needed this; if we have managed to get to where we are today, it is because the way things have always been done, naturally, was the right way. (Family farmer, Santa Catarina)*

By Julian Perez-Cassarino, Terminate Terminator Campaign, Brazil; and Larissa Packer, Terra de Direitos, Brazil.

*\*The testimonials were taken from the video "Terminator: sementes transgênicas da morte" (Terminator: Transgenic seeds of death); to acquire the video, contact: [julianperez7@gmail.com](mailto:julianperez7@gmail.com)*

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## THREATS TO SOVEREIGNTY

### **- Uganda: New Forests Company – FSC legitimizes the eviction of thousands of people from their land and the sale of carbon credits**

Oxfam International recently released an eye-opening report on the activities of UK-based New Forests Company (NFC) in Uganda. The company currently plants and harvests timber on 27,000 hectares of tree plantations in Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Mozambique, and has deals in these countries totalling around 90,000 hectares. It claims that the timber produced can satisfy all the population's needs, thereby preventing logging in natural forests. In Uganda it has planted around 9,300 hectares of pine and eucalyptus trees since 2006, on land licensed to the company by the government.

NFC has acquired considerable financing for its operations: five million euro from the European Investment Bank (EIB) for the expansion of one of its plantations in Uganda, and another USD 6.7 million from the Agri-Vie Agribusiness Fund, a private equity investment fund backed by the World Bank, among others. However, the largest investment in the company's activities comes from a private bank, HSBC, a sum of around USD 10 million.

As if all of these funds provided by investors were not enough, NFC now wants to bring in even more money through the sale of the environmental service of carbon sequestration, through so-called carbon credits under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Polluting companies in the North will be able to continue producing carbon emissions and aggravating the climate crisis by purchasing credits generated by the carbon supposedly "stored" in the trees planted by NFC.

Although the company claims to uphold strict social and environmental standards, and despite the fact that its plantations are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the Oxfam researchers discovered that between 2006 and 2010, more than 22,000 people were evicted from their lands in the districts of Kiboga and Mubende, in some cases with the use of violence, to make way for the NFC plantations. The company admits that people had to be moved, but it denies taking part in the evictions.

Many of these more than 22,000 people say they had lived for more than 40 years on their land, where there was functioning infrastructure including health centres and schools. According to NFC, however, only 31 families had legal title to their land, and

the rest were living there “illegally”, and regarded by the company as “encroachers”.

The report published by Oxfam (1) shows that the people living in these areas were not consulted, while highlighting the desperation that they feel, now that they have been left landless and without prospects. In some cases, their homes and crops were simply destroyed. The food sovereignty of the entire population in two districts was profoundly impacted. One of the people evicted told Oxfam: “I have lost what I owned. Where I am now, my kids cry every day. I cannot sustain them and they do not go to school. Even eating has become a problem.”

In the meantime, in the Project Design Document submitted by NFC to the UN in 2011 in order to be able to sell carbon credits, the company claims that these people vacated their land “voluntarily and peacefully”. Other investors have told Oxfam that the project is coherent with their social and environmental standards and safeguards.

Oxfam is calling for a full independent investigation of the events in Kiboga and Mubende to identify those responsible for the violations that took place, and for fair compensation for those who suffered these abuses.

What we find most striking is that even if the company's actions were entirely legal, as they claim, they were in no way moral or ethical, in light of the testimonies and stories of the people evicted from the lands where they had lived for many years. What occurred was a horrendous violation of the rights of these people.

What is also striking is that NFC managed to obtain FSC certification for its plantations, which allegedly vouches for a company's “socially beneficial” practices. In an audit report conducted in 2010, the FSC declared with regard to the evictions that “the company has followed peaceful means and acted responsibly.” This is yet further proof of the way the FSC empowers large companies like NFC and contributes to the weakening and uprooting of local communities impacted by the monoculture tree plantations it certifies. Worse still, it is actually even capable of legitimizing the eviction of no fewer than 22,000 people!

And if all of this were not enough, the FSC has ended up endorsing what is perhaps the British company's main motivation for this undertaking in an African country: the future profits it can obtain for its headquarters in London and its shareholders through the sale of the environmental service of “carbon sequestration”.

For more information on the NFC plantations in Uganda, see the full Oxfam case study, on which this article was based, at: <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/new-forests-company-and-its-uganda-plantations-oxfam-case-study>

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### **- Uruguay: Pulp plantations threaten dairy heartland**

The Uruguayan economy is largely dependent on agriculture and livestock raising, in which the dairy industry plays an important role. The production of milk and other dairy products is mainly concentrated in three departments, two of which – San José and Colonia – present a diverse collection of family farms and an organized local society

that have achieved favourable levels of income and quality of life, making this one of the most productive and successful regions in rural Uruguay.

But this situation is now threatened by the expansion of the pulp industry, which drives out other economic activities due to the occupation of vast areas of land that it entails.

Montes del Plata, a joint venture created by the Chilean corporation Arauco and the Swedish-Finnish pulp and paper giant Stora Enso, owns 235,000 hectares of land in Uruguay and is currently constructing what will become the largest pulp mill in the country. This mill is being built in the department of Colonia, one of the centres of the country's dairy industry, in southwest Uruguay.

In the pulp industry, it is well known that the costs of transporting logs from where they are harvested to the mill is one of the main factors determining the financial "success" of the operation. In this case, the tree plantations that would supply the raw material for the mill are located more than 200 kilometres away, primarily in the departments of Río Negro, Paysandú and Soriano, which represents a major inconvenience for the company.

Recently, the efforts of a federal prosecutor led to the public revelation of a secret investment contract, through which the national government has granted a series of exclusive and extraordinary benefits to Montes del Plata (see WRM Bulletin 166).

A press release from the Uruguayan organization Grupo Guayubira (1) reports that the benefits secretly negotiated between the government and Montes del Plata include the government's pledge that it will "make every possible effort to obtain a 'forestable' area of 100,000 hectares [of new land designated as suitable for forestation] where plantations can be established within a 200-kilometre radius of the future mill."

To do this, the authorities would have to reclassify the soils on lands that up until now have served for the successful production of dairy products, so that they can be included on the list of soils suitable for tree plantations. This move enormously benefits Montes del Plata, since it could plant trees within 200 kilometres of its pulp mill, thus significantly cutting transportation costs.

In the department of San José, this change in soil classification could potentially mean that 22% of its land surface could be used for monoculture tree plantations, an area of 109,163 hectares of land.

In the case of Colonia, the proportion could be 27% of the land area, or 164,251 hectares reclassified for the establishment of plantations.

The Grupo Guayubira press release warns that the arrival in these two departments of tree plantations for pulp production – an activity that takes up extensive areas of land in comparison with the current agricultural and livestock production activities in that area– could put the survival of family farms in serious danger.

"Competition for land will undoubtedly raise the price of buying and leasing land, further aggravating a traditional problem in the dairy farming and intensive livestock raising areas in the southwest region of the country and increasing production costs. At the same time, all of the impacts and externalities of plantations will generate

numerous conflicts that will lead to a profound transformation of the region and local society. The region's leading economic activities – cheese production in Colonia and milk production in San José – will pay the price, and their inevitable contraction will undoubtedly be reflected in impacts on the dairy industry, exports, suppliers of inputs and services, and the labour demand,” the press release stresses.

Grupo Guayubira reports that the company has already begun to buy up parcels of land in the department of San José, and concludes its press release by urging the authorities not to undertake this new and harmful modification to the land use regulations of an “emblematic region” solely as a means of “increasing the profit yields of a very powerful corporation like Montes del Plata,” and calling on the government, the political system and the productive sectors to “discuss and review this measure to achieve genuine rural development.”

(1) “La cuenca lechera del Uruguay en jaque: 5.02 b es la clave”, press release, Grupo Guayubira, 25 October 2011, <http://www.guayubira.org.uy/2011/10/la-cuenca-lechera-del-uruguay-en-jaque-5-02-b-es-la-clave/>

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### **- Indonesia: Sources of livelihood threatened by REDD+, mining and oil palm projects**

The Dayak have inhabited the forest in Kalimantan for a long time before the current State of Indonesia was established. Their *adat* (custom) has ensured the integrity of the environment and the forest until imposed commercial exploitation started to devastate, damage and encroach on their customary land. Since then, they denounced that decades of destructive projects imposed either directly or indirectly by the Government have progressively disempowered and impoverished the Dayak through the uncontrolled and often illegally issuing of permits and/or concessions through corruption. As the YayasanPetakDanum (YPD) network has pointed out, of the 15.1 million hectares of the total area in central Kalimantan at least 83% (12.5 million hectares) will be converted or destroyed through either monoculture plantations of oil palm, industrial tree plantations for pulp production, or mining permits (1).

Last week, a group of 10 Dayak tribal elders from five villages in Central Kalimantan have presented their case to the Forestry Ministry, the House of Representatives and the National Land Agency in Jakarta. They have warned that expanding oil palm plantations, mining concessions and also REDD projects are threatening to wipe out the traditional way of life of the Dayak tribes of Kalimantan (2).

There is also the case of projects considered outside meddling. “There's no need for any outside intervention to get the tribes to protect their forests,” said April Perlindungan, from the PetakDanum Foundation, which advocates forest conservation through indigenous methods and is supporting the Dayak in their cause. “They don't need to be taught how to grow rubber trees or fish sustainably — that's already their way of life. We just need to let them do as they've always done.” He cited the case of forest rehabilitation efforts in the wake of the Mega Rice Project, a scheme carried out in 1996 which clear-cut a million hectares of centuries-old peat forest in Kalimantan for



rice paddies. "You had people coming in trying to block up the canals dug to drain the peat swamps, but they never succeeded because they never consulted with the locals," he said. "On their own initiative, though, the locals reforested the land, dug ditches to re-divert the water back into the swamps, and built fish ponds that doubled as reservoirs. They've always known how to protect the forest."

Also alleged forest conservation projects have been denounced by the Dayak leaders, like the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP) REDD+ scheme under the Indonesia-Australia Forest Carbon Partnership (IAFCP) founded in 2008. In February 2011, in a letter to the Australian Delegation visiting Central Kalimantan, the YPD network stressed some issues based on their monitoring of the KFCP activities in the districts of Mantangai and Timpah. YPD denounced the "bias reporting of the KFCP project progress" as long as "KFCP field staffs are paid on a performance-based basis and hence the incentive to engage in distorted positive reporting is high. We fear the effectiveness of the KFCP as a REDD+ pilot project will be compromised from the lack of accurate and reliable information to draw lessons from and to learn from, which should be the primary goal of a pilot project."

They have also challenged the role of international NGOs engaged in the REDD+ project, like Borneo Orang Utan Survival (BOS), which YPD says "has had complete disrespect for the Dayak's rights to the remaining forests which they have claimed as conservation area for orangutan rehabilitation, without consultation with local communities." The Dayak community expressed their lack of confidence "that the NGOs have the skills or the relevant experience to carry out environmental restoration or any other project activities in the area, beyond being paid personnel of the project."

So far the KFCP project has not provided any assurance that the basic rights including those of natural resource management of the Dayak for the 120,000 hectares within the project area will be guaranteed. That is why the Dayak motto is "No rights, No KFCP".

In their letter to the Australian delegation, YPD highlights that the network has been "supporting communities in 12 villages in the subdistrict of Mantangai through our Community-based Peatland Use Program in accordance with our traditional wisdom. The Plan is designed to reduce poverty and to restore the peatland. We have collected a lot of information from our program and we have a lot of experience in peatland management in response to the destructive mega-rice project" of 1996, referred above.

And it concludes warning that public funds from Australia will not only be at risk of being wasted in an ineffective emission reduction project, but Australia will be at risk of being blamed for causing, among other evils, "the loss of livelihood of an estimated 15,000 people in the 14 villages included in the KFCP project – specifically our rights to access natural resources in the peatland and peat forests which have been our traditional sources of livelihood."

Article based on information from: (1) Letter of the community leaders in the Yayasan Petak Danum (YPD) network to the Australian Delegation to Central Kalimantan February 2011, <http://www.redd-monitor.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/YPD-Letter-to-Australian-Delegation.pdf>; (2) "Indonesia:

Plantations, Mining and REDD a Threat to Dayak Indigenous Peoples,” Fidelis E. Satriastanti, October 25, 2011, <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/home/plantations-mining-and-redd-a-threat-dayak/473817>, sent by Tom Goldtooth, Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) , [www.ienearth.org](http://www.ienearth.org), e-mail [ien@igc.org](mailto:ien@igc.org)

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### **- Colombia: Monoculture tree plantations threaten land and food sovereignty**

For more than 20 years, Colombia has seen the ongoing expansion of monoculture tree plantations, to the benefit of transnational companies who have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the support of government policies. To analyze this continued expansion, whose consequences include land grabbing, rights violations and the displacement of communities, CENSAT-Friends of the Earth Colombia organized a forum entitled “Tree Plantations in Colombia: A Critical Look”, held in Bogotá on September 21, the International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations.

The issues addressed in the forum (1) included the different forms of “assistance” provided to monoculture tree plantations, particularly Law 1377, which regulates “commercial reforestation” activity and introduced the concept of “*vuelo forestal*” or forest cover. This concept, applied specifically to commercial tree plantations, separates rights to the land from rights to the forest cover – in other words, the trees. This means that companies do not need to plant trees on land of their own in order to obtain financing, sell timber on the market or include these trees in the accounting of their assets. This enables them to absorb the production of the lands of small or medium-sized landowners.

Another boost to the expansion of tree plantations was Decree 125 of January 2011, adopted by the government to address what it called the “State of Economic, Social and Environmental Emergency owing to a serious public disaster”, referring to the heavy rains and flooding that affected 2,220,482 people, according to official figures. The decree was aimed at “the implementation of commercial reforestation projects in areas affected by the 2010-2011 La Niña phenomenon in order to rehabilitate the use of soils with the potential for reforestation, including river basins and areas connected to them.”

In this way, the devastating floods – which among other things affected 925,000 hectares of agricultural crops and dairy and cattle farms – became the perfect justification and disguise for financing for monoculture tree plantations, as highlighted by Diego Rodríguez Panqueva in his presentation, which is included in the forum's final report. He further stressed that “the development model with high levels of deforestation is the main reason for the impacts of the climate crisis facing the country, and in this regard there is a direct relationship between the tree plantations and the state of emergency, not through re-establishment of the natural forest cover destroyed and soil stability on slopes and in hydrographic basins, but rather through being one of the causes of deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, and the loss of soil fertility and other properties.”

Commercial tree plantations, which have not only aggravated the erosion of hillsides

but also involve intensive use of toxic agrochemicals, have in some cases irreversibly altered the dynamics of ecosystems and rural communities. Nevertheless, the “reforestation” target proposed by the government calls for a further 280,000 hectares by 2014, which would mean that by then there would be more than one million hectares of monoculture tree plantations in Colombia.

Social movements in Colombia have responded to the threats posed by megaprojects and agribusiness by organizing the Congress on Lands, Territories and Sovereignty (2) held on September 29 in Cali. The congress was attended by 15,000 representatives of organizations of peasant farmers, rural and urban workers, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants.

The congress participants adopted a series of “mandates”, one of which is “to deepen the liberation of Mother Earth and to undertake participatory land reform. We will not allow the large landholdings of drug trafficking and paramilitary groups, which must be dismantled, to be replaced by large landholdings of agro-industrial conglomerates. On the contrary, those lands – stolen over the course of hundreds of years from indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant communities – must be returned to our communities. We will peacefully occupy what is historically and rightfully ours.”

Another mandate calls for building “an articulated economy of the people, not subordinated to the global market, to guarantee food sovereignty and autonomy and the knowledge associated with seeds, plants and foods. We will strengthen practices of production, processing, exchange and consumption that are culturally appropriate, socially just and in harmony with life; we will not use or allow toxic agrochemicals or transgenics; we will prevent the establishment of agrofuel plantations, tree plantations and other monoculture plantations that threaten our land and food sovereignty.”

Finally, the participants declare: “We are tired of obeying. We are tired of being consulted while others decide. We want to govern. We will govern our territories!”

This article is based on: (1) Final report of the forum “Plantaciones forestales en Colombia. Una mirada crítica”, September 21, 2011, Bogotá, Colombia, <http://www.nasaacin.org/attachments/article/2807/monocultivos.pdf>; (2) Final Declaration of the Congreso Nacional de Tierras, Territorios y Soberanías, October 4, 2011, Cali, Colombia, <http://tinyurl.com/3b7664q>

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## BRIEF NEWS

### - **Belo Monte dam site occupied!**

On October 27, hundreds of indigenous men and women, fisherfolk and riverine community members occupied the construction site of one of the biggest hydroelectric dam projects in the world, the Belo Monte dam in the state of Pará, Brazil, which will have devastating impacts on the lives of the local population.

The occupation was an act of protest against the Brazilian government’s intransigent stance towards dialogue, as well as its refusal to appear at a hearing called in

Washington by the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has called for an explanation as to why the affected communities were not duly consulted. Finally, the protestors condemned the slow pace of the justice system with regard to decisions on the numerous legal proceedings that have been filed, and called for the suspension of the dam's construction in view of the many irregularities that have been duly confirmed.

After 15 hours the protestors decided to end the occupation given that the Justice – with striking agility – fulfilled the dam-building consortium's demand and ordered the police to proceed with the eviction. At the same time the demonstrators evaluated that their action had been very important, being “a new milestone in the alliance against the dam”. They also stressed that “our resistance against this project (..) continues unabated.”

### **- Survey on the WRM Bulletin**

At WRM we have been publishing our monthly electronic bulletin since 1997. It is currently sent in four different languages to more than 15,000 subscribers. This month we have launched an online survey to evaluate the bulletin, with the goal of improving it so that it can better serve its purpose as a bridge for the exchange of information and a tool for local community struggles.

We invite you to take part in this very brief survey to help us make the bulletin as effective as possible.

To complete the survey, please click here:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WRMBulletin\\_Survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WRMBulletin_Survey)

### **- Montevideo Declaration: STOP the expansion of monoculture tree plantations!**

This past September 21, on the occasion of the International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, representatives of social environmental organizations from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe gathered in Montevideo , Uruguay to exchange knowledge and experiences of resistance to the impacts of tree plantations. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the issuing of the Montevideo Declaration, available at:

[http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/21\\_set/2011/Declaration.html](http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/21_set/2011/Declaration.html)

### **- WRM is on Facebook**

You can keep up with what's happening at WRM on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/WorldRainforestMovement>

Among other things, check out the photos of the last WRM international meeting in Montevideo , including our field trip, as well as regular news updates from WRM and our partners.

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