



## WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT

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The tragic fire in Valparaíso is a clear example of what has been happening in various parts of central-southern Chile due to the enormous risks created by industrial plantations of pine and eucalyptus trees. In this case, the tree plantations of Forestal Valparaíso S.A. surround the city’s hills and populated areas.
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The presence of transnationals among the leading companies in the tree plantation sector means that the growing debate on the “foreignization” and

concentration of land ownership in Uruguay inevitably involves them in this process.

- [The REDD Ulu Masen project in Indonesia: like selling air](#)  
The Ulu Masen project was developed in 2008 aiming to generate 3.3 million carbon credits a year. Ulu Masen became the first REDD project to be validated under the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standards. In 2012, Chris Lang of REDD-Monitor visited Aceh and found that the project no longer exists. This article is based on his visit and reports about Ulu Masen (<http://www.redd-monitor.org/tag/ulu-masen/>).
- [Alliance for the Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean](#)  
The Fourth Special Conference of Social Movements of Latin America and the Caribbean for Food Sovereignty was held on May 2 and 3, 2014. The conference was organized by the Alliance for the Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, an important alliance of social movements encompassing indigenous peoples, peasant farmers, rural workers, artisanal fisherpeople, women, environmentalists and NGOs.

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## OUR VIEWPOINT

- A summit on forests with “experts” and without communities



This past May 5 and 6, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) organized a summit on forests in Jakarta, Indonesia, called the Forests Asia Summit 2014. (1) The organizers highlighted on the event website that the participants included “CEOs, civil society leaders, development experts and the world’s top scientists.” They were brought together to share knowledge on how the Southeast Asian region “can accelerate the shift toward a green economy by better managing its forests and landscapes,” by pursuing “new green-growth pathways for development.” To lend continuity to the meeting, the organizers also sought to showcase other national and international initiatives that promote, for example, “win-win synergies between climate change and economic development,” as well as ways to “reaffirm the potential for REDD+.”

If we look at the profiles of the highlighted participants, we can easily see that this summit was not for indigenous peoples or forest communities, despite the fact that both have leaders as well as knowledge, especially the women, who are “experts” on forests. The traditional knowledge generated and transmitted from generation to generation makes forest peoples and communities the world’s real top “specialists” on how to preserve and protect forests.

When indigenous peoples and forest communities talk about the future and solutions for the critical situation facing the world’s forests, they do not usually talk about promoting a shift to a “green economy” or seeking “green growth pathways”. They did not invent these ideas, and that could perhaps be the reason why they have managed to maintain their forests intact. The thousands of communities whose territories have been invaded by big corporations and dozens more invaded by big NGOs for the development of REDD+ projects usually say that it would be better if these corporations and NGOs went back where they came from. And it seems rather contradictory that transnational corporations want to be part of the “solution”, under the logic of the “green economy”, turning the environmental problems for which they are to blame into new “opportunities”.

The so-called green economy carries in its DNA the continuation of environmentally destructive and degrading activities. Its promoters extol the virtues of supposed “win-win” scenarios, in which transnational corporations continue destroying and reaping profits but purportedly “offset” this destruction by preserving “similar areas” somewhere else, while making even more money through trading on the “environmental services” markets. Experience with these so-called solutions has demonstrated that in fact, the communities that live in and depend on forests are the ones who suffer the worst impacts of the “green economy” and “green growth” imposed on them.

Our governments should pay more attention to summits of the peoples, such as the one that recently took place in Santiago, Chile, where – on the same date as the CIFOR summit – more than 50 organizations of peasant farmers, fisherpeople and other rural communities joined together to raise a series of recommendations to the FAO Latin American Regional Conference in Chile. (2) In their declaration, there is no mention of the “green economy” or “green growth”. Instead, the men and women who participated emphasized the crucial importance of the struggle for food sovereignty in order to ensure the wellbeing of the peoples. They stressed that food sovereignty can contribute to eradicating poverty and combating hunger, and noted that in spite of the difficulties faced, peasant agriculture supplies 70% of the world’s food. They declared that, based on their own experience, it is impossible to combat the environmental and climate crisis through an approach based on industry, corporations and market mechanisms. To make real progress, what is needed is to place priority on territories and the peoples who inhabit them, and to work with them and alongside them to find solutions to the crisis.

In particular, our governments need to reflect on this line from the declaration of the organizations and movements who gathered in Chile: “We believe that the time has

come for governments and international agencies to listen to the voices of the peoples.” To move in this direction, any future summits to discuss the critical situation of the world’s forests should be organized in such a way that the communities who depend on forests are the key participants and protagonists.

(1) <http://www.cifor.org/forestsasia/>

(2) <http://viacampesina.org/es/index.php/temas-principales-mainmenu-27/soberanalimentary-comercio-mainmenu-38/2125-declaracion-de-movimientos-y-organizaciones-sociales-ante-33va-reunion-fao-alc>

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## COMMUNITIES, MONOCULTURES AND FORESTS

- Stora Enso’s propaganda campaign in Laos



Since the Laos government adopted, in 1990, the World Bank’s Tropical Forestry Action Plan, it started with support from International Financial Institutions to convert forest areas in the country to large-scale industrial tree plantations, encroaching into people’s lands, forests and livelihoods. When this process started, about 80% of the Laos people relied directly on forests for their physical and cultural survival. This figure alone is an indicator of how heavily the Laos people got affected by the expansion of tree plantations, especially in their right to use and access land and forest, as well as in their food sovereignty.

Rubber plantations have been one of the main monocultures that were introduced. By 2007, 40 companies, mainly from China, Vietnam and Thailand were growing rubber over an area of 182,900 hectares (1). Also eucalyptus has been promoted, both by the Oji company, with 22,000 hectares planted and the Stora Enso company with about 700 hectares. The Laos government intends to expand the tree plantation area to 500,000 hectares by 2020. (2)

The Finnish-Swedish Stora Enso corporation, one of the biggest pulp and paper companies in the world, has come to Asia several years ago. As so many transnationals, Stora-Enso got attracted by the opportunities to make huge profits from the low labor costs in countries like China and the increasing domestic consumer market in some of the countries in the region. Stora Enso was especially keen on the increasing demand for packaging board of the Chinese economy, by far the biggest exporting economy in the world demanding a lot of packaging board to export products promoting ‘western style’ consumption (3). According to Stora Enso’s website, “Here in Beihai, more than 2,000 kilometers southwest of Shanghai in Guangxi province will soon be an ultramodern pulp and consumer packaging board mill”. (4)

Stora Enso has caused many negative impacts in countries in the global South where it has been promoting its industrial tree plantations until now. During the Stora Enso

general assembly in 2011 in Helsinki, a group of civil society organizations from Finland and Latin America launched a press release declaring that “Stora Enso’s profit comes on the back of violations of environmental and labor laws and the criminal code in Latin America.” (5) And in 2013, a group of eleven Finnish and international NGOs has filed a complaint to the UN Human Rights Council about human rights violations in connection to Stora Enso’s eucalyptus plantations and planned cardboard factory in China. (6)

But who tries to get publicly available information about the company’s activities in Laos comes across with a 7 minutes propaganda video where Stora Enso explains the success of its apparently unconventional tree plantation project in a forest-rich upland area in Northern Laos, where the country’s “poorest districts” are located. Under the logo “rethink: our plantations grow more than trees, they also grow food”, the video shows how eucalyptus in Laos is planted, not as a mere monoculture, but together with rice in an “agroforestry” system. (7)

However, some remarks about this video and this apparent success story should be made:

The Chief Operations Officer of Stora Enso declares that because the area was filled with bombs from the Vietnam war, no “efficient agriculture” was possible in the area, only “traditional shifting agriculture” and “that does not give enough food for them”, referring to the villagers. Firstly, this affirmation suggests that Stora Enso neglects the importance of traditional and shifting agricultural practices that worldwide have proven above all their efficiency in terms of, for example, the inputs required to maintain these systems, as well as the huge diversity of food obtained through these practices guaranteeing food sovereignty of millions of forest-dependent people. Secondly, it shows how Stora Enso’s position fits well into the official Laos government one that, with support from German and Swedish development agencies, has been implementing for more than a decade a policy of land use planning and allocation (LUPLA) aiming at eliminating the shifting cultivation practices in upland Lao with the argument that it is a practice that leads to deforestation and forest degradation.

Meanwhile, it has facilitated the entrance in these areas for plantation companies, where monoculture tree plantations are then considered as a “reforestation” practice. Stora Enso claims in the video it is through its “agroforestry system” that it offers to the villagers a “safe place to plant rice”, in reference to the presence of bombs from the Vietnam war in the region. However, many local people in other areas of Laos have second thoughts about and protested against such digging up of bombs fearing they will end up in top-down commercial development projects. (8)

It is important to have in mind that planting rice in between eucalyptus rows is only possible during the first year. After this initial period, the fast-growing eucalyptus results in so much shade that makes growing agricultural crops gradually impossible. On the one hand, this fact will lead Stora Enso expanding its plantations to new areas in order to continue creating areas for rice production for community people, while this overall process would then result in a steady increase in plantation areas, and a consequent reduction of the forest areas available for other uses by communities. On the other hand, the system introduced by Stora Enso has created other difficulties, for example, it has been reported that Stora Enso has introduced new rice varieties that leads to doubts among villagers about its suitability. There also have been problems with different company and farmer schedules of planting (9), raising questions about the overall sustainability of the by Stora Enso introduced alternative “shifting cultivation” system intercropped with eucalyptus.

The Stora Enso people claim they hire local people to work for them, both in the plantations as well as for growing seedlings. However, although any plantation that start

will need relatively a lot of labor inputs, it is also well known that in the “efficient” way Stora Enso manages its plantations elsewhere, it will reduce labor as much as possible in future, so a reduction in the demand of work can be expected too. Nevertheless, it might be true that in Laos and in this particular small project, Stora Enso employs more village people than usual, but then it should also be mentioned that labor costs in this country are relatively very low. At some point in the video, a villager tells: “if it says 25,000 Kip, it pays 25,000 Kip, no deduction”, in reference to the loan paid by Stora Enso, where 25,000 Kip is equivalent to about US\$ 3. This amount probably refers then to the daily income people receive from Stora Enso for working on the plantations, not indicating any further social benefits that workers should be receiving, while the amount itself shows the strong contrast between this tiny amount and the millions of profits a transnational company like Stora Enso makes annually.

Until 2012, Stora Enso had only planted 700 hectares but the aim is to establish 35,000 hectares (10). This raises the question what is the ultimate goal of this plantation project for the company? While Stora Enso aims, like any company, to make profits, and they have naturally done this by going to the global South and purchasing cheaply hundreds of thousands of hectares while also getting cheap labor, it is also clear that the 700 hectares in Laos, planted until now, will not contribute to the company’s overall goal of increasing production, considering the small size of the area and the difficulties in terms of efficient production, harvesting and transportation in upland Laos. Moreover, the company seems to present itself more as a “development NGO” even active in the activity of digging up part of the 2 million tons of bombs thrown on Laos during the Vietnam war.

Maybe it is the exaggerated success story of this experience, transmitted in the PR video, that brings us back to the point why this project can be in the interest of a company like Stora Enso. While not directly pursuing productivity records in this plantation area in Laos with large-scale monoculture plantations against the lowest possible costs, a company like Stora Enso with its so much affected image in the past years might be in need of such a project going against all the “efficiency” rules, just to improve again, against a low cost, its image and by doing so helping further to improve its sales and profits records.

But this article aims to show also that short and wonderful propaganda videos from transnational corporations definitely need to be better understood by putting such projects in a broader context of the strategies of such corporations to know what is kept hidden behind such “success stories”. Such information is relevant, not in the last place for those communities involved in such “success projects”, as well as for others already negatively affected by Stora Enso’s operations.

By Winnie Overbeek, WRM, email [winnie@wrm.org.uy](mailto:winnie@wrm.org.uy)

- (1) <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/laos-expansion-of-rubber-plantations-more-conflicts-with-communities/>
- (2) Zhou, When, 2012. Transnational paper and pulp: the production of eucalyptus plantations in China and Laos; <http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/research/ecodynamics/downloads/2012Zhou.pdf>
- (3) <http://wrm.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/EJOLTplantations.pdf>
- (4) <http://www.storaenso.com/rethink/investing-in-china>
- (5) <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section2/stora-enso-makes-money-out-of-environmental-crimes/>
- (6) <http://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section2/ngos-filed-a-complaint-to-united-nations-against-stora-ensos-human-rights-violations-in-china/>
- (7) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeGqGLcOV6E>
- (8) Ibid. Zhou, When, 2012.
- (9) Ibid.

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- Mozambique: More tree plantations increasing the threat on food sovereignty



Mozambique is a country where tree plantations dates back to colonial times, when Portugal encouraged the planting of eucalyptus and pine trees. By independence there were 20,000 hectares of tree plantations of exotic species in seven provinces.

In 1992, the area covered by tree plantations had doubled, reaching around 40,000 Hectares. The active promotion of large-scale private investment in tree plantations led to the expansion of tree plantations which in 2010 reached 62,000 hectares, according to FAO. Furthermore, a national Reforestation Strategy set the objective of establishing tree plantations on around 1.3 million hectares in the following 20 years.

Niassa, Mozambique's largest province located in the north, has been the ideal scenario for the promotion of large-scale investments in tree plantations due to its overall adequate soil and climatic conditions. There, companies and investment funds mainly from the Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden and Finland have invested heavily in the tree plantation and wood processing sectors. That is the case of the private Norwegian company Green Resources, with big shareholders such as the investment company Phaunos Timber Fund Limited, and Storebrand, one of Norway's biggest insurance companies (see WRM Bulletin 191).

The Sweden-based investment fund Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF), an initiative of Swedish and Norwegian Churches with investors that include the Dutch Pension Fund ABP (see WRM bulletin 173) has also started operations in 2005 in the region through its subsidiary Chikweti, establishing mainly pine trees plantations though more recently it is planting up to 90 per cent of eucalyptus on new plantations.

This expansion has caused serious problems because it is taking over land from the machambas, small family farms used to grow food (see WRM Bulletin 165). According to a report published by FIAN International for the Hands off the Land Alliance (1), "from the very beginning of the establishment of the tree plantations, there have been complaints by communities in the districts of Lago, Lichinga and Sanga. In some cases, these complaints have led to open resistance and conflict. One of the major impacts caused by the establishment of industrial tree plantations in Niassa is the loss of access to fertile lands by local peasant communities, which they were using for food production, due to the establishment of the tree plantations. Farmers thus see themselves obliged to farm on fields that are much more distant from their homes, sometimes spending hours to get there. In some cases, houses close to the plantations have been abandoned, either in order to be closer to the new areas for agricultural production, or because the inhabitants fear that their homes will be destroyed by fire.

Indeed, while peasants are threatened to avoid burnings through fines, the plantation companies still use burnings on their plantations.”

The report also reveals that “The access to food and the means of subsistence of the communities in the plantation areas are further reduced by the loss of access to forests by these people. Community members use forest products for several purposes: firewood to cook, wood to produce charcoal, construction material, fruit and some forest plants for medicinal use. Some of these forest products are also used as additional sources of income. Local people claim that they lose access to these resources due to the establishment of tree plantations, either because the forest companies deny them the right to access the plantations to collect fire wood or because native forests are cut down.”

Now, the situation is likely to worsen. Green Resources has recently acquired Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF). The merger allows Green Resources to increase its scale operation and consolidate its tree plantation business in east Africa.

This entails more pine and eucalyptus plantations and consequently more threats to the food sovereignty of Mozambican communities.

Article based on information from: “The Human Rights Impacts of Tree Plantations in Niassa Province, Mozambique”, Published by FIAN International for the Hands off the Land Alliance, September 2012, [http://www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications/PR\\_-\\_2012.10.16\\_-\\_Tree\\_plantations\\_Niassa\\_Mozambique.pdf](http://www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications/PR_-_2012.10.16_-_Tree_plantations_Niassa_Mozambique.pdf)

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- Argentina: Harvard staunchly defends its tree plantations



Harvard University is the owner, through the Harvard Management Company (HMC), of the world’s largest endowment, which handles 32 billion dollars annually. Of this total, around 15% is devoted to forestry investments around the world.

In Argentina, Harvard owns 87,000 hectares of land in the province of Corrientes with pine and eucalyptus plantations that are managed by two companies: Empresas Verdes Argentinas S.A. (EVASA) and Las Misiones S.A.

A system of production based on large-scale tree plantations in Argentina is an ideal way to generate quick profits, for a number of reasons: it employs few workers, and those who are employed work in precarious conditions; it is an activity that receives support from national and provincial governments in the form of tax exemptions and fiscal stability; and the local climate fosters rapid growth of the tree species used,

namely pine and eucalyptus.

These HMC investments have drawn criticism from environmental groups and local communities, who have denounced the environmental impacts caused and the land grabs carried out by the companies involved. These denunciations recently reached a wider public when a group of Harvard students and professors conducted research on the plantations and published a report that is critical of their own university's activities in Corrientes (1).

In April, I had the opportunity, along with a small-scale farmer from Iberá, Adrián Obregón (2), to travel to Harvard University, invited by a group of students and professors concerned over the lack of ethics in their university's investments.

There, at a meeting with Lars Peter Knoth Madsen, senior special assistant to the president of Harvard, Kathryn Murtagh, managing director of HMC, and Jameela Pedicini, vice president of sustainable investing at HMC, we were able to hear in person the arguments used by Harvard to defend its investments.

While we were still flying back to Corrientes, Argentina, Andrew Wiltshire (the head of alternative assets at HMC) published a harsh response to our claims, staunchly defending the tree plantations, in the Harvard newspaper *The Crimson*.

The HMC's entire line of argument is based on the great myths about tree plantations. They essentially equate tree plantations with forests, claim that they help to combat climate change, and maintain that FSC certification of the plantations guarantees environmental sustainability, social equity and corporate responsibility to the community.

But if the extensive worldwide debate and the opinions of various environmental, peasant farmer, indigenous and trade union organizations who challenge these myths have no importance for the managers of the HMC, it is enough to observe what is happening in the concrete case of our territory, which is what sparked this discussion.

Of the 87,000 hectares owned by the HMC in Corrientes, around 50% are within the Iberá Provincial Nature Reserve, a wetlands ecosystem. They have planted millions of trees in wetlands, savannahs and grasslands with high conservation value, according to reports from the WWF and BirdLife, replacing them with industrial pine plantations where nothing else grows.

The HMC claims that they have created reserves and buffer zones, but these have mostly been established in marginal areas where it is too costly for the company to plant pines. In numerous sites where their own technicians have recommended that they remove the pines and stop planting, they have completely ignored these recommendations, such as in areas where the rare dwarf yatay palm (*Butia Paraguayensis*) grows – a native species classified as extremely vulnerable by the IUCN.

In Corrientes there have been many studies that compare the biodiversity found in areas of extensive cattle farming with that found on tree plantations. A paradigmatic case is that of the coexistence of the Pampas deer with cattle in the wetlands region of Aguapey (on the east coast of Iberá) and the disappearance of this same species resulting from the advance of pine plantations. The "Alianza del Pastizal" (Grasslands Alliance) initiative highlights the benefits for biodiversity of maintaining extensive cattle farming on natural grasslands.

Adrián Obregón, the small farmer representative who spoke face to face with the HMC, is from a place called Montaña in the Iberá wetlands, a rural area that borders on the

Santa Julia landholding, owned by Las Misiones S.A. “Many of the residents of Montaña have the Santa Julia plantations right on top of them,” said Adrián. “And also around the Ipacarapá Lagoon, which forms part of our ancestral territory – my grandfather’s house was on the edge of it – the whole area is planted with pine trees now, right up to the water. There is only a small area of native forest left, and we can’t access it without ‘intruding’ on private property. Las Misiones S.A. is the owner of a third of the lagoon,” he added.

Ipacarapá is a central part of Guaraní indigenous culture in the region, a place of recreation, fishing, and a symbol in numerous ancestral legends and myths. Today the physical appearance of the lagoon has been destroyed, and the indigenous population has no way of accessing it. But for the HMC and their certifier Rainforest Alliance, this does not form part of the rights of indigenous peoples. In the FSC certification reports for EVASA and Las Misiones, they simply placed an X meaning “does not apply” in the space referring to indigenous peoples, thus denying their existence.

Another example of the lack of coherence between the discourse of corporate responsibility and the actual management of the plantations on the ground is that of the local rural roads. The timber trucks of Harvard’s plantation companies are primarily responsible for the degradation of these roads. The residents of the town of Chavarría, frustrated with the lack of a response to their complaints, took matters into their own hands and set up a roadblock on Route 22 to keep EVASA’s trucks from getting through.

With regard to the mechanisms for dialogue that are meant to form part of the FSC certification system, they are entirely absent in Corrientes. Misiones S.A. recent obtained certification of its plantations, but on the company’s website ([www.lasmisionessa.com.ar](http://www.lasmisionessa.com.ar)), as of May 18, there was no information on this subject nor news of any sort of meeting being organized. In the meantime, the FSC in Argentina website simply does not exist. Meetings with residents of nearby towns were not convened through any other form of media, either.

The demands to Harvard agreed upon by small-scale farmers, workers and environmentalists in the region are simple and clear:

- 1) To permit and guarantee the workers’ freedom to organize and to establish a transparent and honest mechanism for them to present their demands for better working conditions to the companies.
- 2) To halt the expansion of its plantations until a genuine, public, participatory and accumulative environmental impact assessment has been conducted for all its plantations.
- 3) To establish a buffer zone between its plantations and small farmers and other local producers.

Notes

1. <http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/informe-harvard-argentina>
2. Provincial delegate of the FONAF (Federation of National Family Agriculture Organizations) and vice president of the APPPC (Provincial Association of Small Farmers of Corrientes).

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In early 2012, voracious fires swept through thousands of hectares in various regions of Chile, including la Araucanía and Bío Bío, in central-southern Chile. It is in these regions and Maule, which are also the regions with the country's highest rates of unemployment, emigration and poverty, that almost all of the more than three million hectares of industrial plantations of exotic tree species, mainly pine and eucalyptus, are concentrated – thanks to government policies that incentivise their establishment and expansion. The holding companies CMPC (owner of Forestal Mininco S.A.) and Arauco, two of the biggest economic groups in Chile, control 70% of the tree plantation industry, and their plantations have invaded traditional Mapuche indigenous territories (see WRM Bulletin 174). Industrial pine and eucalyptus plantations dry out the land, drain groundwater reserves and generate veritable “deserts” in the sense of a complete absence of plant diversity. These factors, combined with high temperatures and the dryness of the trees' structures, particularly in the case of pines, create a permanent threat of the breakout of fires.

On that occasion, the fires took a tragic toll that included the deaths of a number of fire fighters. Some government authorities and company owners accused sectors of the Mapuche community of causing the tragedy. For their part, various Mapuche organizations laid direct blame on the companies and stated that this was a campaign orchestrated by political and business sectors who were seeking a means to divert attention away from those who were truly responsible, as well as a blatantly racist attempt to step up the criminalization and stigmatization of indigenous communities demanding their rights and/or defending their territories.

On April 12, 2014, the threat of fire posed by industrial tree plantations became a tragic reality once again, this time in Valparaíso. The fire caused 15 deaths, consumed more than 900 hectares and destroyed some 3,000 homes, in a port city surrounded by plantations of exotic and highly flammable tree species that border on its hills and populated areas. According to the news agency Mapuexpress (1), this is a clear example of what has been happening in various parts of central-southern Chile due to the enormous risks created by industrial plantations of pine and eucalyptus trees.

Mary T. Kalin Arroyo, a National Science Prize winner in 2010 and director of the Ecology and Biodiversity Institute of the University of Chile – quoted by Mapuexpress – recently sent a letter to the Opinion section of the newspaper *La Tercera*, expressing her concern over “the tragedy associated with the fire suffered by Valparaíso this weekend,” which, she said, “obliges us to reflect on its causes and on why it has been so difficult to control.”

On this point, Kalin Arroyo stresses: “One aspect that has received little mention (with regard to the fire in the port) is the composition of the natural vegetation of the hills of Valparaíso, which is typical Chilean scrubland, which may be flammable, but not as much as the exotic species (eucalyptus, pine and acacia) that have been planted in the area. *Eucalyptus globulus* is considered one of the world's most fire-prone plants. The leaves contain volatile compounds that produce explosive fires locally. Once it catches

fire, the bark separates from the tree, causing additional outbreaks. Pine needles have a high resin content. Acacia delata, which is now common in central Chile, is included on the list of the most flammable plants in Tasmania, where it is a native species.” (2)

In the meantime, the online publication el deconcierto commented that the fire that devastated the hills of Valparaíso broke out in an area surrounded by tree plantations owned by the company Forestal Valparaíso S.A. It added: “In addition, species like pine contain and secrete terpenes, a flammable substance that when exposed to heat can spread or ignite fires. Combined with this situation is the lack of safeguards such as firebreaks that are of sufficient size for the conditions in the country, where there are close to 2.9 million hectares of tree plantations between the region of Valparaíso and La Araucanía, of which 68% are industrial plantations of pine trees (*Pinus radiata*) and 23% are of eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.).” (3)

The tree plantation industry and some political sectors have plans to double the area of industrial tree plantations in Chile. But they would be well advised to consider what Mary T. Kalin Arroyo warns in her letter: “There are lessons that must be drawn from this.”

This article is based on information from the following sources:

(1) “Incendio en Valparaíso ¿Más expansión de pinos y eucalpitus?”, Mapuexpress, <http://mapuexpress.org/incendio-en-valparaiso-mas-expansion-de-pinos-y-eucalpitus/>

(2) “Incendio en Valparaíso”, <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/opinion/correos-de-los-lectores/2014/04/896-573964-9-incendio-en-valparaiso.shtml>

(3) “Incendio en Valparaíso: las responsabilidades del sector forestal”, <http://eldesconcierto.cl/incendio-de-valparaiso-las-responsabilidades-del-sector-forestal/>

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- Uruguay: Transnationals lead land grabs in industrial tree plantation sector



In the early 1990s, as a result of the Forests Law of 1987, the area covered by tree plantations in Uruguay began to grow rapidly, with rates of expansion sometimes greater than 50,000 hectares annually.

In the first years of the decade, transnational corporations did not yet occupy a predominant position in terms of the area of industrial tree plantations owned or managed, but two subsidiaries were created which quickly came to play a leading role: EUFORES S.A. and Forestal Oriental. The first was a subsidiary of the Spanish group ENCE, while the second was a consortium with two majority shareholders, the Dutch transnational Shell and the Finnish corporation UPM-Kymmene. Both began to rapidly plant eucalyptus in the western region of the country. Shell subsequently began to sell

off its plantations to ENCE. The arrival of the Swedish-Finnish Stora Enso in the central region of the country in 1996 and U.S.-based Weyerhaeuser in the north in 1997 marked the beginning of the era of the transnationals, which have dominated the purchase of land for silviculture (\*) in Uruguay ever since.

This period corresponds with the first phase of expansion of investment from countries of the North in the sector, which involved the expansion of tree plantations to supply raw materials for their industrial plants in Europe or North America. ENCE, for example, used Uruguayan wood to feed its pulp and paper mills in Spain. During the following period, the same companies sought to establish their pulp mills next to their new plantations in South America, as in the case of the ENCE and UPM pulp mills in Uruguay.

After the financial crisis of 2008, the period ended with only two pulp mill projects still active, those of UPM and ENCE. The latter was taken over by the Montes del Plata consortium, formed by Stora Enso and the Chilean group Arauco. In addition to the pulp mill, Montes del Plata also controls more than 270,000 hectares of land. The end result of this process was heavy concentration of ownership in the industrial tree plantation sector, with the gradual departure of smaller companies.

Leading companies in the industrial tree plantation sector in Uruguay as of 2011

Company	Country of ownership	Area of land owned (ha)	Area of tree plantations managed (ha)
Montes del Plata (Stora Enso y Arauco)	Sweden, Finland, Chile	270,000	156,500
Forestal Oriental (UPM)	Finland	231,500	151,000
Global Forest Partners	Foreign	140,595	n/a
Weyerhaeuser	United States	140,000	55,000
Forestal Atlántico Sur	Chile, Uruguay	75,000	n/a
Grupo Forestal	Chile	40,000	16,000
Regions Timberland Group	United States, European countries	32,500	20,150
Phaunos Timber Fund	n/a	31,500	n/a
Cofusa	n/a	30,000	n/a
Caja de Profesionales Universitarios	Uruguay	18,000	n/a
Caja Bancaria	Uruguay	18,000	7,739
Caja Notarial	Uruguay	12,748	9,102
FYMNSA	Uruguay	8,751	n/a
Riermol	n/a	8,610	n/a
GMO Renewable Resources	n/a	n/a	25,000

Note: n/a = data not available  
Source: compiled by the study author

The presence of transnationals among the leading companies in the tree plantation sector means that the growing debate on the “foreignization” and concentration of land ownership in Uruguay inevitably involves them in this process. There is a clear process of concentration of land in the region, closely tied to the rise in prices of agricultural commodities and forest products in the first years of the 21st century.

It is important to distinguish between the concentration of land ownership and of tree plantations. In the region, when a company purchases land, there are rocky areas, streams, roads, stands of native forest, etc. which limit the establishment of plantations. In Uruguay, trees are planted on 61% percent of the landholdings on average. As a result, companies operating in Uruguay always own a much larger area of land than of plantations.

In addition to this necessary distinction between land and plantations, there is a second difficulty: some companies sign contracts with third parties in order to increase their area of cultivation. In some cases the company leases land from third parties on which it establishes plantations. In others, it provides the third parties with inputs and training so that they plant trees in accordance with standards of the company, which then purchases the wood when it is harvested.

Another difficulty arises if we want to move beyond quantifying the degree of concentration at the country level to analyse this phenomenon at the local level. Companies tend to only report total figures in regards to their assets, and only on rare occasions do they specify the exact location of their plantations and landholdings.

At the country level, the degree of concentration of ownership of industrial tree plantations is even greater than that of the extremely high concentration of agricultural land. In 2009, five agribusiness corporations operating in Uruguay accounted for “more than 20% of the land cultivated in the country,” with the distinction that most of this land is leased from third parties. In the meantime, in 2010, four companies controlled 31% of the country’s tree plantations, that is, almost 300,000 of the 950,000 hectares in total. Unlike the case in the agribusiness sector, these companies also own most of the land involved.

Measuring the percentage of the total area of plantations in a specific territory controlled by each company is a way of better understanding the hierarchies among the different actors in the sector. But that is not all: it also makes it possible to distinguish between situations where a single company dominates the activity and its local effects on the society (direct and indirect employment, stimulation of commercial activity, social impacts, etc.) and others where several companies are operating at the same time. In other words, it makes it possible to distinguish between areas that are highly dependent on a single economic actor and those with a lesser degree of dependence.

By even further refining the scale of analysis, we can see how some companies concentrate control over high percentages of the tree plantations at the local level. On the Uruguayan coast, the transnationals Forestal Oriental and Montes del Plata share the space and account for between 30% and 40% of plantations. In the rest of the country there are also high percentages of land concentration but to a lesser degree, with figures around 25% in the north and southwest. In southeast Uruguay there is a low degree of concentration due to the coexistence of numerous companies and a number of small and medium-sized plantation owners.

Levels of concentration above 20% denote areas where a very small number of

companies dominate the industrial tree plantation sector, and thus enjoy a high degree of negotiating power with public authorities. It is in these regions that the issue of social dependence on these actors becomes significant.

(\*) While they are often used interchangeably, the author has opted to use the term “silviculture” as opposed to “forestation” in order to more clearly reflect what companies in this sector do: they cultivate trees in the same way as agricultural crops are grown, waiting several years to harvest what they have planted, working the land and using agrochemical products. The term forestation, created by institutions that promote industrial tree plantations, such as FAO, tends to obscure the agricultural nature of this activity and fosters confusion between native forests and tree plantations, attributing environmentally beneficial qualities to plantations as if they were native ecosystems.

Sent by Grupo Guayubira, <http://www.guayubira.org.uy>, e-mail: [info@guayubira.org.uy](mailto:info@guayubira.org.uy), article extracted and adapted from “Forestación, territorio y ambiente. 25 años de silvicultura transnacional en Uruguay, Brasil y Argentina” (Forestation, territory and environment: 25 years of transnational silviculture in Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina), Pierre Gautreau, 2014, Editorial Trilce, Uruguay.

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- The REDD Ulu Masen project in Indonesia: like selling air



The Ulu Masen project was developed in 2008 aiming to generate 3.3 million carbon credits a year. Ulu Masen became the first REDD project to be validated under the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standards. In 2012, Chris Lang of REDD-Monitor visited Aceh and found that the project no longer exists. This article is based on his visit and reports about Ulu Masen (<http://www.redd-monitor.org/tag/ulu-masen/>).

Covering an area of 770,000 hectares in Aceh province in the north of Sumatra, the Ulu Masen project was developed by the conservation organisation Fauna & Flora International (FFI), the carbon trading firm Carbon Conservation and Aceh's then-Governor Irwandi Yusuf, with the aim of generating and selling 3.3 million carbon credits a year to finance “conservation and development projects for local communities”.

The project area consisted of 428,757 hectares of logging concessions and 310,991 hectares of protected forest. The logging concessions were inactive because of the logging moratorium introduced in 2007, and due to pressure from villagers and NGOs to prevent the companies from restarting the concessions. “Even without REDD it was their decision to keep their forest,” explained indigenous leader Anwar Ibrahim, who lives at the edge of the Ulu Masen project area. Since 2007 he has taken part in more than 30 meetings about REDD.

On 6 February 2008, Ulu Masen became the first REDD project to be validated under

the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standards. In 2008, the Merrill Lynch bank, now Bank of America, promised to buy US\$9 million worth of carbon credits from the project. In 2011, with no carbon credits generated, Carbon Conservation sold 50% of its shares to Canadian mining company, East Asia Minerals Corporation.

### Unresolved issues

Research published in November 2009 in Environmental Research Letters found that the project “may not significantly reduce deforestation in northern Sumatra ” because a large amount of forest inside the proposed REDD project area is protected de facto by being inaccessible, and also much of northern Sumatra’s lowland forests will remain outside of REDD and will be exposed to the combined expansion of high-revenue oil palm plantations and road networks.

The change of logging concessions to protected forest and the implementation of protected areas have land tenure implications that were not resolved when the Ulu Masen’s Project Design Document was produced at the end of 2007. Land tenure is a crucial issue for communities and the fact that it was not resolved raised questions about how communities could be expected to give their “prior” and “informed” consent to a project where the consultations on key issues including land tenure, had not yet been concluded.

### REDD: far from clear

In a 2010 report published by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies Lesley McCulloch interviewed Pak Sabibasyah, an indigenous leader from Geumpang in Pidie District. Pak Sabibasyah told her that,

“We have been told very little about REDD. FFI has been here to discuss with us, but mostly in the context of protecting the forests and rivers for our downstream neighbours. We are wondering whether FFI staff themselves understand REDD because information is far from clear. What we want is very simple – do not treat us as children in our own territory. We are the most important stakeholder in the REDD project – why do you have information that we do not have, and how can that be so when the REDD project is about our lives, not yours? That is our question to FFI.”

McCulloch commented, “Sadly, there has been no free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples, nor the full (or even partial) support and involvement of local communities.”

SmartWood is a Programme of the NGO The Rainforest Alliance (RA) that administers Verification Services in several areas including carbon project verification and validation. In 2008 it carried out a Validation Audit Report of the Ulu Masen project. Though the audit ended up validating the project, SmartWood’s report revealed that “key staff at FFI had not seen or knew very little” about Ulu Masen’s Project Design Document. This should have raised serious questions about how much detail the communities knew about the project and the implications for their livelihoods.

Anwar Ibrahim, an indigenous leader living at the edge of the Ulu Masen project area told REDD-Monitor in 2012 how he first heard of REDD:

“In 2007, Frank Momberg of FFI organised a meeting in the Hermes Hotel in Banda Aceh. This was when the discussion turned to carbon and the idea that people would get money if they keep their forest. The idea of Ulu Masen came from FFI, acting as a go-between between the Government of Aceh and investors. Since then we keep hearing about REDD, REDD+, REDD++. But don’t ask me what it means, because I don’t know.”

In Aceh, T. Camarud Zaman, the head of Sarah Raya village inside Ulu Masen, asked:

“What is the process of REDD? We’ve heard that carbon has been sold. Where’s the money? We’ve heard rumours that the map produced with support from FFI wasn’t accepted by the government because there are community areas inside it. Community members were involved in the mapping but don’t know what the follow up is.”

In addition to questions from local communities, questions about the Ulu Masen REDD project were also raised elsewhere. In May 2008, the consulting firm Development Alternatives wrote a report looking at the potential for USAID’s Environmental Services Programme to enter the carbon markets in Indonesia. “At the governmental levels there is no capacity to implement a carbon market project,” Development Alternatives concluded, adding that, “Fortunately, these projects will likely be implemented either by private parties or in a public-private partnership.”

In its report, Development Alternatives includes a list of issues that the Ulu Masen project had not publicly addressed, including:

- \* The many and critically important land tenure questions;
- \* The benefit distribution questions – related to the how much, who, what, where and when of the financial flow;
- \* The agreements between the project proponents. There is a non-transparent process with the project proponents stipulating what their agreements are; and
- \* The field level activities with communities, over 750,000ha, have not been described or defined other than in general terms.

Development Alternatives report was published three months after SmartWood had validated the Ulu Masen project as complying to the CCBA standard. The issues raised were never addressed and five years later, Ulu Masen became the first REDD project to lose its CCB validation status.

No carbon credits have been sold from the Ulu Masen project and FFI has withdrawn its support. Dorjee Sun, the head of Carbon Conservation, did not reply to REDD-Monitor’s questions about the project. The Ulu Masen REDD project is at a complete standstill. Meanwhile, Aceh’s forests are more threatened than ever.

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- Alliance for the Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean

# Alianza Soberanía Alimentaria América Latina/Caribe



The Fourth Special Conference of Social Movements of Latin America and the Caribbean for Food Sovereignty was held on May 2 and 3, 2014, in Santiago, Chile. The conference was organized by the Alliance for the Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, an important alliance of social movements encompassing indigenous peoples, peasant farmers, rural workers, artisanal fisherpeople, women, environmentalists and NGOs.

The Alliance for the Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean is aimed at interconnecting social movement sectors from the countryside and the cities in order to join forces in the struggle for food sovereignty.

With the launching of the International Year of Family Farming by FAO and its priority concern of eradicating hunger and poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, the different organizations that make up the Alliance felt it was important to meet and discuss the main considerations of social movements with regard to these issues.

The first consideration stressed by the Alliance is that the term family farming is insufficient. The sector that produces food on a small scale and contributes to the food sovereignty and security of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean is made up of men and women who are family farmers, peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and artisanal fisherpeople.

The social movements recognize and value FAO's efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. However, it is not possible to solve a problem without attacking its root causes. The model of large-scale industrial production and marketing based on monocultures and the use of toxic chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers is the primary driver of the land and income grabs that have forced thousands of people out of the countryside, destroying cultures and biodiversity while polluting the environment, with serious impacts on the water, soil and human health.

As a result, the social movements participating in the conference reaffirmed that only food sovereignty can eradicate hunger and poverty in the countryside. FAO should therefore consider the small-scale agricultural production of healthy food as an important part of the solution to two critical problems facing humanity today: hunger and poverty.

The conference participants agreed upon a number of key points that should be taken into account by FAO in the coming period. These include the demarcation of indigenous lands; a concrete and integral process of agrarian reform; the prioritization of public policies that promote food sovereignty (in areas such as small-scale processing industries, the development of artisanal fisheries, school food programmes,

state subsidies and public procurement); the guarantee of the rights of salaried rural workers; and the eradication of slave labour.

Beyond the discussion that should take place through institutional channels for dialogue with FAO, the members of the Alliance reaffirmed their commitment to continuing the ongoing struggle for the production of healthy food, defending the land and native seeds, preserving biodiversity, protecting the environment, and feeding the world.

By Dayana Mezzonato of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and La Vía Campesina.

The full text of the declaration adopted at the conference is available in Spanish at:[http://www.biodiversidadla.org/Principal/Coberturas\\_especiales/IV\\_Conferencia\\_Especial\\_para\\_la\\_Soberania\\_Alimentaria/Declaracion\\_sobre\\_la\\_Biodiversidad\\_para\\_el\\_Sustento\\_%21Debemos\\_detener\\_ya\\_la\\_destruccion\\_de\\_las\\_bases\\_de\\_nuestra\\_subsistencia](http://www.biodiversidadla.org/Principal/Coberturas_especiales/IV_Conferencia_Especial_para_la_Soberania_Alimentaria/Declaracion_sobre_la_Biodiversidad_para_el_Sustento_%21Debemos_detener_ya_la_destruccion_de_las_bases_de_nuestra_subsistencia)

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## PEOPLES IN ACTION

### - Cameroon: Call to action against Herakles Farms

In a context of massive land concessions in Cameroon over the last five years, a presidential decision in 2013 to grant the US based company Herakles Farms almost 20,000 ha of native land for the establishment of a large-scale oil palm plantation ignored the long local people and organizations' opposition to the project that would destroy a densely forested area. The move raised a broadly supported international "call to action" in December 2013 demanding the President to cancel the decision.

Greenpeace is raising now another "call to action" to condemn and stop the commercialization of wood by Herakles. A press release of May 27 this year denounces how Herakles Farms is "attempting to rescue its dire financial situation" and so has "colluded with government officials to illegally obtain a permit to export timber" to China that had been "illegally felled in order to establish an oil palm plantation in the South West region of the country."

See <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/getinvolved/Stop-Herakles-Timber/>

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### - International call to stop the spread of transgenes

A broad coalition of organisations has launched an international call to request that the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety implement binding regulations to stop the spread of genetically engineered organisms into the environment.

There are already documented cases of genetically engineered plants spreading uncontrolled into wild populations and ecosystems, as well as transgene presence in landraces or local varieties of crop plants such as maize in Mexico and rice in China.

The long-term impact of uncontrolled gene flow of transgenes into the environment could be irreversible. In the meantime, the technical approaches proposed by industry and some governments – such as genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs), also

known as “Terminator” – will not only not bring any solutions, but also implicate new and additional risks, and only serve to stop farmers from reproducing seeds.

The organisations signing on to the call hope to gather broad support from civil society and will bring their demands to the meetings of the parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Convention on Biological Diversity, taking place September/October 2014 in South Korea.

<http://www.stop-the-spread-of-transgenes.org/>

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#### - International Anti-Chevron Day

To mark International Anti-Chevron Day on May 21, the Union of People Affected by Chevron-Texaco’s Oil Operations (Ecuador); the Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén (Argentina); the Richmond Progressive Alliance and Asian Pacific Environmental Network (California, United States); Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre (Nigeria); and the Communities of the Vaslui Region (Romania) issued a joint statement to condemn Chevron’s abusive and irresponsible corporate practices.

The global day of protest took place just before the oil transnational’s annual shareholders meeting on May 28 in Midland, Texas (United States).

The statement, which was signed by more than 300 organizations around the world, demands that Chevron acknowledge its responsibility for all the damage it has caused to the environment and human rights.

<http://www.antichevron.com/declaration.html>

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#### - India: Evicted for “tiger conservation”

With similar arguments as people in conservation areas who have been evicted for REDD, like the Sengwer case in Kenya (see <http://wrm.org.uy/all-campaigns/your-support-in-needed-the-sengwer-people-in-kenya-is-being-forcibly-evicted-from-its-territory/>), several indigenous communities in tiger reserves in India are facing imminent eviction from their homeland allegedly for “tiger conservation”.

Survival has reported that the Khadia, inside Similipal Tiger Reserve, have been evicted and are now living in dire conditions under plastic sheets. They have not received the compensation they were promised.

Other tribes in Tiger Reserves in Odisha in eastern India, who have been living with the forest’s wildlife for generations, are facing harassment and pressure from forest guards to force them out of the reserve despite the villagers’ desperate appeal to stay on their land.

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/10239>

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#### - Victory over Malaysian land grabbers in Papua New Guinea

The people of Collingwood Bay in Papua New Guinea have won back their land from Malaysian loggers and oil palm companies after a hard fought battle.

Two leases had been originally issued in 2012 to two companies covering 38,350 hectares. Later, the Malaysian oil palm company Kuala Lumpur Kepong (KLK), a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), together with Malaysian investment company BatuKawan, acquired the rights to these leased lands via a third company: Collingwood Bay Plantations.

In protest, the communities presented a case to the National Court in Port Moresby, that recently declared that the leases of land are null and void and ordered the State to cancel the title deeds. For Collingwood Bay the court has accepted that the customary landowners never gave their consent to their land being leased and that the lease applications contained serious flaws.

In April 2013, the Collingwood Bay landowners had also filed a formal complaint with the RSPO pointing out that KLK's involvement in the leases breached RSPO policies. Yet, the RSPO did not take any action against KLK.

The legal victory obtained now will be a serious embarrassment for KLK, BatuKawan and the RSPO.

<http://pngexposed.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/villagers-secure-victory-over-malaysian-land-grabbers-in-papua-new-guinea/>

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- Movement of People Affected by Dams in Brazil denounces violations, proposes solutions

The Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) in the Madeira River region, made up by hundreds of rural and urban workers, farmers, fisherpeople and community representatives and leaders, held a People's Assembly on April 17 in the city of Porto Velho.

The participants analysed the struggles they have waged against the countless human rights violations caused by the flooding of the Madeira River and the violent imposition of hydroelectric plants in the state of Rondônia. They placed responsibility on the shareholders in the Energia Sustentável do Brasil consortium, which operates the Jirau power plant, the Santo Antônio Energia consortium, which runs the Santo Antônio power plant, and the Brazilian government.

As a result of the construction of these hydroelectric dams and power plants, more than 5,000 families were affected and more than 100,000 people were left without access to drinking water, while 12 districts in Porto Velho and over 50 communities along the Madeira River suffered the loss of their land, homes, means of production, work tools, equipment and other belongings.

At the end of the assembly, the MAB members drafted an open letter denouncing these violations and proposing a series of emergency and structural measures to remedy the critical situation in the state of Rondônia.

<http://www.mabnacional.org.br/noticia/carta-do-madeira-delibera-es-da-asmbl-ia-popular-dos-atingidos>

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## RECOMMENDED

- Licence to Launder - a report by Greenpeace that reveals how the oil palm plantation being developed by the US based Herakles Farms in the southwest region of Cameroon – an area of great biodiversity surrounded by five protected areas – pose a serious threat to forests and forest dependent communities.

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/Campaign-reports/Forests-Reports/Licence-to-Launder/>

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- Carbon versus food - A case study of the "Fair Forest Carbon compensation" project of French company Pur Projet, in the region of San Martin, Peru, which aims to generate carbon credits destined, initially, for the voluntary carbon market. In Peru where the nature of land law means that peasant or indigenous communities can be stripped of their land titles to make way for a protected environmental conservation area created within the framework of public policy, "carbon offsetting" projects, such as this one, only serve to exacerbate land disputes. <http://www.amisdelaerre.org/purprojet>

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