



WRM BULLETIN

World Rainforest Movement



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Dear friends,

We would like to highlight that the section "Genetically Modified Trees" of this bulletin includes a very important action alert to urge the Convention on Biological Diversity to ban GM trees that we would like to invite all of you to sign on. Thanks in advance for your support!

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OUR VIEWPOINT

- International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations

In 2004, the Brazilian Network campaigning against the spread of tree plantations came up with the idea of instituting an International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations on 21 September, which is National Tree Day in that country. The idea was supported by organizations from all over the world, who since then carry out a number of special activities on this day.

It is important to stress that this is certainly not a day aimed at opposing tree planting in general, but an activity focusing on one type of plantation in particular: large scale tree monocultures.

The need for such opposition is increasingly clear. While governments and many international institutions continue promoting what they term as “forest plantations” or “planted forests”, local communities continue to oppose what they describe as “green deserts”, “green cancer”, “selfish trees”, “planted soldiers”, or “dead forests”.

Such differences in wording reflect the gap between those who promote these plantations as something positive –forests- and those who oppose them because of their negative social and environmental impacts, described under the above terms.

Knowledge gained during the past decades, of the fact that plantations are established at the expense of local peoples' livelihoods and environment, has now reached such a level of certainty that it can no longer be ignored. In country after country, monoculture tree plantations have resulted in net loss of employment, forced or “voluntary” evictions, appropriation of large areas of land by national and transnational corporations, depletion and pollution of water resources, biodiversity loss, soil impoverishment, destruction of local ecosystems –forests or grasslands- and in many cases in human rights abuses including repression, imprisonment and even death.

Increasing consumer awareness on the impacts of the production of wood-related products –ranging from paper to furniture- led to the creation of certification systems, whereby consumers would be able to receive assurances that their purchases were not resulting in impacts on forests and forest-dependent peoples.

Those certification systems were promoted by different national, regional and international actors and led to the creation of a number of labels: Canadian Standards Association Standard (CSA), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), The Australian Forestry Standard (AFS), Sistema Brasileiro de Certificação Florestal (CERFLOR), Certificación Forestal en Chile (CERTFOR), Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC).

However, all of them failed to see what was obvious to local communities living in the vicinity of plantations: that large scale tree monocultures are intrinsically uncertifiable.

Over the past years, WRM has concentrated its critique on the certification of plantations by the FSC. This may have led to the wrong impression that the other labels were better. If this has been the case, we apologise. The only reason for concentrating on the FSC was because the participation of social and environmental NGOs provided this system with some credibility. The other labels –promoted by

governments and corporations- simply have no credibility at all (see articles below on PEFC, CERFLOR and CERTFOR).

However, having better or worse certification schemes is not the issue. What is needed is not certification but legislation –and compliance with it. The situation is so serious that it cannot be left in the hands of voluntary schemes and consultants to decide whether plantations deserve a label or not: their impacts are such that none of them do.

Legislation must ensure, in the first place, that governments immediately cease to provide plantation companies with any type of subsidies or support.

Secondly, governments must ban further plantations in areas where there is evidence of their negative social and environmental impacts.

Third, governments must carry out independent and participatory research to evaluate the impacts of existing plantations and compensate local peoples for the damages suffered, including devolution of land in cases where it was taken away from them.

Fourth, governments must apply the precautionary principle and prevent the implementation of plantations which might have social and environmental impacts.

The above are only some of the many actions that governments must implement to begin to redress the problems created by their plantation-promotion policies. People from each country or region should decide which ones are applicable and which others need to be added.

September 21st could be a celebration to living organisms that most people see as environmental symbols –trees- but the way in which they are being used for generating profits to some, makes it a necessity to commemorate this third International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations. We hope that the need for this Day will no longer be necessary in the very near future.

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- **Brazil: International campaign against rural violence in the Amazon**

A team comprising Alvaro Santos, Emiliano Camacho and the author travelled from Montevideo, Uruguay to the state of Para in the Brazilian Amazon in the framework of a national and international campaign on “An end to violence in rural areas!” “Cut out this scourge from the root!” promoted by the Latin American Secretariat of the International Union of Food workers (Rel-UITA) and the Brazilian National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), against rural violence in that country. The purpose was to film a documentary video gathering testimonials regarding some of the dozens of cases of rural leaders that have either been murdered or threatened with death.

These people are struggling in the front line where “grileiros” burn thousands and thousands of hectares of forest to appropriate the land, with no papers – and in the event they do have papers, they are always false – exploiting it during the few years soil fertility lasts, until irremediably it turns into a

desert. The association between wealthy adventurers, retired or serving military personnel who have founded their own feudal dynasties (starting in the sixties during the years of dictatorship) and those exporting precious wood, razing to the ground almost 40 per cent of the best Brazilian Amazon timber -and still advancing- and the cattle-ranchers and soya bean growers that cover vast tracts of bootlegged land, are such a powerful factor that, save for a few honourable exceptions, they are able to demolish Justice, the Police and the local political system.

The 40-minute video prepared on this occasion* tells three of these stories to help understand how this social and environmental massacre carried out in the Amazon turns into a drama of survival on a personal, individual level. To get an idea of the magnitude of the disaster, it is enough to mention a few facts:

- During the period of the Brazilian military dictatorship alone (1964-1985), 10 million hectares of Amazon forest were given over to settlements. Most of this land was distributed among high ranking military officials.
- Since then, over 1,550 murders have taken place, associated with disputes over land between powerful landowners and landless peasants or rural worker leaders. Between 1985 and 2004 alone, 560 murders were denounced relating to this cause.
- Of these, the police investigated a mere 30 per cent, only 6 per cent led to legal proceedings and in only 3 per cent of the cases were the merits of the cause determined, the suspects nearly always being absolved due to "lack of evidence." In short, cases in which a conviction was made were less than one per cent and the intellectual authors of the murders were practically never tried.
- Because of this inefficiency on the part of the legal and police system, 300 murder cases have already been prescribed as unenforceable.
- In 2003, 35 thousand families were recorded as having been evicted from their plots of land, in 2004 this figure was 37 thousand and in 2005 the figure dropped to "only" 26 thousand families. However, partial figures for the current year lead us to suppose that there will be an increase in the number of families evicted from rural areas in relation to the previous year.
- The Brazilians call people who have become landowners by "stealing" fiscal land "grileiros." Very often this involves thousands of hectares. These grileiros open up a gap in the forest, where large trucks can enter and leave. Then they log all the timber with a high market value and burn the rest. Satellite photos show the hundreds of fires taking place every day, where high spirals of smoke rise from the whole of the Amazon forest, from Bolivia to Venezuela.
- After burning this "useless forest" the grileiros fake title deeds with the complicity of corrupt local authorities and fence in their new "acquisition." With this procedure there are landowners who have managed to accumulate over 200 thousand hectares. First of all they bring in cattle to "tame" the forest soil, and then they plant transgenic soya bean, with massive use of the herbicide glyphosate for weed control.
- In the city of Santarem, in the heart of the forest and on the River Amazon, the transnational corporation Cargill has built, without any type of permit, its own port and the largest soya bean deposits in the world, where it stores the soya beans grown in these illegal farms.
- According to official and conservative estimates, some 100 million hectares have been "griladas" in

the whole of Brazil, some 90 per cent alone located in the Amazon. This area is as large as the whole of Central America and Mexico put together.

- Proposals for agrarian reform made by civil society set out a rational use of the forest: out of the total amount of land allocated to a community or to a farming family, the owners are authorized to cultivate 20 per cent and acquire a commitment to conserve the other 80 per cent where they can only carry out sustainable extractive activities. Land ownership is associated with fulfilling this commitment.

- In the opinion of trade unions and local peasant associations, the present government has made notorious efforts to change the situation. For example, over the past few years, 17,325 people who were subject to slave labour in ranches distant from populated centres were freed. In 2005 federal resources to resolve and prevent these conflicts were increased fourfold. Laws protecting important areas of the Amazon were adopted (that will have to be enforced), but the aspirations and needs of the communities concerned have still to be fulfilled. A law was adopted for the protection of Quilombola communities**. Among other initiatives and actions, a programme for geo-referencing the "hot frontier" of the Amazon forest corresponding to the areas most attacked by grileiros and logging companies has started to be implemented, under the responsibility of the Brazilian army.

- In spite of this, the pace of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon remains at approximately 2 million hectares per year and changes agreed on in the capital often take years in reaching the concrete locations where communities and rural workers suffer from the consequences of the landowners' - the powerful ones - impunity and absolutism.

Rel-UITA and CONTAG's national and international campaign is already showing positive results such as the visit by European trade union delegations and parliamentarians to the Brazilian government and to the area of Para with the aim of appraising in situ the complaint. The presence of Federal Police in the zone and strengthening of economic and human resources for the Public Ministry in the region have raised hope for change. However, the experience accumulated over so many years of struggle prevents any social organization from dropping its guard and they all are active and alert.

By Carlos Amorín, Rel-UITA. The complete version of this article -in Spanish- can be accessed at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Brasil/Para.html>

*"En la frontera del miedo. Historias de vida y muerte" (At the frontier of fear. Stories of life and death," Direction and script: Carlos Amorín and Alvaro Santos; Cameras: Emiliano Camacho, Alvaro Santos, César Ramos; Edition: Fabián Arocena; Made by: Osmedia (www.osmedia.com.uy); Production: Rel-UITA (www.rel-uita.org), CONTAG (www.contag.org.br). For information on the video: uita@rel-uita.org

** Quilombos: Communities of descendents of African runaway slaves

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- Congo Basin: International funding to support oligarchic logging

African logging concessions are usually seen as units of forest management. However they are better seen as a kind of currency in a larger system of power politics and exploitation.

The international community has played a key role in establishing and perpetuating the politics of 'logging-patrimony'. Probably the most important way in which northern countries promote oligarchic logging is by providing political, military, economic and diplomatic support for the oligarchic regimes it is designed to serve. Often, such support is unofficial, private or covert. International financial institutions (IFI) provide additional support by providing lending devoid of forestry-reform conditionality, by providing ineffective or misguided forestry-reform and project lending, and by providing private-sector forestry-related investments.

Despite the known problems with the forest sector in Cameroon, international funding has continued to pour into the country: during the 1990s, at least \$75 million in foreign assistance was given for forestry and conservation projects.

During the mid 1990s, Britain's Overseas Development Administration (and then DFID) attempted to implement a programme to 'operationalise' the provisions of Cameroon's 1994 Forest Law relating to the establishment of community forests. This required, firstly, establishing a clear set of rules for the allocation of community forests – which had never been undertaken by the Cameroonian government – and secondly to establish a unit within the Forest Department to administer the community forests. Community forests, as defined in Cameroon's law, are of extremely limited size (maximum 5,000 hectares) and duration (15 years renewable for a further 15). Further, they can only be established in the limited areas of 'non-permanent' forest, thus excluding them from areas designated as forestry concessions (UFAs). However, subsequent to the passing of the 1994 Forest Law, these non-permanent forest areas were becoming increasingly important to the political machinery as a means of allocating short-term, 'cut-and-run' logging rights, or 'ventes de coupes'. The forest administration thus worked actively to oppose the implementation of community forests.

This illustrates that the institutions that now administer the 'forest sector' in parts of Africa are not only primarily articulated around industrial logging but also, because this logging is linked to the vested interests of senior political figures, directly opposed to any use of forest resources – such as community forests – that might hold developmental benefits but that would potentially jeopardise the absolute discretion that those political figures have had in using forests as a means of political patronage.

Given the importance of logging concessions as the 'grease in the cogs' of political patronage, graft and corruption in all Congo Basin countries --and elsewhere: in Ivory Coast, Togo, Guinea, etc.--, it is hardly surprising that internationally funded projects to provide 'technical assistance' to improve the 'performance' of African forestry concessions have proved to be such spectacular failures.

Excerpted from: "The political ecology of the African logging concession system and the complicity of international donors", Simon Counsell and Arnaud Labrousse, sent by Simon Counsell, Rainforest Foundation, email: simonc@rainforestuk.com

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- Laos: FSC certified timber is illegal

When a forestry operation is certified under the Forest Stewardship Council system, it should mean we can all relax in the knowledge that the forests are reasonably well managed. Unfortunately, it seems,

this is not the case. SmartWood, an FSC accredited certifier, recently certified forestry operations in Laos which are producing timber that is illegal under the Lao Forestry Law.

The FSC certification is the result of more than a decade of aid projects and millions of dollars of aid money. Between 1996 and 2000, a project funded by the World Bank and the Finnish government set up a series of Village Forestry Associations in Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces in Laos. The project, part of the Forest Management and Conservation Programme (FOMACOP), aimed to develop a model of "village forestry", through which villagers would log the forests and receive a share of the money from the timber.

The first attempt to determine whether "village forestry" could be FSC certified came in 1999. But Lao government officials were unhappy about any outside monitoring of forestry operations. Rumours spread that government officials were worried about losing a lucrative source of income: bribes from the logging industry. FOMACOP collapsed in 2000, shortly after the failed certification attempt.

The World Bank and the Finnish government subsequently set up another project, this time called the Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project (SUFORD). In May 2003, SmartWood assessed the forest management. In January 2006, after a series of conditions were met to SmartWood's satisfaction, SmartWood issued an FSC certificate for 39,000 hectares of forest managed by six villages in Savannakhet province. A month earlier, SmartWood issued a certificate for about 10,000 hectares of village forestry in Khammouane province.

WWF supported the certification together with the Tropical Forest Trust, an organisation set up in 1999 to expand the area of FSC certified forest in the tropics. "FSC certification of these forests is a giant step forward for sustainable forestry and conservation in the region," said Roland Eve, WWF's Country Director in Laos.

But a leaked consultant's report from the World Bank- and Finland-financed SUFORD project tells a different story. The report documents the findings of a visit by a team from the Lao Forestry Department and a consultant to the SUFORD project, Tomas Jonsson. The team visited Thapanthong district in Savannakhet province between March and May 2006.

The team found that the certified logging operations are not carried out in accordance with management plans. "Documents were scattered and parts were missing" and "only partially understood" by local forestry staff, loggers and villagers, according to Jonsson's report.

The team found that the villagers and local forestry staff were "next to unable to use the tree maps". The maps were found to be inaccurate. In the forest, trees to be logged were not adequately marked. Unmarked trees had been logged. Some marked trees were left standing. Resin trees used by villagers had been cut. Some large, good quality logs were left in the felling area. Skid trails were not as marked on the maps. Hardly surprising, as the logging crew didn't have copies of the maps. Neither did they have safety equipment or protective gear. Logging crews lived under a tarpaulin, in a logging camp with no washing facilities or toilets.

More trees were logged than in the management plans because the province issued logging quotas "over and above the harvestable volumes as per approved logging plans." Several areas had been logged which were not yet supposed to be harvested according to the management plans. The team also found signs that villagers were felling and processing sawnwood within the certified area.

The team concluded that logging is not controlled by the management plans but is driven by the

demand from an ever increasing number of local sawmills. Logging plans are interpreted "as giving the right to cut a certain volume instead of specifically permitting the selected and marked trees to be removed," according to Jonsson's report.

With FSC certification it should be possible to trace wood back to the specific location that it came from in the forest, through a system of marking and tracking the timber. "In all inspected locations (forest, landing, mill)," the team found that "no tree or log was marked as per requirement." Logs that were marked did not have the appropriate number and were often marked with chalk. "Tracing and chain of custody of trees/logs is therefore impossible," Jonsson wrote in his report.

The control team also found evidence of illegal logging - logging in areas where management plans were non-existent or not yet approved. Without adequate timber marking, there is no way of knowing whether timber from these or any other illegal operations is being passed off as FSC certified timber.

But SmartWood knows all this. SmartWood's assessors issued a condition which states that "By the end of Year 1, all logs must contain clear and lasting marks (e.g. paint or chops) to identify the village, strip, and log number."

It is illegal under the Lao Forestry Law to move logs that are not appropriately marked. Before SmartWood's condition is met, therefore, FSC certified timber from Savannakhet is illegal under Lao law.

By Chris Lang, e-mail: chrislang@t-online.de, www.chrislang.blogspot.com

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- Nicaragua: Mining in the Southeast Biosphere Reserve

Nicaragua has been aware of the effects of mining for a long time now. The many gold mining and other metal mineral works have left an aftermath of environmental degradation, impacts on water resources with, inter alia, high cyanide, lead and arsenic levels and irreparable damage to the health of thousands of workers who have also suffered violation of their labour rights.

In spite of the fact that some Nicaraguan municipalities that had supported development on the basis of extractive activities now have the highest poverty rates – according to the poverty map prepared by the Nicaraguan Statistics and Census Institute (INEC) – the Government of Nicaragua is showing increasing interest in continuing to grant mining concessions all over the country. The Humboldt Centre has recorded that in December 2005, a total of 1,401,539 hectares were granted for metallic and non-metallic prospecting, in a country that has a total terrestrial area of 12,142,800 hectares.

Recently, the Municipal Government of Nueva Guinea, granted Minerale de Nicaragua S.A. (MINESA) a permit to prospect and exploit an open cast mine. Members of the Municipal Development Committee (CDM) of the Municipal Environmental Commission (CAM) and of Organized Civil Society (OCS) lodged a complaint with the Administrative Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ). In March 2004, MINESA had requested the General Natural Resources Office of the Ministry of Promotion, Industry and Trade (MIFIC) to grant it a mining concession for a 25 year period, of a 23,000 hectare parcel of land known as San Antonio.

The site is located in the Municipality of Nueva Guinea, part of the Southeast Nicaragua Biosphere Reserve, covering an extension of 18,340 Km² and harbouring high biodiversity of flora and fauna. "The soil of Nueva Guinea is clayey and acid. As it is in the humid tropics, leaf decay and organic elements together with humidity favour a productive fertile layer. However, the development of mining is detrimental to the environment, converting it into dry tropical lands," explained Luis Umaña, OCS representative. Mining works will completely change the type of vegetation, biodiversity, flora and fauna, in addition to affecting soil productivity and causing displacement of the population and other economic activities which generate greater income.

Umaña explained that with this type of action the Municipal Government of Nueva Guinea will encourage the social and environmental degradation of the area, affecting over 120,000 inhabitants. As it is a region with constant rainfall, there is serious danger of scattered cyanide being absorbed by the soil and contaminating the groundwater.

The OCS complained that legal provisions had not been complied with regarding prior consultation with the local inhabitants in view of mining concessions. Law 475 on Citizen Participation requesting the government to consult with the citizenship has been violated. For this reason we are asking for more information in order to give an opinion regarding the viability, benefits or damages that this activity may give rise to in the Municipality of Nueva Guinea," stated Umaña.

The OCS member urged the mayor of the Municipality and his government to respect articles 60 and 102 of Nicaragua's Political Constitution, which guarantee citizens' rights to inhabit a healthy environment and set out the State's obligation to preserve and care for the environment and natural resources.

Article based on information from: "Reserva de la biosfera del Sur Este de Nicaragua en Peligro por concesión Minera", Aldo Palacios, distributed by the Network of Environmental Journalists, Case: Expansion of Mining concessions and activities in Central American Territories, Humboldt Centre. http://www.humboldt.org.ni/descargas/denuncias_veredictos/veredicto%20Caso%20Centroam%E9rica%20mineria.pdf

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COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

- Brazil and Uruguay: Stora Enso's promises and the harsh reality

For some months now, declarations have been circulating in Southern Brazil and in Uruguay, both by members of the Swedish-Finnish company Stora Enso and by Government authorities of these countries regarding the advantages for the local population of the installation of the company's pulp mills in the region.

The president for Latin America of Stora Enso, Nils Grafström, as well as other high-ranking executives of the Swedish-Finnish company visit towns in both countries with the sole aim of announcing wealth, development and environmental preservation. Something very similar is taking place at this same time in other Latin American, African and Asian countries, such as China, where Swedish and Finnish corporate representatives increasingly affirm the social, economic and environmental benefits of projects to install thousands of hectares of plantations and new pulp mills.

However, the facts show that once installed in the countries of the South, the situation is really very different from what the companies had promised.

The experience of the Veracel pulp mill - joint property of Stora Enso and Aracruz and operated by the former – in the Brazilian State of Bahia is a clear example of unsustainability. This is confirmed in a letter we received, signed by an important group of “men, women and young people, rural and urban workers, indigenous people, environmentalists, scientists, professors, students, in which they denounce the situation of degradation and poverty of the Southern Region of the State of Bahia, promoted by the pulp company Veracel, a joint venture of Stora Enso”.

This situation is the result of the negative social and environmental impacts caused both by the vast monoculture tree plantations that the company has been establishing in the region for many years now to make available the necessary raw material, and by the pulp mill itself that started operating in 2005, with an annual production of 900,000 tons of pulp for export.

This letter states that “Over the past years, Veracel has generated a track record of environmental degradation, concentration of land, eviction of thousands of workers from the rural areas to the outskirts of cities, causing significant social and environmental disruptions”.

Regarding the generation of jobs, the letter affirms that “Not satisfied with the large number of lands purchased in the Southern Region of Bahia for the plantation of eucalyptus, Veracel Celulose now moves forward to the south of the State ignoring the social impacts this entails. Only in the municipality of Mascote, the company purchased several estates. Approximately, 400 workers lost their employment. Many of these workers moved to the outskirts of nearby cities”.

As is also happening in the case in Uruguay and many other countries, the signatories of the letter complain that: “In one of the properties of the Santa Rita group (made up by 4 ranches) purchased by Veracel ... the houses, corrals and plantations have already been destroyed to eliminate the signs that human beings once lived there, who depended on that land”.

Additionally and as is already happening in other regions, the plantations have negative impacts on water and in this respect, the letter states that: “Throughout the region, the extensive plantation of eucalyptus has resulted in the disappearance of several rivers and streams”.

When Stora Enso was installed in Bahia, it did so on the basis of the same promises of employment, development and wealth that it is now making in other countries. For instance, according to the Uruguayan press, “the information handled so far by Stora Enso” is that during its operational phase it will generate “some 3,000 direct and indirect jobs.” In Bahia not only did those promises prove to be false, but the company also generated rural migration, unemployment and poverty.

We ask ourselves how long these companies will be able to continue repeating their lies with impunity.

The letter referred to in this article is available at:
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Brazil/LetterStoraEnso.html>

- Cambodia: Impacts of pine tree plantations in the Mondolkiri province

Establishment of monocultures of fast-growing trees to produce so-called fast-wood has accelerated in Cambodia following the country's transition to a market-oriented economy in the early 1990s. Proposed and established plantations under the development paradigm of 'economic concessions' include fast-woods acacia, pine and eucalyptus. The majority of these economic concessions violates Cambodian law and there is little evidence that they create the proposed benefits and income for the state.

Between September 2004 and March 2005, the Environment Forum Core Team (EFCT), a group of volunteer environmental activists conducted field-based research on four economic concessions in Cambodia. The EFCT is part of a network of environmentally orientated NGOs established by the NGO Forum on Cambodia in 1995. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the EFCT looked at the likely benefits and disadvantages of economic concessions on local people's livelihoods (see full report at <http://www.ngoforum.org.kh/Land/Docs/Plantation/EFCT%20Plantations%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>).

Among the investigated cases is the fast-growing tree plantation of the Wuzhishan LS Group in the Mondolkiri province. Wuzhishan was established as a company in May 2004; in August 2004 the company received permission to establish a 199,999 hectare pine tree plantation in Sen Monorom and Ou Reang districts of Mondolkiri province. The concession boundary also overlaps in part with the 'Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area'.

In planning the concession, there was no consultation with the local communities, and extremely limited communication with the local authorities. There is no official publicly available map indicating the extent of the granted concession. In September 2004, Wuzhishan began operations in earnest, liberally applying the herbicide glyphosate to areas of the concession's grasslands, burning the dead vegetation, and commencing the planting of 250,000 pine seedlings. In preparing the land for the concession, Wuzhishan has indiscriminately cleared not only grassland used by the local Phnong population for cattle grazing, but also spirit forests and ancestral burial grounds which are essential elements of the Phnong culture. The use of the herbicide was widely criticized by the communities: it is believed to have contaminated water resources, to have affected human health, and to have been responsible for the death of cattle.

Large protests erupted on 16 June 2005, when between 650 and 800 mostly Phnong people affected by the plantation protested in front of the company's office in Sen Monorom town. This led the Council of Ministers to issue a Notification on 17 June 2005, ordering Wuzhishan to suspend planting immediately in all areas of the concession. An inter-ministerial committee was set up to resolve the problem.

Despite this, in late June, communities protested the apparent lack of progress and the company's continued planting, blockading roads in the concession-affected communes. The affected communities were subsequently reported to be subject to numerous threats and intimidation tactics. The blockades lasted for around a week before the company broke it with trucks full of workers wielding hoes, knives and sticks.

The results of the investigation show that almost all households interviewed (98%) were engaged in agriculture and animal raising as their primary occupation. 65% said that the company's activities had affected these agricultural activities, owing mainly to loss of farmland and effects from the spraying of the herbicide glyphosate. Many woman villagers reportedly do not now go out to farm because they are afraid company workers will rape them.

Interviewees reported a significant decrease in the availability of timber, which was mainly blamed on Wuzhishan having cleared the forest. The abundance of wildlife was also noted to have decreased as well as loss of habitat resulting from Wuzhishan's activities.

At the time of writing the report, the precise extent of loss of assets for villagers was unknown, because the precise boundary of the plantation in the vicinity of villages remained under negotiation. Despite this, 57% of interviewees said that they would lose some of their farmland. Large areas of grassland away from the village centers, presently used by villagers for cattle grazing, are being lost. Natural forest and fruit trees (growing both in forests and on open grasslands) that are vital to non-timber forest product collection are being felled, and tracks used by the Phnong are being obstructed. Furthermore, animals, fruit and crops are being stolen by the company workers. Important cultural sites, namely, spirit forests and burial grounds, have also been destroyed. Legal recognition of land ownership is complicated by the communal ownership systems practiced by the indigenous Phnong people.

In total, 21% of the households interviewed said that they had members working on the plantation. Each worker worked for eight hours per day, and was paid between US\$30 and US\$42.50 per month, with several workers also receiving 25kg of rice per month. UNCOHCHR (UN Cambodia Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) have described working conditions on the plantation as harsh. Interviewed villagers identified that: when sick they cannot ask for personal leave; they have to work hard; they do not get enough salary; they were worried by the alleged case of rape among the workers; there was pressure on them to work hard; and the workers stole sheep, dogs and cows from the villagers to eat. More recent reports (August 2005) indicate that most employees on the plantation are now migrant workers, and not local indigenous Phnong people.

The Wuzhishan concession has had serious negative impacts on the local, mainly indigenous Phnong, people's livelihoods, provoking serious protests and necessitating central-level government to intervene in negotiations for a solution. A lack of consultation with the local population during the initial stages of the concession's development has led to serious mistrust towards the company and a general feeling that local people's concerns are not being adequately addressed. Similarly, local government departments and the local authorities were not consulted and have been left on the sidelines in the decision-making process. Asked how they felt about the company, 11% of the households interviewed said they did like it because they could get work but 88% said they did not like it.

Since the report has been published, affected community people have tried to continue the dialogue with the government. In October 2005, officials from the Ministry of Environment conducted an environmental and social impact assessment in less than two days. The assessment -that has so far not been publicized- found no environmental impact and blamed the social impact on unreasonable demands of the villagers. The position that local communities were too demanding and uneducated to understand 'development' has since been reiterated in several meetings of community representatives and government officials. Recently, commune councilors from the affected area in Mondulkiri province have been taken on study tours to the capital and 'further developed' provinces to learn from the example. Civil society organizations were not informed and have been systematically excluded from

supporting the communities. Indigenous Phnong villagers are afraid that the government will demarcate their community land without paying any respect to their traditional rights; rights that are clearly recognized under Cambodian law. Until now the situation remains unresolved.

Excerpted and adapted from: "Fast-wood Plantations, Economic Concessions and Local Livelihoods in Cambodia", Environment Forum Core Team (EFCT), <http://www.ngoforum.org.kh/Land/Docs/Plantation/EFCT%20Plantations%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>; Information updated by the NGO Forum on Cambodia.

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- India: Will new National Forest Policy open the door to GM trees?

The study by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) "Preliminary Review of Biotechnology in Forestry Including Genetic Modification" (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/008/ae574e/ae574e00.pdf>), released in December 2004, summarized the state of biotechnology in forestry generally with a specific look at genetic modification of trees. In their findings they report 225 outdoor field trials of GM trees worldwide in 16 countries. Unfortunately they do not differentiate which field trials are current and which occurred in the past, painting a somewhat skewed picture. Of the 225 field trials, they list 150 in the United States. The remainders are listed mostly in Europe: France, Germany, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Finland and Sweden, as well as in Canada and Australia. Field tests in the South are listed in India, South Africa, Indonesia, Chile and Brazil. China is the only country known to have developed commercial plantations of GM trees, with well over one million trees planted throughout ten provinces.

India was referred in the study to have carried out one field trial of GM forest tree. Presently, a new National Forest Policy is being debated behind closed doors which, according to a report from the Indian Financial Express, "is expected to give a thrust to genetically modified (GM) trees for boosting the paper industry as well as improving the quality of by-products of wood."

Genetically modified trees have the potential to radically and permanently change the world's forests. As with GM crops, a major issue is gene escape, but the effects are more far-reaching due to the central role played by trees in the ecosystem.

After some inquiries, Ecologist Asia staff were unable to discover details of the proposed National Forest Policy. The Indian subsidiary of Monsanto says it is not working with GM trees in India at this time. In response to a query by email, Monsanto India representative Susan Joseph said from their Mumbai office that "Monsanto's India business consists of developing high-quality herbicides, hybrid seeds (corn and sunflower) and biotech traits (Bt cotton)." However, when asked about Monsanto's likely course of action if the new Indian Forest Policy promotes GM trees, she did not respond.

Anne Peterman of the US-based based Global Justice Ecology Project, which is coordinating an international campaign against GM trees, said in response to this, that "Trees are being engineered to resist Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. If Roundup-Ready trees are proposed for India, this is a connection to Monsanto, even though they may not be directly involved in the R&D. They will definitely profit from these trees through the increased sales of their toxic Roundup herbicide." If, as suggested by the Indian Financial Express, the purpose of GM trees deployment in India is to boost the paper

industry, then it is likely that one trait that will be genetically modified is the amount of lignin in the trees. Reducing the amount of lignin, which provides rigidity and strength to plant cell walls, is potentially a money-saver for the pulp and paper industry, which has to remove less lignin during processing of wood fibre.

However, as pointed out by Prof. Joe Cummins of the UK-based Institute of Science in Society (ISIS) in a paper on lignin reduction, "the advantages of reduced lignin are offset by the disadvantage of plants with reduced lignin, which are more readily attacked by predators such as insects, fungi and bacteria."

Weak lignin-reduced GM trees are likely to require additional genetically engineered traits, such as Bt insect resistance and herbicide tolerance. It is then only a matter of time before the traits escape into the wild ecosystem, as has already happened with GM crops of various kinds.

International agencies such as the FAO also are playing a key role in the issue of GM trees. In response to a question by email, Pierre Sigaud of FAO said that "FAO takes no stand for or against GM trees." In a statement on biotechnology on its website, FAO says that it supports "a cautious case-by-case approach to address legitimate concerns for the biosafety of each product or process prior to its release." However, with the FAO's involvement in China's GM trees programme, it seems clear that this represents a de facto stance in favour of industrial plantations of GM trees. There was no reply to an email asking for further clarification of the FAO's position.

Species that could be commercialised in India include GM eucalyptus, which has been called the "selfish tree" because of the large amount of water it uses, with an accompanying effect on India's vulnerable water tables. Glyphosate spraying, for example with Monsanto's Roundup, would also lead to inevitable contamination of drinking water and health problems for local people, such as cancer and miscarriages. Denmark has already banned glyphosate for this reason.

India's new National Forest Policy is being shaped against this background, possibly with pressure from companies that stand to profit from GM trees. As India's already-stressed forests struggle into the 21st century, with the human communities, native ecosystems, and especially water supplies that are dependent upon them, it is time to ask for transparency in this process.

Article based on information from: "The International Status of Genetically Modified Trees", 2005, Anne Petermann, Global Justice Ecology Project, <http://www.globaljusticeecology.org/index.php?name=getrees&ID=339>; "Preliminary Review of Biotechnology in Forestry Including Genetic Modification", FAO, December 2004, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/008/ae574e/ae574e00.pdf>; "GM trees bloom in rush to feed growing paper industry", BV Mahlakshmi, 2005, http://www.financialexpress.com/fe_full_story.php?content_id=97000; "Frankentrees Threaten India's Forests", Philip Carter, email: pcarter@web.ca, [http://www.writingfortheplanet.com/images/GE_Trees.pdf#search=%22Frankentrees%20Threaten%20India%E2%](http://www.writingfortheplanet.com/images/GE_Trees.pdf#search=%22Frankentrees%20Threaten%20India%E2%80%A2)

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- Indonesia: World Bank/WWF experts look for new ways to subsidise plantations

Wherever industrial tree plantations are planted in the South, governments provide a range of subsidies to investors. In Indonesia, the government has handed out billions of dollars for plantation development. The plantation and pulp sectors have also received generous aid support. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank funded studies in the 1980s. A range of export credit agencies helped finance the construction of pulp mills.

During the 1980s, while vast areas of Indonesia's forests were being destroyed by logging companies, the Indonesian government set up a "Reforestation Fund" financed by royalties collected from logging companies. Once the logging companies had carried out their reforestation obligations they could reclaim the money from the Reforestation Fund. Of course most logging companies carried out no reforestation and simply wrote off the payments to the Reforestation Fund. As a result, the amount of money in the fund grew rapidly.

In the 1990s, the government changed the Reforestation Fund to allow direct financing of industrial tree plantations. But most of the money went to Suharto's family and business cronies. The NGO Down To Earth notes that Suharto used money from the fund for the State Aircraft Company and the Southeast Asian Games. Between 1993 and 1998, more than US\$5 billion was lost from the fund. Many Reforestation Fund loans that did go to industrial tree plantation companies became bad debts. Two years ago, the Forestry Department rescheduled Reforestation Fund loans. As a result, 14 plantations companies closed because they could not repay the debt.

Companies drew up proposals requesting funding for industrial tree plantations, but the areas planted were far smaller than claimed. Between 1990 and 1997 almost US\$1 billion was distributed from the fund, which should have paid for five million hectares of plantations. Less than one-fifth of this area was actually planted.

Earlier this year, the World Bank/WWF Forest Alliance started a project with the Ministry of Forestry aimed at developing "financial mechanisms that can help to expand and accelerate plantation development". In an "activity concept note" dated February 2006, the Alliance states that the area of plantations in Indonesia needs to be "at least doubled", in order to secure the future of the country's wood processing industry (which is dominated by the pulp and paper industry). The total capacity of Indonesia's pulp mills is almost 6 million tons a year. According to the Centre for International Forestry Research, about 70 per cent of the wood consumed in these pulp mills is mixed tropical hardwood from what's left of Indonesia's forests.

Where plantations have been established, it has been at huge environmental and social cost. For example, in Riau province, 75 per cent of Asia Pulp and Paper's land is peat swamp. The only way of establishing plantations is by clearing the forest and draining the land.

An obvious answer would be to address the structural problem of massive over capacity in the pulp sector in Indonesia. Plantations are not even profitable. According to the World Bank/WWF Alliance, "returns to plantations are believed insufficient to attract commercial investment." But the World Bank/WWF Alliance is determined to rescue the pulp industry by finding new subsidies for more plantations.

The World Bank/WWF Alliance proposal is a bean-feast for consultants. According to the February 2006 "activity concept note", the Alliance was to hire "expert consultants" and pay them an average of more than US\$2,000 a week.

These experts were to develop a strategy and a plan. They were to look for financial institutions or

mechanisms to create incentives for plantations. They were to develop interim results and hold workshops. They were to engage stakeholders. They were to develop criteria and indicators, identify opportunities and barriers and analyse future trends and likely market developments.

The experts were to determine "conditions and interventions that will help to improve plantation financing based on the principle of 'The right tree in the right place for the right reasons, meaning the right end markets.'"

The experts were to "examine approaches for identifying beneficiaries and financial mechanisms that will enable resources to reach the right target groups, engaging in the right activities (environmental, social and financial viable) for the right reasons (informed and market responsive) with the right financing."

The experts were to "focus on establishing institutional means to ensure the right funds going to the right projects based on the right information and right returns on investment in the right time frame."

The experts were to be such experts that they could do all this without the inconvenience of talking to any communities affected by industrial tree plantations. The World Bank/WWF Alliance "activity concept note" states that "This feasibility study should draw on and synthesize previous studies and analyses, rather than primary data collection."

With this project to subsidise the pulp industry the World Bank/WWF Alliance shows where its loyalties lie: with the pulp industry and against the people.

By Chris Lang, e-mail: chrislang@t-online.de, www.chrislang.blogspot.com

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- Peru: The pillagers of yesterday and today, from deforestation to plantations

In our previous issue (WRM bulletin 109) we made reference to the promotion of oil palm plantations, denouncing their negative impacts on the Amazon forest and on displaced peasants.

The wave of plantations continues, with other types of alien trees. In July of this year the National Reforestation Plan was submitted, promoting plantations for commercial and industrial purposes. Adopted in January 2006, the plan set out an average annual rate of plantation of 104,500 hectares from now until the year 2024.

In a country where over eight million hectares of forests have been pillaged, it seems extremely ironic to propose such a reforestation plan as a remedy, and by the very same authors of the pillaging!

In fact, the National Reforestation Plan was put into operation by official bodies – the National Institute for Natural Resources (Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales, INRENA) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance – jointly with industrialists and logging companies. In a proposal similar to those applied in other countries of the region, the idea is to channel private investment through tax incentives. In this case the Plan has established an approximate amount of 853 million dollars that include foreign debt swapping for plantations. It defines that the payment of incentives for each type of

plantation and the promotion of private investment shall be done through “the development of a capital market that will be able to offer credit lines, with sufficiently ample periods of grace (harvest) and promotional interest rates.” The forest group Fondobosque announces it in this way: “Private Forestation Investments. The Great Opportunity” (<http://www.fondobosque.org.pe/boletin/Boletin25.htm>).

International financial institutions are lining up to facilitate this business. The World Bank, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and FAO are among some of the possible sources of international technical and financial cooperation. Within the possible funding mechanisms, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) would take responsibility for indebtedness, while the Italian-Peruvian Fund and the German Financing Corporation would be responsible for debt swapping.

There are practically no restrictions on this business as the tree plantations for commercial and industrial purposes of alien species – eucalyptus and pine – can be installed almost anywhere in the national territory. They may be located in agricultural lands, forests or grasslands and even in the lands of Andean peasant communities. The plan states that it is these communities that “have the most land suited to the establishment of this kind of plantations.” We have seen the damage done in other countries and denounced it profusely (see in our website: “The problem of tree plantations” at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/about.html>)

Furthermore, the forestry sector has recently managed to get Congress to adopt a new law, framed in the National Reforestation Plan, whereby deforested lands belonging to public domain may be given in concession to private investors to implement forestation and reforestation projects. This law has already been promulgated by the Executive and only requires ruling.

Yesterday's depredators who became rich at the expense of the destruction of Peruvian forests will now become – according to official discourse – “forestation agents” or “reforestation agents” and will receive sizeable resources from the State. However, in spite of the change in name, they will continue to be the same depredators, destroying soil, water, flora and fauna with their monoculture tree plantations and sinking the local inhabitants into poverty.

Article based on information from: Plan Nacional de Reforestación, http://www.inrena.gob.pe/iffs/pnr/proyecto_pnr-v151205v1.pdf#search=%22Plan%20Nacional%20de%20Reforestaci%C3%B3n%20per%C3%BA%22; información provided by Carlos Dávila Obregón, e-mail: carlosfelipedaob@yahoo.es

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- South Africa: Differentiated impacts of tree plantations on women

The history of the plantation industry in South Africa can be compared with the development of plantations elsewhere in the South: in Brazil, Aracruz Cellulose was developed under a military dictatorship; Indonesia's pulp boom was planned and put into operation during the Suharto regime; Cambodia, Thailand and Chile provide other examples of how state oppression has benefitted pulp/plantations companies.

In South Africa, the initial phase affected state-controlled land, from where communities were removed and relocated to other tribal areas by government decree. The 1980s witnessed a wave of new plantations led by timber companies with Sappi and Mondi taking the lead. This development took place mainly on land previously owned by white farmers. Thanks to artificially low input costs, especially wages and land acquisition, as well as generous subsidisation by the government at that time, the local timber industry has grown into a major exporter of wood and wood derived products.

However, the lives and standards of living of local communities have not been improved by the plantation industry. The so-called empowerment deals and contracting opportunities to the communities were not widely distributed, thus becoming a source of differentiation and social division. Furthermore, the encroachment of industrial timber plantations has led to environmental impacts -- including the irreversible destruction of grasslands, reduction in streamflow and water quality--, which in typical rural community life is difficult to separate from social, cultural, economic and political issues.

Further down this adverse scenario women suffer the differentiated impacts of various activities in the industrial timber plantations sector affecting them. A number of factors result in greater pressure on women from timber plantations. These factors should be read in the context of the culturally and historically defined division of labour among women and men in a patriarchal society, complicated by colonial economic policies. Rural family life is patriarchal and the status of the male head is unchallenged. It is usually the male head who will make the important decisions in the family. The role of women in these economies is complicated by the lack of mainstreaming of female involvement and participation in broader issues. They are largely considered as reproductive rather than productive.

Women are affected by the timber industry through involvement as workers, as growers, or because they reside close to or inside plantations. Those that work are affected by differential wages or the ability (or lack of it) to access skilled or better paying jobs. Timber growers are affected by their ability to command access to adequate land to ensure profitability, as well as retaining or independently deciding how to use the proceeds from the sale of the wood. Theoretically, and very often in practice, tree growing offers an economic option to rural women who have no other opportunity, provided they have access to some suitable land. However, many woodlots are contractually owned by men, but actually worked by women. Depending on how the contractual arrangements work out, the labour aspects have the potential to boost men's cash income although women do the work. This money seldom benefits the women and children who did the work as men often consider them already paid by virtue of staying in their homestead.

Problems related to living near or inside plantations have to do with safety. Plantations close to people's homes have increased safety and security concerns; women get raped and thieves dump their loot in the plantations: "As parents with girl children we worry a lot about the plantations. There are always strange men wandering around aimlessly and many sexual offenses have been reported. So they [girl children] cannot go to fetch water or firewood anymore. Besides, the plantations are used by thieves and robbers to hide and to store their loot. When the police discover these things they come and harass us by searching our houses apartheid style. We are not safe here with these plantations", said a local woman.

Women's time is shared amongst a multiplicity of activities, for which production responsibilities (food, the availability of water and energy for home use) compete with the reproduction responsibilities (childbirth, caring for and raising children). The advent of industrial timber planting activities in these rural communities complicates the nutrition and caring role of women. "From a woman's point of view my biggest problem is that of food. We were not used to buying food from the shops because where

we come from we had fields for beans and mealies. There would even be fields for the following year's crops. You would rotate the fields comfortably because there was enough land. We would buy machines and grind our own corn. We would never buy mealie meal. These are some of the things that remind us of where we are coming from."

The timber industry has been fairly labeled as the 'chief water thief'. The question of water and timber plantations is a very important one in a country like South Africa, where water is scarce and also very important for rural communities which were allocated land in the areas they were because the land was not good enough for European agriculture and settlement. In KwaZulu-Natal province, thirsty timber plantations are often situated high up in the water catchments, short-changing downstream water users. In rural community areas the loss of surface water has severely negative implications for people's ability to survive. Plantations cause small springs, streams and ponds to disappear, and this forces people to move into ecologically sensitive marginal areas to find water for their livestock and vegetable gardening. Also, when water becomes scarce it is women who have to walk longer distances to fetch water. It is women who have to wake up much earlier to get water for the household.

A senior woman in Sabokwe, Mrs Ziqubu, argued: "The thing is that we compete for water with these plantations. They use up a lot of water. I remember when we got here in 1996, the stream close to our garden was running perennially because the eucalyptus trees were not here. This piece of land from here to the road up there was grassland. The company feared that we would plant our crops and build our houses on that land so they quickly planted it to trees. Since then, water has become scarcer. The stream is drying up. The land, which we had to drain because it was swampy, has become very dry. We used to dig very small wells to water the reclaimed land. Now we have to dig deeper and we get the water from far away. Water for drinking has also equally become scarce. We also have to fetch water for our cattle, chickens and goats, besides the water for domestic consumption. This makes the work for women even harder. We have a co-operative garden run by women from this community which we fenced with assistance from the Department of Agriculture, yet we face big problems with watering it. We fetch water in buckets on our heads – and the women's garden project involves very old women. This is not a way to live and do business. The problem of water is as crucial as the access to land itself. You may get land, but without water there is very little one can do with the land. So we are here in the middle of a desert created by the plantation industry. To think that they do not even assist with drilling of boreholes, construction of windmills or other such water technology. This is why I said earlier that we are left to pay for the costs of these unconsidered impacts of the industry."

Excerpted and adapted from: A Study of the Social and Economic Impacts of Industrial Tree Plantations in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa, John Blessing Karumbidza, WRM, December 2005 <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/SouthAfrica/book.pdf>

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PLANTATION CERTIFICATION AT ITS WORSE

- PEFC: Endorsement of non-credible certification schemes in the South

The PEFC was set up between 1998 and 1999 by the national forestry interest groups – mainly associations of small-forest owners in several European countries as the Pan European Forest Certification Scheme. It changed to its current name after having endorsed other non-European schemes. The scheme is governed by the PEFC Council, which consists of representatives of national

certification schemes and are the PEFC's members. The PEFC is not a single certification scheme with a single standard, but a programme for the endorsement of national certification schemes.

As with other certification schemes, although the PEFC was supposed to certify forest management, it has also included tree plantations as being certifiable "forests".

A number of characteristics of PEFC make it the perfect label for unsustainable plantations in the South, as can be seen in the two articles below on certification in Chile and Brazil.

As a FERN report (2004) states, "In all PEFC standards, indigenous rights are not recognised", adding that "This is of particular concern, as PEFC will soon incorporate tropical schemes where the indigenous rights and land rights issues are of great concern." This has already happened.

In its report, FERN also considered that "PEFC's failure to give full recognition to the land rights of local people is a serious omission, as is its lack of a requirement for proper consultation with local stakeholders during the certification process. This is particularly relevant as the PEFC is about to endorse non-European schemes in countries where the discussion about land rights and reform of forestry laws holds the key to improved forest management. Without recognising this issue, the PEFC seriously risks coming under attack from a wide range of social and environmental organisations in these countries as well as in the North."

Such concern is now a reality: plantations in Chile and Brazil, strongly opposed by the indigenous peoples whose lands were taken over by plantation companies have received a label endorsed by PEFC. The sole reason for PEFC not having come "under attack" in the South is that the certification schemes it has endorsed have so little credibility that they have not even merited attention by organizations involved in the struggle against plantations.

The FERN report also states that PEFC "has not yet changed the fundamentals of the system by embracing equal participation of different stakeholder groups. It still gives the forestry industry and forest owners dominance in the development of the programme and in the development of the standards. It is, therefore, not an independent scheme." In addition "Stakeholder consultation during the certification process is not required, although some national schemes have carried out stakeholder consultations." To make matters worse, "field visits are not in all cases required."

The above means that in countries such as Chile and Brazil the standards are simply set by the same plantation companies that will be certified, that adequate consultation is inexistent and that field trips are not even necessary –at least meaningful field trips.

As expressed by FERN, "the threshold for endorsement is so low, that most certification schemes can qualify." This has been proven true.

In this respect, FERN says "PEFC France, which has no clear minimum performance standards, does not certify at FMU [Forest Management Unit] level and does not require any field visits" and warns that "This does not bode well for the forests certified by tropical certification schemes that now want to accede to the PEFC." This has also proved to be true: hundreds of thousands of hectares of plantations scattering in thousands of management units –which were never visited by certifiers- are now certified in Chile and Brazil under the PEFC umbrella.

In sum, PEFC endorsement may have credibility in a few European countries, but in the two schemes analysed below (CERFLOR and CERTFOR), it has simply become the tool for providing market

access to some of the worse type of socially and environmentally damaging large-scale tree monocultures.

- FERN (2004).- Footprints in the forest. Current practice and future challenges in forest certification.
http://www.fern.org/media/documents/document_1890_1900.pdf

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- Brazil: The CERFLOR certification programme does not deserve the slightest credibility

The Brazilian CERFLOR certification programme, endorsed by the international PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes), was officially launched in 2002 by the Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade and started to operate in March 2003.

CERFLOR is based on five principles – accompanied by criteria and indicators – that vary according to local conditions. Much emphasis is placed on management plans, monitoring exercises and development plans for the local communities, but no minimum and clear social and environmental requirements exist with regards to performance. The social requisites do not go beyond those demanded by law. There are no requirement regarding self determination of the Indigenous Peoples and no representatives of NGOs or indigenous or local groups participate in the preparation of CERFLOR standards.

Beyond the principles, criteria and indicators, what is important is to see how it performs in concrete cases. In this respect, the case of the certification of Aracruz Celulose is amply revealing. In fact, CERFLOR has certified “forest management” of all Aracruz’ plantations in the States of Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia and Espirito Santo.

It is interesting to point out that in the case of the plantations of this company in Rio Grande do Sul, conflict over lands with the indigenous communities of the distant State of Espirito Santo generated so much discredit that the company itself decided to request voluntary withdrawal of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification from its plantations in the State of Rio Grande do Sul before revalidation in December this year (see WRM Bulletin No. 107). These same plantations have now been granted CERFLOR certification.

The case of Aracruz plantations in Espirito Santo is even more serious. In this state the company owns 146,000 hectares of land, 93 thousand of which are covered with monoculture eucalyptus plantations. Certification of these plantations by CERFLOR would seem provocative to all those who have a close knowledge of the situation and position of the companies’ managers towards the local communities and their environment over the past 35 years.

The Alert against the Green Desert Network, quotes some of the examples of conflicts, some going further back in time, some more recent:

“Aracruz Celulose continues to occupy approximately 10.500 hectares of Tupinikim and Guarani indigenous lands in the Municipality of Aracruz. They are lands that were recognized as indigenous by the Federal Government, although they were excluded from the last demarcation made in 1998. At that time, the Federal Government, under pressure from Aracruz Celulose, committed illegal action on

reducing the amount of land allocated for demarcation. The question is then how can a company be certified that occupies and exploits indigenous land?

Aracruz Celulose invaded the lands of the Quilombolas (the descendents of runaway African slaves) in the north of the State of Espírito Santo, evicting thousands of people and planting eucalyptus trees. Over the past few years, 34 Quilombola communities have launched a process of re-articulation and reorganization to guarantee recognition, devolution and demarcation of their lands, with the support of the Palmares Foundation, INCRA (the National Institute for Settlements and Agrarian Reform) and organized civil society.

Even so, CERFLOR certified a company that occupies and exploits Quilombola community lands. The inhabitants of Vila do Riacho who used to make charcoal from waste eucalyptus from Aracruz, had their ovens destroyed in an action linking the City government of Aracruz, the local police and Aracruz company 'armed militia' Visel. Eucalyptus waste, - remains of branches and trunks - were the only source of survival for the communities deprived of their traditional way of life. Presently the company is considered environmentally sound because it has a machine that grinds all this waste to become organic matter to be returned to the earth. All that remains is for Aracruz to win an environmental prize for this... Now, how can a company be certified that deprives landless families, Quilombolas and Indians of their only source of survival, making them go hungry?

In October 2004, Aracruz destroyed four houses belonging to inhabitants of the Barra do Riacho area, near its industrial complex. Following the destruction of the houses, it became evident in court that the families had been living there for over 10 years. Aracruz brutally destroyed their houses, and pulled up their banana, manioc and pineapple plantations. Is this a company that deserves to receive a forest management certification while it continues with its acts of violence against the local inhabitants, just as it has done against the Indians, Quilombolas and small farmers throughout the last 35 years, even with the support of the military dictatorship? "

The organizations, movements, communities and civil society citizens consider that CERFLOR does not deserve the least credibility. Civil society was explicitly excluded from the discussion on the objectives, principles and criteria in this certification system. As denounced by the Alert against the Green Desert Network: "To date we do not know what the principles and criteria the BVQI certifying company will use in this certification process and if we want to know them then we must purchase the documentation concerning the certification procedure established by CERFLOR, which characterizes it as lacking transparency. Furthermore, there are no minimum social or environmental requirements related with the CERFLOR certification. The reference is basically Brazilian legislation." .

But, as pointed out by the Alert against the Green Desert Network "a large-scale monoculture plantation can never be certified as it is unsustainable. Eucalyptus plantations are only "sustainable" for Aracruz, which increases its productivity at the cost of high consumption and contamination of water resources, the death of fish and other animals and so many other environmental impacts involving Indigenous, Quilombola and small farming communities that have always inhabited the region which has now become known as the Green Desert. Their way of life has been changed to benefit Aracruz, with the destruction of the Mata Atlantica forest, thus eliminating these communities' source of true sustainability.

The local communities are tired of the negative impacts caused by monoculture eucalyptus plantations. They want alternatives based on the production of food from the land through a wide-sweeping Agrarian Reform, they want reforestation with species improving the local environment and offering multiple use options, the Indians and Quilombolas want their lands back and, above all, they

all want their fundamental rights to be respected. .

The Alert against the Green Desert Network denounces CERFLOR and its technical team, in charge of preparing a report for the certification of Aracruz Celulose in the State of Espírito Santo. With no prior communication, this team accompanied by two Aracruz Celulose officials appeared in the Guarani village of Boa Esperança on 30/11/04, interrupting a meeting of the Commission of Tupinikim Guarani Chiefs and leaders.

Ângelo Rafael, a university professor and formerly having done in service training with Aracruz Celulose and Mannesman –another plantation company- and who has studied in the United States of America, spoke on behalf of the CERFLOR team, explaining that Aracruz Celulose still had the old-fashioned ways of the military dictatorship, when the State held most of the company's shares. However with certification the possible negative impacts caused so far, could be reverted. Aracruz took on the responsibility that possibly it may not be fulfilling its commitments. Additionally, according to the professor, the eucalyptus plantations would be beneficial for the population of Espírito Santo, because they are used in building furniture, making books, copy-books and other products consumed by the local population. Eucalyptus would then be comparable to the manioc, maize and bean plantations...

Questioned on these statements and confronted with data refuting them, Professor Angelo Rafael left the Guarani hut in a hurry to go to his car. The other member of the team, who said she was an anthropologist, stayed on a while longer, attempting to argue in favour of the company."

Paulo, a Tupinikim leader, questioned the specialists asking them "what do you people call forests?" For us, plantations are not forests. Our concept of a forest is different from the concept of the scientists. For us a forest is not planted to be cut down later. The forest is the place where we go to look for material for our crafts, to hunt, to look for fruit and to fish in the rivers. Our condition for the company to receive certification is that as a start it gives back the eleven thousand hectares of our land in its power." And speaking on behalf of the Indians, the oldest chief closed the conversation, stating "You are doing your job, but if you only knew the misfortunes that the company has caused here, you would not do this job, no. I could not do it, what the company did here was a crime. That is what the company is, a delinquent. We tell you that we, the Indians we do not agree that they be given this certification."

In spite of all this, CERFLOR has certified all Aracruz plantations. It is therefore evident that CERFLOR's certification programme does not deserve the slightest credibility.

Article based on: "Carta pública da Rede Alerta contra o Deserto Verde sobre a certificação CERFLOR da Aracruz Celulose no Espírito Santo" and "Aracruz Celulose: CER-FLOR que não se cheira", comunicués by the Alert against the Green Desert Network 2005; "Footprints in the forest. Current practice and future challenges in forest certification", 2004, FERN

http://www.fern.org/media/documents/document_1890_1900.pdf

All Aracruz forests now fully certified by Cerflor

<http://www.aracruz.com.br/web/en/imprensa/noticias/noticias177.htm>

Aracruz requests voluntary temporary withdrawal of FSC certification of its Guaíba Unit

<http://www.aracruz.com.br/web/en/imprensa/noticias/noticias178.htm>

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- Chile: Has the CERTFOR label any value?

In the year 2000 Chilean forestry companies announced the launching of their own forestry certification scheme, CERTFOR. This label was created under the auspices of the Fundación Chile, the Forestry Institute (Instituto Forestal - Infor) with the financial support of the Corporation for the Promotion of Production - CORFO (Corporación de Fomento de la Producción). After having attempted to join FSC – seeking international legitimacy – and following a negative answer, CERTFOR approached another international certification system: PEFC. It was thus that in October 2004, the Chilean CERTFOR certification system was internationally endorsed by PEFC.

The certifying companies accredited to carry out the audits are QMI Toronto and SGS. It is surprising that the latter is also accredited in the FSC system and that has been repeatedly questioned over its certification of plantations under this system. Perhaps it has mixed up the manuals of procedure?

So far CERTFOR has certified seven forestry operations in Chile, covering no less than a total of 1,600,000 certified hectares. Among these are the vast plantations of two of the most powerful groups in Chile: the Arauco Group and the Mininco Group.

This system is based on 9 principles accompanied by a number of criteria and indicators. Beyond these principles and indicators it is important to point out that CERTFOR is able to certify in one go all the plantations of a given company. This is the case with Bosques Arauco, a company that has been granted with a single certificate a label for 280,000 hectares distributed in 950 different plantation units. The same has happened in the case of Forestal Celco and Forestal Cholguán (also belonging to the Arauco Group) which have been granted certification for 446,100 hectares distributed in 2150 different plantation units. Needless to say the certifiers only visited a fraction of these units, going to show the system's lack of reliability.

Among its principles, the CERTFOR label does not make any mention of the use of transgenic trees, so it would not be surprising if in the future it were also to certify transgenic plantations. This gap has a very simple explanation: Fundación Chile – one of the creators of this scheme – is one of the organizations that has been most actively involved in the genetic engineering of trees.

Beyond the theory, practice itself shows sufficient elements to point out that none of these plantations should ever have been certified...by anybody!

In the first place, the Chilean forestry model was promoted during the Pinochet dictatorship and expanded on territories that historically belonged to Chilean indigenous people: the Mapuche People.

The impacts caused by the powerful expansion of forestry companies in the south of Chile are well documented: the destruction of native forests, the depletion and pollution of water resources due to the use of agrochemicals, uncontrolled erosion, destruction of biodiversity, the decline and even disappearance of wildlife and vegetation, health problems in the local population due to the use of agrochemicals, just to mention a few.

But fundamentally in Chile “forestry development” has led to serious negative impacts on the Mapuche People. It is not by chance that the increase in poverty of the Mapuche population coincides with the concentration of tree plantations. In spite of the millions of dollars of profits received by the companies, the forestry locations with a high Mapuche population in the Eighth and Ninth Regions are the areas where the highest levels of poverty and extreme poverty are to be found.

The advances of the Chilean forestry model are causing an ethnocide of the Mapuche People, a sufficiently important argument to prevent any certification of a Chilean forestry company operating in these territories. However, the CERTFOR certifiers do not even seem to be aware of the problem.

The Mapuche communities' principle focus of conflict over territorial claims is with the forestry companies, mainly with Forestal Mininco and with the companies grouped in Bosques Arauco. This has given rise to hundreds of people being arrested, sentenced and condemned, dozens of people wounded, and hundreds of mobilizations as a balance and result of the many demonstrations aimed not only at recovering lands but also at curbing expansion of plantations and of the serious consequences being denounced against the forestry companies.

Moreover, the Mapuche people have had to lament the death of two young men who were brutally murdered by the guards of Forestal Mininco during mobilizations to recover their land. So how could CERTFOR give Forestal Mininco a certificate for its 540,766 hectares?

Summing up, the CERTFOR label deceives consumers and is an affront to the Mapuche communities that are suffering the serious impacts of these plantations. We therefore permit ourselves to make a suggestion: perhaps they could change the pine on their logo for a skull and crossbones. It would not look so nice, but it would better reflect the true situation.

Article based on information from: CERTFOR, <http://www.CERTFOR.org>; Defensores del Bosque Chileno, <http://www.elbosquechileno.cl/41fsc.html>; "Modelo forestal chileno y Movimiento autónomo Mapuche: Las posiciones irreconciliables de un conflicto territorial" (The Chilean Forestry Model and the Autonomous Mapuche Movement: the irreconcilable positions of a territorial conflict) by Alfredo Seguel, http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Chile/modelo_forestal_chileno.html; Previous WRM bulletins, available at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Chile.html>

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GENETICALLY MODIFIED TREES

- Sign-on letter to CBD urging a ban on genetically modified trees

At its last Conference of the Parties (COP8), the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted a very important Decision (VIII/19), "Recommending Parties to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees".

That Decision recognized "the uncertainties related to the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts, including long-term and transboundary impacts, of genetically modified trees on global forest biological diversity, as well as on the livelihoods of indigenous and local communities, and given the absence of reliable data and of capacity in some countries to undertake risk assessments and to evaluate those potential impacts".

This is a very important step in the right direction, which needs to be supported against the pressure that will be put on the CBD by the powerful pro-GM tree lobby.

Given that the COP8 Decision has invited everyone "to provide relevant views and information to the

Secretariat for inclusion in this assessment", a number of organizations have produced a joint letter to be sent to the Secretariat providing information and analysis on the issue and calling for a "mandatory decision declaring an immediate ban on the release of GM trees."

The letter concludes that "GM trees have no role to play in the conservation of global forest biological diversity and, on the contrary, are likely to reduce forest biodiversity, with attendant social consequences. The high risks indicated by the available though incomplete science show that the technology could result in the extinction of forest plant and animal species with severe negative impacts on biodiversity" and urges the CBD "to move forward from the current recommendation to Parties to take a precautionary approach, to a mandatory decision declaring an immediate ban on the release of GM trees."

The full letter is available at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/subjects/GMTrees/LetterCBD.html>

If you wish to sign on to this letter, please send a message to STOP GE Trees <info@stopgetrees.org> before November 15th!

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