

The dangers of transgenic trees

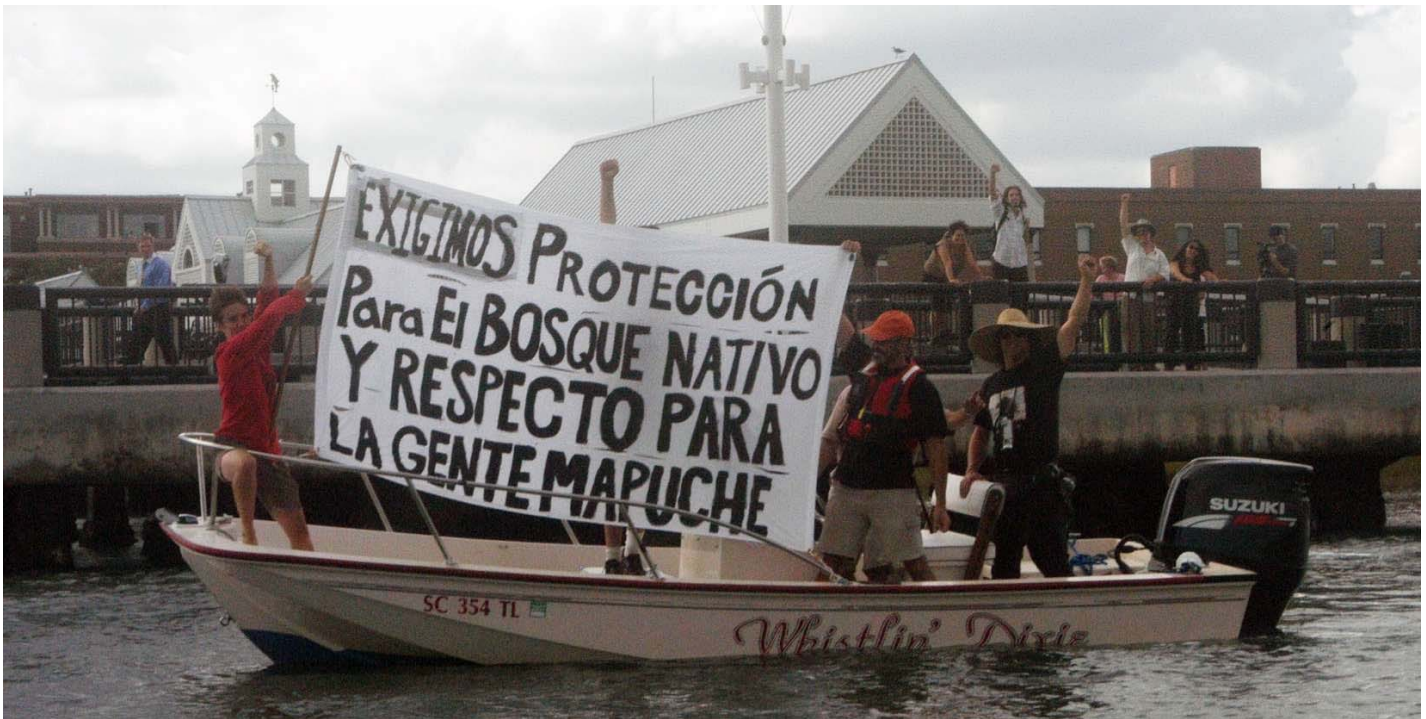


Photo: protests against transgenic trees and tree monocultures in Chile during an industrial conference in South Carolina, United States, 2006.

Transgenic Trees Will Expand the Disaster of Tree Plantations

Already in Chile monoculture plantations of pine and eucalyptus are producing terrible impacts on rural communities, on people's health, access to water, agriculture and forests. These plantations mean a serious danger during forest fires, because they are highly inflammable and propagators of fire and also because they dry all water sources.

Where communities are surrounded by eucalyptus or pine plantations, there are many bad effects. People's health is harmed by the chemicals used on the plantations. They lose access to fresh water because of the plantations. Their agricultural land is taken away by companies to expand tree plantations. The soils become very bad. This causes terrible poverty in the communities.

Communities have been stripped of their historical ways of subsistence and they have also suffered of forced displacement. This affect both the Mapuche People Communities as well as peasants from each of these territories, increasing the lands owned by companies. In the case of Chile, there are already approximately three million hectares of tree plantations, of which almost seven hundred and fifty thousand are from CMPC holding company that belongs to the Matte family.



Mapuche Leader at the 2009 United Nations conference on Climate Change. Photo.: Langelie

The Angelini group, through Forestal CELCO y Arauco, have more than one million two hundred thousand hectares. This situation has been supported by State development policies, which for more than four decades has financed this destructive model through the Law N° 701, tool through which the State provides direct subsidies to forestry companies, which have reached up to 90% of the cost of planting these "exotic species".

Today companies want better, more productive trees to feed their mills and make more money. These companies are using dangerous transgenic technologies to force these trees to grow faster. They want to grow more wood on each hectare of land.



They also want these trees to kill insects and resist toxic agrochemicals so fewer trees will die before they are cut for the mill.

All of this means that transgenic trees will make the problem of tree plantations much worse..

Transgenic trees = More land taken for tree plantations.

If companies succeed in developing new faster-growing transgenic trees, they will want more land to grow them. This will cause more evictions and land conflicts.

Companies say they will need less land if they have faster growing transgenic trees. But whenever companies make their plantations more productive, they expand them onto more and more land. Forests are killed and communities relocated to make room for the more economically valuable plantations.

Another problem is that transgenic trees do not grow only where they are planted. They can spread their pollen and seeds into other plantations and forests, making them more dangerous also. If this starts, there is no way to stop it.

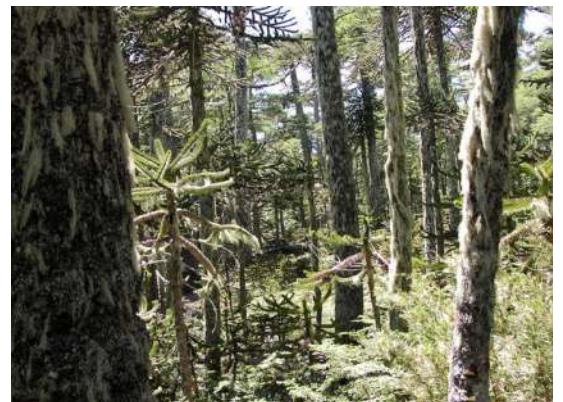
Transgenic trees deplete water and soils, expand drought

Because these trees are engineered to grow faster and bigger, they will use much more water than other plantations. They will also ruin the soil.

Plantations already use up soils and dry up fresh water, rivers and springs. Droughts are expanding and getting worse partly because of water-greedy plantations. Fires will get worse.

Transgenic trees = More agrotoxins sprayed

Transgenic trees will have more agrotoxins sprayed on them. This will cause more water to be poisoned, more land contaminated, more animals sickened or killed, and people's health will be affected.



Transgenic trees have unpredictable dangers

When scientists make transgenic trees, they are forcing them to do things the tree could never do in nature. This causes great harm to the tree and makes the tree do very strange things. It is impossible to know what these damaged trees will do as they grow—how they will impact the soils, animals, birds, insects or people—their impacts could be very dangerous.

For all of these reasons, transgenic trees must never be allowed to grow.

People resist transgenic trees



People around the world have been resisting development of transgenic trees since 1999.

There have been many, many protests at timber company greenhouses, forestry conferences and United Nations meetings.

Thousands of people have participated.



Protests against transgenic trees during 2013 IUFRO meeting in the U.S. Photo: Langelle

In 2015, protests were organized at Brazilian Embassies all around the world and more than 160,000 people signed letters demanding transgenic eucalyptus trees be banned in Brazil.

On International women's day in 2015, women in Brazil destroyed all of the transgenic eucalyptus seedlings growing in a Suzano timber company greenhouse.



What happens in Chile?

Although in Chile there are no regulations on research and biosafety in the development of transgenic trees, the one that exists for their insertion and / or propagation in the natural environment is extremely weak. Forestry companies and university research centers have been working for some years, even with public financing.

The strategy of introducing this technology in Chile has gone through the importation of transgenic forestry material, reproduction of that material, and also creating the national biotechnological capacity to produce species of transgenic trees in our country. We have arrived at this scenario, without public information and without democratic debate regarding the risks that this represents, constituting a new threat to territories and biodiversity.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)

One of the institutions promoting transgenic trees is IUFRO. IUFRO holds a Tree Biotechnology Conference every 2 years. In 2011 it was held in Brazil. Four years later, Suzano applied for and won approval to plant their GE trees.



In In 2013, IUFRO held their conference in the US state of North Carolina, in the region of the US that is already covered in pine plantations and where transgenic trees are being developed.

There were 5 days of non-stop protest and disruption of this conference.

Hundreds of people participated in the protests.

In June 2017 IUFRO is holding their Tree Biotechnology Conference in Concepción, Chile. There will be transgenic tree researchers there from all over the world to promote the development of transgenic trees in Chile.

Transgenic trees research is also being carried out in Belgium, New Zealand and Australia.

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