
[REDD - Brazil: Open letter from Acre challenges legitimacy of REDD+ “consultation” in California](#)

Organizations and individuals in the state of Acre and other states in Brazil sent an open letter this month to the governor of California and the California REDD Offset Working Group, challenging the legitimacy of a “consultation” carried out – through three workshops in California and over the internet, in English – regarding the inclusion of REDD offsets, primarily from Acre, in California’s carbon trading scheme. As of April 30, 2013, the working group will consider this “consultation” to be concluded and will submit its recommendations to the government of California.

The initiative to include REDD offsets in California’s cap-and-trade system stems from an agreement signed in 2010 by the governors of California (USA), Acre (Brazil) and Chiapas (Mexico), under which Acre and Chiapas would “supply” carbon offset credits generated by REDD+ projects, while polluting industries in California would benefit from these credits by purchasing the “right” to continue polluting.

The open letter from Acre and Brazil stresses, first of all, that this entire process is illegitimate: “As organizations and activists based in Acre and Brazil, (...) we are writing to you to express our opposition to the proposal of the government of the U.S. state of California to ‘reduce’ its CO₂ emissions through the acquisition of REDD+ offsets from the states of Acre and Chiapas, instead of pursuing emissions reductions in California itself. In addition to our opposition to this proposal, we also challenge the legitimacy of the ‘consultation’ process underway in California with regard to this matter, due to the lack of effective participation by the communities in Acre and Chiapas who depend on the forests to maintain their way of life and will be directly affected by this REDD+ proposal.”

The open letter also emphasizes that the “green” image presented to the world of Acre as a model of “sustainability” and of how REDD+ projects can be carried out in tropical rainforests – often using the figure and ideals of Chico Mendes to back up this image – is in fact a far cry from the reality in the state. “REDD+ will not effectively reduce global carbon emissions, and much less the destruction of the world’s forests; it deepens existing social and environmental injustice; it criminalizes the traditional practices of forest peoples and communities; and it is a profoundly neocolonial initiative.”

The letter recommends that the government of California cancel the illegitimate consultation process currently underway, “unless it undertakes, in the near future, a wide-reaching consultation with the parties affected in the territories from which it plans to obtain REDD offset credits.”

A large group of international organizations and individuals have endorsed the open letter and have sent a statement of solidarity, which declares: “Decisions regarding REDD+ legislation or programmes already do and will in future affect forest peoples’ way of life. Given that such meaningful participation was absent from REDD+ processes in Acre or during the elaboration of recommendations to the government of California in this matter, we urge you not to include REDD offset credits into the California carbon trading scheme.”

The statement continues: “We also share the additional concerns on the REDD+ mechanism and

support the demand made in the Open Letter that California should not include REDD offsets credits from Acre in its carbon trading scheme, and rather engage in efforts to reduce emissions at home.”

Download here the full texts of the [open letter](#) and [statement of solidarity](#).