
Brazil: Juma REDD test case in the Amazon

At present, the initiative for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is rather a collection of proposals and some pilot schemes. However, it is being strongly pushed and at a remarkable speed inside as well as outside the United Nations process, with the aim of including carbon forest in the array of mechanisms for carbon permits and carbon offsets.

Over the past two years, national proposals and plans for REDD projects have proliferated involving governments, multilateral organizations, big NGOs and corporations. The World Bank and northern governments including Norway, Australia and Great Britain have created a large fund of some \$800 million to finance REDD projects.

In Brazil, the Juma Sustainable Development Reserve Project, in the south-eastern corner of the state of Amazonas, in the municipality of Novo Aripuanã, is the first Brazilian implemented project involving REDD and has received the validation to the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Standards (CCBS) in Brazil, issued by the German audit company TÜV Süd.

The REDD test case of the Juma Sustainable Development Reserve covers a forest area of 589,612 hectares and announces that it will avoid the degradation of around 366,151 hectares of tropical rainforest from the total area and the emission of 210,885,604 million tones of CO₂ into the atmosphere by 2050. The project promises to pay local families an allowance for conserving the forest untouched.

The money for the project comes from the Brazilian NGO the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (ASF), which manages the reserve with funds donated from the provincial government, the Brazilian private Bradesco Bank and the big multinational hotel chain Marriott International. Hotel guests worldwide are invited to donate \$1 per night to the Juma fund as a way to voluntarily offset the calculated emissions from their individual hotel stay - the hotel's website announces: "Ten dollars will offset the carbon for your next ten roomnights at Marriott hotels and is tax deductible for U.S. taxpayers" (1).

Another financial source for the Juma project is the prospective sale of carbon credits for the CO₂ emissions avoided by not deforesting the reserve in the voluntary carbon market of emissions compensation, which according to the project (2) is being developed in partnership with Marriott International. For a big corporation like the Marriott Hotel Group, the project might well be very useful as a "green" public relations exercise.

The Juma project claims it benefits local communities with direct payment through the programme "Bolsa Floresta" – an allowance for the 339 families living in 35 communities in the area, who will be remunerated to protect the rainforest by receiving roughly US\$ 28 on a monthly basis transferred through a debit card issued to the wife.

A contract signed by each family head binds them not to cut or burn the trees, which will be supervised by regular inspections. In case of deforestation, the government will stop the

allowance.XX The Center for Investigative Reporting Frontline wanted to have their own look at this project which is being hoisted around the world as a model way to halt tropical deforestation. So they conducted a field trip by Mark Schapiro (3) who found that for residents like Dalvina Almeida, it takes a two-day roundtrip journey by boat just to receive their 28 monthly dollars. The report quotes Dalvina's husband saying 'We used to plant a lot. When this became a reserve they told us that we could no longer plant in the forest. Everyone signed up for Bolsa Floresta. But Bolsa Floresta can't sustain my family.'

The allowance of US\$ 28 per month represents US\$ 0.93 per day. For an average rural family of at least 5 people the per capita income drops to US\$ 0.18 per day. It would be good to inform the Juma Project managers and funders that this meagre payment is well below the poverty line, estimated by the World Bank as people earning less than 1.25 US dollars per day. Such a pittance becomes scandalous when compared to the US\$ 25,000 per month payment that is said the Juma Project foundation director receives.XX Additionally, it is important to highlight that local communities that have until now obtained their means of livelihood from the forest will lose most of those resources as a result of the Juma reserve.XX Schapiro comments in his report that "some farming families have lost a significant portion of their income when required to shift their food-growing activities from primary to secondary forests, and that the roughly \$25 'Bolsa Floresta' stipend has not significantly made up for the short-fall."

What makes matters even worse is that the preservation of this forest will allow polluters to continue emitting fossil fuel-related carbon. This means that the inclusion of the Juma forest into emissions trading will in fact contribute to climate change, because it will allow polluting corporations and rich countries claim that they are "offsetting" their carbon emissions by conserving a patch of forest in Brazil. Were it not because the World Bank strongly supports emissions trading, its economists would define the Juma project as a "lose-lose situation" for climate and people. But of course they won't.

(1) <https://www.marriott.com/green-brazilian-rainforest.mi>

(2) "The Juma Sustainable Development Reserve Project: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Deforestation in the State of Amazonas, Brazil," Project Design Document for validation at "Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA)," 29/09/2008, http://unfccc.int/files/methods_science/redd/application/pdf/pdd_juma_reserve_red_project_v5.0.pdf

(3) "The Carbon Hunters," Carbon Watch, reported by Mark Schapiro, produced by Andres Cediell, <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/carbonwatch/2010/05/the-carbon-hunters.htm>
