
Myth No. 7: Plantations provide opportunities for women

The experience of Ecuador in areas where large-scale pine plantations have expanded shows that, far from providing women with opportunities, women have been adversely affected by them in various ways.

The arrival of tree plantations to the Ecuadorian Andes has involved the destruction of local economic systems, strongly based on a subsistence economy. Smallholder farming for self-supply was the work of women and it provided them with a certain degree of food sovereignty in addition to leaving them a surplus for trading. Plantations have dismantled this system and forced the communities to integrate to a new economic system where money is the central element, leaving little room for women in a world dominated by men.

Furthermore, the expansion of monoculture tree plantations has caused water sources to dry up. This has had two kinds of repercussions on women as it is they, together with the children, who are responsible for taking the animals to pasture and now must cover longer distances in search of water for their animals. Furthermore, the scarcity of water makes their domestic and farm work harder.

Socioeconomic changes resulting from the arrival of the plantations, together with their negative environmental impacts have also led to generalize migration. In the Sierra, the trend is that the men leave to work in the cities and the women stay at home with the children. This has implied an additional load on women because now, in addition to their usual domestic chores they are responsible for doing jobs in the fields that were previously done by men – with the exception of sowing and harvesting which the men come back to do.

Summing up, the plantations have only worsened the situation of women, without giving them any benefits in exchange.

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