
[Brazil: Paper pulp companies must remove eucalyptus plantations in Bahia's national parks buffer zones](#)

According to Recommendation no. 01 of 18 November 2005, the Federal Public Ministry, through the Attorney of the Republic in Ilheus-Bahia, is demanding the removal of eucalyptus plantations in a radius of 10 (ten) kilometres in the buffer zones of the Conservation Units of the Do Descobrimento, Monte Pascoal and Pau Brasil National Parks, as determined by Brazilian legislation. The document also sets out that in order to restore the environment these enterprises, that is to say the pulp companies, must prepare a Plan for the Restoration of Degraded Areas (PRDA), immediately following the removal of the eucalyptus plantations.

For almost fifteen years now, the Centre for Studies and Research for the Development of the Extreme South of Bahia (CEPEDES), together with other bodies, has been lodging complaints regarding the irregularities committed by pulp companies in Bahia and Espírito Santo. In Bahia, among many other irregularities are the eucalyptus plantations surrounding Conservation Units, violating Federal Law No. 9,985 of 18 July 2000, which sets out stipulations regarding the National System of Conservation Units – SNUC and establishes buffer zones surrounding the parks. These buffer zones should be used as ecological corridors to guarantee the survival of local species of flora and fauna and maintenance and strengthening of biodiversity.

This decision of the Federal Public Ministry is a result of the public hearing held in October 2005 at the Porto Seguro Convention Centre. On that occasion, civil society organizations demanded that measures be taken regarding the irregularities committed by the pulp companies, through formal petitions addressed to the Federal and State Public Ministry and to IBAMA (the Brazilian Environmental Institute) and CRA (the Centre for Environmental Resources), which are responsible for authorizing and following up on plantations.

The recommendation emphasizes that the “Mata Atlântica [Atlantic Forest] is a national heritage, as established by the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil in its article 224, item 4, and its use must follow legally established rules in order to ensure environmental conservation and Decree 750/1993 strictly forbids logging, exploitation and removal of the primary vegetation or of vegetation in an advanced or intermediary state of regeneration.” It also adds that the replacement of thousands of plant species by a single species of economic interest, aimed at the pulp industry, promotes risks for the local fauna and flora.

Administrative file nº 1.14.001.000046/2001-67 is being processed which monitors the authorization for the location of the illegal plantation of 45,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees by Aracruz Celulose in the extreme south of Bahia.

Between 1970 and 1985 Bahia lost 70% of its native forests with the arrival of the paper and pulp mill companies Suzano Bahia Sul, Aracruz, CAF Santa Barbara Ltd. and Veracel. According to recent studies by the Ministry of the Environment, there is only 4 per cent left of the original Mata Atlântica in reserve areas in the extreme south of Bahia. It is estimated that in this region over half the arable land is in the hands of the companies. Approximately 12 thousand families are camping along the

highways. The eviction of rural workers, quilombolas (descendants from slaves), small farmers and rural Indigenous People has led to a significant increase in favelas (shanty towns), the disintegration of groups and families, violence and extreme poverty.

The development model imposed by governments for this region has destroyed entire systems of plant and animal life. The wealth generated by the economic model favouring concentration of income and land, has not prevented the growth of extreme poverty and hunger. To face this, demonstrations and movements have arisen reflecting the awareness of a significant part of the population regarding environmental and social violence caused by the vast stretches of monoculture eucalyptus plantations in the region.

Therefore, in view of this resolution by the Federal Public Ministry to have IBAMA, the Environmental organization, take measures in making the pulp companies remove the eucalyptus plantations surrounding parks, once again it is evident that the declarations of an environmental nature made by the pulp companies through the mass media, are being demolished. The meetings promoted by the pulp companies, aimed at masking the truth and discussing ecological corridors, now have no sense. What we have here in the extreme south of Bahia is not a central corridor for the Mata Atlântica, what we have here is a central corridor of an extensive monoculture eucalyptus plantation with small patches or isolated mosaics of degraded Mata Atlântica.

The decision by the Federal Public Ministry is an unusual event and a very significant one for organized civil society in the extreme south of Bahia, as for a long time now they have been asking for the responsible authorities to take measures to prevent the total destruction of this biome. Now it is not only up to IBAMA and to the NGOs to monitor the activities of these companies, but also up to the population, the most interested party in preserving what is left of the Mata Atlântica.

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