
[Brazil: Plantar counterattacks after receiving award for worst carbon sink project](#)

The Plantar forestry company located in the State of Minas Gerais has large eucalyptus plantations in the zone, established at the expense of evicting the local populations. They were also established at the expense of the typical forest in the zone (the “cerrado”), and the trees were converted into charcoal to supply the iron and steel industry and replaced by eucalyptus, planted for the same objective. The company’s social, environmental, economic and cultural impacts were widely documented in recent research work carried out by WRM (“Certifying the uncertifiable: FSC certification of tree plantations in Thailand and Brazil”), which sets out the impacts such as appropriation of lands and eviction of the inhabitants, depletion and contamination of water and soils, deforestation, destruction of biodiversity, net loss of jobs, bad working conditions, loss of livelihoods, and risks to health, among others.

In spite of that, the World Bank decided to approve the Plantar plantations as its first carbon sink project within the portfolio of the Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF), later validated by the SCS consulting firm, supposedly on the basis of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards.

All seemed to be going well for the company and the World Bank, until on 9 December, in the framework of the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention held in Milan, the Global Forest Coalition designated the company as winner of the 2003 Treetanic Award, granted annually to the worst carbon sink project. In their grounds for this award they stated that “in spite of the merits of the World Bank, the Prototype Carbon Fund and the State Government of Minas Gerais, the Global Forest Coalition is convinced that Plantar’s past and present record of social and environmental destruction are sufficiently outstanding to be declared as the undisputed winner of the 2003 Treetanic Award.

However, the company did not feel flattered by the award. On the contrary, the following day, the directors Marcos de Deus and Marcos Vinicius called a meeting of the leaders of the Rural Workers’ Trade Union (STR) of the Municipality of Curvelo in Minas Gerais. There the company exerted extreme pressure on the leaders, demanding that they sign a letter addressed to the World Bank, the text of which had been previously prepared. In their pressure on the STR leaders, the Plantar bureaucrats threatened once more with dismissals in Curvelo, in the event that the carbon credits were not forthcoming – unmistakable proof of the company’s lack of economic feasibility unless State incentives, green labelling and carbon credits are forthcoming. Putting pressure one by one on the leaders present there, like in a scene of Russian roulette, the company gathered the signatures it wanted, except that of Gracie dos Reis, who wrote “under pressure” next to her signature. The director Marcos de Deus threatened to bring a court case against her.

In the letter to the World Bank, the Curvelo STR assents (under pressure) that Geraldo Martins, the trade union’s lawyer, was present at the COP9 in Milan, representing the organizations Network Alert Against the Green Desert, FASE and others, but not the local STR. An attempt is thus being made to create a climate of local opposition against Geraldo Martins, who is described as contrary to the creation of jobs in Curvelo. An attempt is also being made at dividing the Municipalities of Montes

Claros and Curvelo, stating that in Milan, Geraldo Martins had criticised monoculture tree plantations, while Eliseu Oliveira from Montes Claros, had defended them. This falsity was denied in a message by both, in which they state:

“We were officially accredited as delegates to the conference and we met yesterday with PCF investors. We talked to them about the environmental impacts that eucalyptus plantations cause in our regions, the drying up of springs and rivers, and the eviction of local communities. We showed them the number of jobs generated by eucalyptus plantations and compared them with the number of jobs generated by other crops such as guayaba, coffee, corn, cattle raising, milk, particularly in the States of Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais, and more precisely in the areas of Plantar and Aracruz.

We told them about the uncertainty of employment, the health of workers in this employment and as an example referred to an accident that took place recently in Curvelo, causing the death of 11 workers and leaving two others mutilated. Added to this, is the fact that the companies adopt a rotational system among the workers to prevent them from ensuring labour rights, and even dismissing workers with work-related health problems. We asked them not to consider eucalyptus plantations in the Clean Development Mechanism or as carbon sinks because the plantations are only aimed at producing charcoal for the iron and steel works and pulp mills, without respecting the native vegetation.

To plant the eucalyptus, native trees are uprooted, and it is like uprooting our culture, our customs and the roots of our hearts. We have submitted alternative projects for a true agrarian reform, generating more jobs, fighting against hunger and misery and consolidating the Zero Hunger Programme, respecting trees, animals, water and life. Global warming has been caused by developed countries and the countries of the Third World should not be obliged to clean up contamination by the indiscriminate plantation of trees. We ended by saying that we were talking about the anguish of a people and they told us it was the beginning of a dialogue.”

Are the old military dictatorship methods back? Does Plantar have the right to repress the opinion of people who are not in agreement with the shameful process of environmental degradation caused by monoculture eucalyptus plantations? The above only goes to confirm that Plantar merits the award it has received. And if it continues along the same path, it will surely receive many more.

Source: in view of the present situation triggered off by the company, WRM has omitted the sources of the information on which it based the present article, considering that if it made them public it might be dangerous for those who sent us the information.