
[Costa Rica: Japanese dollars to promote monoculture tree plantations](#)

The new President of Costa Rica, Abel Pacheco would seem to have good intentions regarding the environment, but at the same time, shows some gaps in knowledge of the native tree species of his country.

In fact, such contradictions became evident on 2nd June, on occasion of a ceremony at the Presidential Residence, celebrating the donation by the government of Japan (through the World Bank), of US\$300,000 aimed at promoting commercial tree plantations. During the ceremony President Abel Pacheco stressed the need to fight for native species and halt plant "Nazism."

It would seem that the President was not aware that the species to be planted --Gmelina and Teak-- are not native, but come from Asia. In fact the project funded with the Japanese government donation, is aimed at planting 50,000 hectares a year of Gmelina and Teak, for a period of ten years. That is to say that the plan is to cover a small country like Costa Rica with no less than 500,000 hectares of monoculture tree plantations.

The donation is accompanied --as usual-- by the corresponding environmental, social and economic discourse to justify this type of forestry "development." The very name of the project (Project for the Reactivation of Commercial Reforestation in Costa Rica – REFORESTA), transmits a deceitful message that "reforestation" is taking place, when in fact it is really "monoculturisation" that is being carried out.

Furthermore, Constantino González, the chairman of the fund managing the donation has stated that this activity will generate between 20 and 30 million dollars over the next ten years and will make it possible to supply local demand for wood and eliminate pressure on forests and lessen illegal logging. All this sounds good, but does not agree with the true situation, either in Costa Rica or in any other part of the world.

It is sad that a country such as Costa Rica, possessing a very rich forestry diversity, has entered into the Japanese game of becoming a supplier of cheap wood for this and other insatiable markets of the industrialised world, instead of concentrating on rehabilitating its forests destroyed by other "development" processes (such as cattle-raising) which, in the past have resulted in environmental and social destruction.

We would very much like to see the new President of the Republic "fight for native species" and face "plant nazism" promoted in this case, by the government of Japan and its intermediary, the World Bank. We hope to see this.

Article based on information from: "Reactivan reforestación comercial," by Lisbeth Huertas Jiménez, Semanario Universidad, 19 July, 2002, sent by Juan Figuerola, e-mail: juaneco@racsa.co.cr

