Mexico: Opposition to forestry plan prepared by Finnish consultancy firm

In the previous issue of our Bulletin, we reported on the forestry plan prepared for Mexico by the Finnish consultancy firm, Indufor. In the article we pointed out that the consultancy firm itself emphasised that “the uncertainty of social consequences associated with large scale plantations, has produced a cautious attitude on the part of the rural communities.” We translated this as an elegant way of avoiding the use of a more appropriate word: opposition.

And, in fact, opposition has not been long in coming. The leaders of the five most important social forestry organisations in the country have made public their serious questioning of the so-called Strategic Forestry Plan for Mexico.

The leaders of these organisations have stated that the Plan stems from a “biased” assessment, which identifies the type of land holding as the main cause of deforestation “which would seem to suggest that the solution to deforestation is privatisation of woods and forests.”

And of course, the leaders are right. In spite of all the proof shown to the contrary, the foreign consultants continue insisting on the recipe of privatisation as the solution to all ills. In this case, it will imply appropriation by major transnational companies of lands presently occupied by small-scale farmers, peasants and indigenous peoples.

Contrary to what the Finnish consultancy firm suggests, for the social forestry organisations, “the main cause of deforestation is a policy subordinated to agricultural policies, where traditionally the woods and forests have been a sort of territorial reserve for the expansion of agriculture and animal husbandry.” This is no secret to anyone in Latin America, although it would appear to be so to the foreign “experts” responsible for this analysis, correctly considered as “biased” by the local organisations.

Linked to the above, the leaders also criticised the fact that the plan promotes private initiative as the driving force for forestry development and does not take into consideration the communal and small land holders (owners of 80 percent of the country’s woods and forests) in preparing and implementation of the plan, nor does it contain any mechanism for actions in concert with those forest managers.

Paradoxically, it seems clear that the Strategic Forestry Plan for Mexico is not a plan for the Mexicans living in the forests of Mexico. On the contrary, it is a plan prepared behind the backs of the owners of the forests, aimed at benefiting external agents comprised by major transnational groups. Under such conditions, it is only to be expected that opposition to the plan will continue to grow and extend to all the social sectors that would be affected should it be implemented.

Article based on information from: Rosa Rojas, "Critican grupos sociales plan forestal del gobierno foxista", La Jornada, 25/7/01.