
Mexico: Forestry Plan prepared by Finns

No one can doubt that the world is becoming increasingly mad. The Uruguayan forestry plan was prepared by the Japanese, the Thai plan by Finns and now, the “Strategic Forestry Plan for Mexico 2025” will also be prepared by Finns.

No matter that these supposed experts know little about local environmental conditions and even less about the culture and idiosyncrasy of the inhabitants. The recipe is always the same, be it Mexico, the Congo or Indonesia: “forests must be planted” (which, in the language of these experts, usually means monoculture eucalyptus plantations). The recipe includes the need to “promote” plantations (translated into normal language meaning that the people must subsidise the large companies so that the latter can obtain considerable profits). It also involves government sectors taking on the responsibility of making the recipe acceptable and putting it into practice.

The former governor of Jalisco, Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez, director of the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR), seems to have taken on this role seriously. During an interview, published on 12 July in “La Jornada”, he set out the need to “make forests.” He announced that the sector’s main work is established in the Strategic Forestry Plan 2025, “prepared with support from Finnish specialists.” In fact the Finnish firm of consultants, Indufor did a lot more than simply provide “support”: it prepared a final report that is now being used as a draft for discussion.

During the same interview, the director of CONAFOR pointed to the need for introducing legislative changes to implement the plan and announced that “special impulse will be given to commercial forestry plantations.” The changes announced will certainly have something to do with the subject of land and with the subject of subsidies to plantations.

As may clearly be seen, the opinions of Mr. Alberto Cárdenas are based on the plan prepared by Indufor, so it is interesting to see what they say in this respect. In the chapter on forestry plantations, the plan states that “to promote the establishment of commercial and industrial forestry plantations, direct economic incentives have been designed and implemented which are presently being adjusted.” This means that the major forestry companies are to be subsidised.

The report continues by stating that “Problems still persist in having access to the land, security of property rights, marketing and regulations...” generating “an unfavourable climate for investment.” Of course this does not refer to access to land by peasants or indigenous peoples; the “problem” resides in how to enable the major forestry companies to legally ensure the use of hundreds of thousands of hectares of land for their plantations.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the report (in comparison with other very similar ones existing in other countries of the region) is that it brings up a doubt: “the uncertainty of social consequences, associated with large scale plantations, has produced a cautious attitude on the part of rural communities.” This also requires translation: it means that the communities are opposed to large scale plantations as they suspect, and rightly so, that they will be established on the lands that they depend on for a living. Similarly well founded are their suspicions that the plantations will

generate very few jobs and that they are going to bring about impacts on soil, water and biodiversity, elements they also depend on for survival.

Returning to Mr. Alberto Cárdenas, he tells us where they intend to plant these single crops: "In the south and south-east of the country. But there is also interest in the states of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Sonora, Chihuahua, Jalisco and Michoacán." In fact, they will be implemented in those sites having the requisites needed by the international paper industry. That is to say in regions where eucalyptus grow very fast, where land and labour are cheap, where there is abundant water for the installation of paper pulp plants, where environmental control is not very strict. Those who know the characteristics of the various Mexican regions, will thus know where they are considering establishing their plantations.

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