Hawaii: tree plantations threat is back

In 1997 Friends of Hamakua -a local NGO- together with local farmers and community organizations successfully resisted a project of Prudential Insurance Co.and Oji/Paper Marubeni to set up a big eucalyptus plantation and a pulp mill in the Big Island of Hawaii. The project was finally rejected by the Hawaiian authorities (see WRM Bulletins 3 and 7).

Nevertheless, the threat of plantations is still standing: 16,000 acres of former sugar cane land are to be converted into eucalyptus plantations in Hamakua. The same as in the above mentioned failed attempt, the big landowner Bishop Estate -this time together with Prudential Insurance- is behind this initiative. Tradewinds Forest Products, an affiliate of Quality Veneer and Lumber Inc. of Seattle and Oregon, USA, is willing to install a veneer and plywood industry in a small coastal town in Hamakua. The population and environmental organizations have expressed their concern on such a large industry development (only the plan site will occupy 70 acres), since the factory will need at least 50,000 acres of tree plantations to support its operations. This means that still larger areas will be devoted to monocultures.

The implementation of the project will also require the deepening of the local harbour which, together with the dumping of ballast water to the sea, will cause a negative environmental impact on the existing coral reefs. Additionally, it is feared that the increase of truck traffic in the area will also have negative effects.

Friends of Hamakua, which is actively monitoring this project, is requesting all information that can be useful to their struggle. Those wishing to cooperate and to know more about this case, please contact them by
e-mail: texdrivein@aol.com or by phone (1 808 775 9886)

Source: Ada Pulin-Lamme, Friends of Hamakua, 20/9/99,