
The World Bank makes plantations possible

The World Bank is one of the major actors directly and indirectly promoting industrial tree monocrops in many countries, especially in the tropical region. The Bank directly promotes plantations through:

- The provision of technical advice for forestry planning, where models on how to zone land for different uses -including plantations- are set up.
- The provision of loans, some of which are currently being presented as national resource management projects, environmental projects, etc., even if many of them are basically focused on monoculture tree plantations. Between 1984 and 1994, the Bank lent 1.4 billion dollars to create 2.9 million hectares of tree plantations and this trend continues.
- The promotion of plantations as carbon sinks under the Clean Development Mechanisms established in the Kyoto Protocol. Even if the negotiations related to its implementation are still in course, the Bank is planning to open in November 1999 a Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) for a group of selected investors of Northern countries. The PCF will be an investment fund where carbon tonnes -instead of shares- will be negotiated. Investors will be compensated with credits or licenses to emit an equivalent amount of carbon to the atmosphere or to sell them to other companies or countries. This James Bond licence-to-kill approach could eventually result in the plantation of millions of hectares of carbon sink plantations in the tropics.

The Bank also supports large-scale tree plantations indirectly by:

- Lending for infrastructure -as highways- that are used to transport roundwood produced in plantations to the ports and to pulp mills. In tropical countries, highways are also the way to penetrate into the rainforests, leading to their destruction through logging and conversion to cattle-raising, agriculture, tree plantations, etc.
- Influencing or creating the required conditions through structural adjustment loans, which emphasize the promotion of export products such as wood, pulp and palm oil, thus leading to an increase in the plantation area.

In sum, the World Bank is a major actor in making large-scale plantations possible. The current process it is carrying out to review its forest policy -which will include regional consultations- may be a good opportunity to influence it regarding the negative role of plantations and to have it change its policy in this respect.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- NGOs monitoring World Bank activities in general can monitor and question the Bank's role in the promotion of plantations. They can also disseminate to relevant organizations those Bank projects related to plantations
- NGOs following up the Bank's forest policy can take advantage of the FPIRS process as an opportunity to bring up and question the Bank's role in the promotion of plantations
- NGOs working on Bank and climate change issues can denounce the promotion of plantations as carbon sinks through the Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) as something that has nothing to do with the

Bank's main mandate, which is poverty eradication

- At the national level, identify Bank's projects and programmes in the pipeline which can directly or indirectly promote plantations, analyse their possible impacts and put pressure on the Bank to abandon them.