
Thailand: the pulp industry tries to strike back

The pulp and paper industry, which lost a number of battles to peasants opposing both plantations and pulp mills in Thailand, is now putting pressure on the government for the approval of an expansion of eucalyptus plantations. The Thai Pulp Industry Association is suggesting the Agriculture Ministry amend the existing forestry law which curbs the planting of eucalyptus. The reasoning is simple: that "the law should acknowledge that eucalyptus is an economic plant." The already well-known social and environmental impacts don't seem to be a major source of concern for the industry.

The Association is saying that the existing two million "rai" of eucalyptus plantations (some 320,000 hectares) are insufficient to supply the industry with raw material and that some 160,000 additional hectares of plantations would need to be planted within the next 10 years.

It is not known whether the recent purchase of shares of Advance Agro (a major local pulp and paper manufacturer) by the ENSO Group from Finland and a preliminary agreement to buy shares by Oji Paper from Japan, have something to do with the mounting pressures to develop eucalyptus plantations.

Sources: 'Producers want more eucalyptus plantations', Bangkok Post, 10/11/98; 'Finns pay for shares in Advance Agro', Bangkok Post, 12/11/98