
Jaakko Poyry: more than mere consultants

Jaakko Poyry is one of the actors involved in creating the conditions for establishing plantations. This consulting company was born in Finland 40 years ago. It grew up together with the boom of Scandinavian forestry after the war, when Finland, Sweden and Norway became one of the superpowers of industrial forestry. Jaakko Poyry was there, helping them to do it. Its role was to provide special expertise about planning pulp mills, paper mills, plantations, logging, how to plan industrial operations. At first its clients were Sweden, Finland, Norway and the rest of Europe. In the last couple of decades it started to expand globally and this has followed the pressures to expand plantations to the South, the pressures to exploit the forests of the South. This is a result of that but it is also one of the things that has facilitated this move to the South. Because as a consultancy, Jaakko Poyry plays an important role to get the land together with the machines, to get the officials together with the executives, to get the consultants together with the Forestry Department, so that the land can be converted to something which will support industrial forestry for pulp and paper.

Its role in the South especially --although obviously in the North as well-- is essentially political. They advertise themselves as technicians, but their role is largely networking, getting people together, getting the industry together with the officials, selling pulp and paper machinery, selling forestry machinery from Scandinavia and other countries, getting together the technology with the political infrastructure in each country. That's basically what they do. They have offices in 25 countries around the world and employ almost 5,000 people.

Indonesia provides a clear example of Jaakko Poyry's work. First hired by the World Bank to do surveys, assessments and planning for the entire forestry sector in Indonesia, this later resulted in contracts to help the specific private firms who were involved in plantations and industrial forestry in Indonesia, where many pulp mills are now being built..

In 1988 Jaakko Poyry did a study of Indonesia's timber resources for the Asia Development Bank and this was to identify sites for the development of the pulp industry in that country. As a result of that there are now 65 big pulp mills planned for Indonesia, with another 15 with permission to operate. Since then, the Finnish government agencies have provided guarantees, bank loans, technical advisors and equipment for the pulp and paper development in Indonesia and this includes setting up the plantations and then setting up the pulp factories which work from that. A number of other Finnish agencies and companies benefitted later from this.

Jaakko Poyry did the feasibility study for Indorayon in the North of Sumatra, and advised and supervised the plantations, the nursery and the equipment that went into that. It was also involved in Indah Kiat, which is another huge development in Riau, including pulp mills and paper production and in the Riau Andalan plant as well, where UPM/Kymmene (from Finland) is now involved. The PT TEL pulp mill also included Jaakko Poyry involvement, as well as the Finantara Intiga project in West Kalimantan, which is a joint venture between ENSO (The Finnish forestry state agency) and the Indonesian cigarette company Gutam Garang, who established a large plantation and there's a factory due for construction there in East Kalimantan.

Those are just some examples within the whole pulp industry and the plantations on which they depend, that are a result of Jaakko Poyry's work. These pulp mills are at the moment using native forests because the plantations are not yet mature. In the case of Indorayon the plantations are mature now, but to create those plantations they destroyed the forest. The only example where mills have not been built first and then the plantations set up is the case of Finantara Intiga, where they have set up the plantations before they even built the mill. But the general pattern is the other way round: they build the mill, they get a timber concession, clear-fell and then establish the plantation.

In spite of all the above -which are only some examples in one single country- Jaakko Poyry is now trying to promote itself as a "green" consultancy. However, its activities are being challenged, not only by the people directly affected, but also by Finnish NGOs, who have organized a number of seminars to show this to the Finnish public, on whose support the company depends to a large extent.