
Myth No. 5: Plantations relieve pressure on native forests

A typical propaganda disseminated by business interests and governments in many tropical countries is to say that plantations will relieve pressure on native forests. They claim that with enough plantations, native forests would eventually be left alone, as the plantations would provide sufficient wood to avoid the need of extracting timber from native forests.

This argument is a blunt lie. In the first place, because plantations and forests produce different qualities of wood, aimed at different markets. This means that demand for high quality wood will continue to rely on native forests while plantation timber will supply lower quality wood demand.

More importantly, in most cases monoculture plantations are established by replacing a native forest, which is felled and cleared to make way for the plantation. Through this operation, the plantation company -which is often also the company that logs the forest- will at the same time get access to cheap timber –from clearing the forest -and fertile land until then occupied by the forest. In many cases, plantation companies don't even establish the plantation after the native forests are felled and cleared –though the timber is of course sold- and they abandon the area leaving behind a degraded forest. In Indonesia, millions of hectares of degraded forests have been the result of this process.

In sum, plantations not only don't "relieve pressure" on forests, but are a major cause of deforestation and forest degradation.

Ginting Longgena, WALHI, Indonesia