
- Latin American Network Against Tree Monocultures is born

In the framework of the World Social Forum, representatives of Latin American NGOs got together to discuss the possibility of coordinating efforts with respect to the growing problem of tree monocultures.

During this meeting, the factors promoting territorial occupation by monocultures aimed at timber, cellulose fibre and palm oil production were analysed, together with factors limiting this occupation.

The increasing support for these monocultures given by the governments of the region was emphasised, many of which have approved legislation explicitly aimed at their promotion through granting all kinds of subsidies to this activity. In turn, such support is the result of initiatives arising from bilateral and multilateral agencies that prepare the way for the investment of transnational companies interested in this business.

Additionally, the area devoted to large-scale tree monoculture may be vastly increased because of the implementation of the so-called Clean Development Mechanism included in the Kyoto Protocol of the Climate Change Convention, making it possible for contaminating industrialised countries to "compensate" their release of greenhouse gases through the plantation of large areas of trees as "carbon sinks." Latin America appears to be one of the favourite destinations for such projects.

Summing up, the Latin American scenario is ready to receive, with the blessing of the governments, investment aimed at increasing the area covered by tree monocultures, both for production (timber, cellulose and palm oil) and to act as carbon sinks (dumps).

However, the participants in the meeting also analysed the people's growing opposition to this forestry model and the level of knowledge and experience gathered on the issue, which makes it increasingly difficult to convince the population of the region that these plantations will be of benefit to them. On the contrary, the experience in regions where this model has been implemented has proved to have disastrous consequences, both for the people (loss of territories, resources and jobs) and the environment (impacts on water, soil, biodiversity and on the landscape).

It was therefore considered essential to organise and coordinate action against tree monocultures on a continental level, in order to prevent their further expansion. In this respect, the representatives of NGOs from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay (and subsequently El Salvador) agreed to set up the Latin American Network against Tree Monocultures, delegating its Secretariat functions to the World Rainforest Movement.