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## Indonesia: the struggle against oil palm plantations

Indonesia is undergoing an accelerated process of plantation of oil palm. In a process promoted by the government -that wants the country to become the first palm oil producer in the world- and led by a reduced group of powerful companies, the present area of 3.2 million hectares is expected to increase at a rate of 330,000 hectares a year.

Since these monocultures invade lands originally occupied by forests and generally inhabited by indigenous peoples and local communities, their expansion brings with it significant environmental and social problems: land degradation, loss of biodiversity -due to the presence of the monoculture in itself and the use of pesticides and herbicides- dependence of the local economy on a single commodity whose price is affected by variations in the international market, etc. Many cases of conflicts regarding the use of the territory and natural resources, and human rights violations, have been denounced.

Realizing the need to work and develop plans together for coordinating and strengthening efforts at the local, national and international levels, some Indonesian NGOs initiated in July 1998 Sawit Watch and since then more NGOs joined the initiative. Sawit Watch has been successful in its activities of supporting local and indigenous peoples' struggle against oil palm plantation companies, campaigning against IMF/World Bank's Sectoral Adjustment Loan for liberalizing oil palm plantations, and raising public awareness on the social and environmental impacts of oil palm plantations.