
Malaysians in South Africa, South Africans in Brazil

Malaysian forestry companies could be given a thirty-year concession in South Africa to establish 300.000 hectares of industrial tree plantations in the Transkei in Eastern Cape province. Such project has raised very difficult and delicate questions given that this is probably South Africa's most impoverished area and plantations are being presented as providing development, jobs and money. Malaysian companies would also receive exclusive rights to develop elite and exclusive tourist resorts in the most pristine areas of coastal forest endemism. For sure this will prevent rural people from having access to their own natural resources and will degrade the local ecosystems.

On the other side of the ocean, South African pulp and paper company Mondi became, in May 1996, one of Aracruz Celulose's three major shareholders. Aracruz is the world's largest bleached eucalyptus pulp producer and owns 203.000 hectares of land in the Brazilian states of Espirito Santo and Bahia. Those plantations have invaded indigenous peoples lands, who are struggling to recover them and have resulted in widespread environmental degradation. Development, jobs and money are also used here as catchwords, but the true beneficiaries are mostly the companies' shareholders.

Sources: Chris Albertyn, EJNF, South Africa; Aracruz Celulose: Facts and Figures 1996