

# THE ROUND TABLE ON IR-RESPONSIBLE SOY

**Certifying Soy Expansion, GM Soy and Agrofuels**

**A briefing on the impacts  
of the Round Table on  
Responsible Soy**

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# Executive Summary

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**This report, published on the eve of the Round Table on Responsible Soy's third conference in Buenos Aires, warns that rather than promoting more sustainable production methods in the soy industry, the Round Table is in fact legitimising the existing environmentally and socially destructive practices which have drawn widespread concern from around the world.**

The damaging impacts of the booming trade in South American soy are already widely recognised in many parts of the world. Extensive research has shown how the intensive agricultural model being used by soy producers destroys rural economies, reduces biodiversity, depletes the soil and leads to increases in deforestation. Associated pesticide use damages human health and contaminates water supplies. The violence produced by the agroexport model of soya results in the violation of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the population in the producing countries.

But demand for soy is increasing as a result of the growing appetite for meat and a new European market for biofuels. And soy producers and investors, while paying lip service to the need for responsible production methods, are working behind the scenes to minimise environmental standards and increase access of their commodities to European markets.

Evidence from so-called "responsible soy" projects in Paraguay suggests that the Round Table will make little difference to the day-to-day activities of soy producers. The criteria being put forward are too weak, too superficial and too narrow focused on technical issues to make a real difference to the social and environmental damage being done by soy. In addition, the economical impunity of the agribusiness in the producing countries makes it unlikely that even these weak "sustainable" measures are to be enforced.

But the criteria, which incomprehensibly have the backing of some conservation NGOs, will be hugely beneficial to the soy producers seeking to provide reassurance to European governments and consumers who are concerned by the damage being done. The Round Table's criteria will provide a valuable coat of greenwash, legitimising the damaging practice on the ground.

If the Round Table members from industry have their way, it will mean a massive expansion of intensively produced genetically modified soy across South America - exacerbating the damage already caused - and a vast increase in the quantities of GM soy imported into Europe for use of animal feed and agrofuels, allowing contamination with GM varieties which have not been approved in Europe.

This will exacerbate the existing imbalance in the global food chain. European countries already have lost their food sovereignty with the intensive model of import of animal feed and depend heavily on developing countries for vegetable oils, including crucial vegetable proteins for animal feed. The report questions this model of feeding the world and urges a shift to a regional approach based on food sovereignty principles.

# Resumen Ejecutivo

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Este informe, publicado en vísperas de la tercera conferencia de la Mesa Redonda de Soja Responsable en Buenos Aires, advierte como esta institución en lugar de promover métodos de presión sobre la industria de la soja, es más bien de hecho, una herramienta para legitimar las prácticas destructivas sobre el medio ambiente y la sociedad.

Los efectos perjudiciales del floreciente comercio de soja de América del Sur son ya ampliamente reconocidos en muchas partes del mundo. Numerosas investigaciones han demostrado como el modelo de agricultura intensiva utilizado por los productores de soja destruye las economías rurales, reduce la biodiversidad, causa el agotamiento de los suelos y aumenta la deforestación. Además, el uso asociado de plaguicidas, daña la salud humana y genera la contaminación de los cursos hídricos. La violencia generada por el modelo agroexportador de la soja resulta en la violación de los Derechos Económicos, Sociales, Culturales y Ambientales de la población rural y urbana de los países productores.

La demanda de soja es cada vez mayor debido a la creciente industria cárnica y el nuevo mercado europeo para los biocombustibles. Los productores de soja y los inversores, mientras sostienen los “esfuerzos” de la necesidad de métodos responsables de producción, en realidad están paralelamente cabildeando en el escenario político internacional para reducir al mínimo las normas ambientales y aumentar el acceso de las commodities a los mercados europeos.

Los estudios de casos de los llamados proyectos en Paraguay de "soja responsable" indican que la Mesa Redonda hace poca diferencia en el contexto ambiental y social de los productores de soja. Los criterios que están siendo planteados, que tienen el respaldo de algunas organizaciones no gubernamentales de conservación, son demasiado débiles, superficiales y de visión estrecha basada en tecnicismos como para crear una verdadera diferencia a nivel del impacto ambiental y social que genera el modelo agroexportador de la soja. Además, la impunidad económica de los agronegocios en los países productores de soja genera una situación donde es muy improbable que ni siquiera estas medidas de “sustentabilidad” se cumplan.

Pero estos criterios serán enormemente beneficiosos para el agronegocio que intenta desesperadamente proporcionar una pantalla de seguridad a los gobiernos europeos y a los consumidores que se preocupan por el daño producido en los países productores. La Mesa Redonda y sus criterios de sustentabilidad proporcionarán un valioso escudo de maquillaje verde, la legitimación de la práctica perjudicial en el terreno.

Si la Mesa Redonda con sus miembros de la industria del agronegocio logra apaciguar el debate político y público sobre las consecuencias del modelo sojero, significa que habrá una masiva expansión de los monocultivos de soja genéticamente modificados en toda América del Sur –lo cual exacerbará el daño ya causado - y un gran aumento en las cantidades de soja transgénica importada a Europa por el uso de animales. Los piensos y los agrocombustibles, serán la entrada para la contaminación con variedades transgénicas aún no aprobadas en Europa. Esto solo resultará en la profundización del desequilibrio existente en la cadena mundial de alimentos. Los países europeos también han perdido su soberanía alimentaria con el modelo intensivo de importación de forraje, dependen absolutamente de los países en desarrollo para el consumo de las proteínas vegetales para la alimentación animal y en gran medida de los aceites vegetales para la industria alimentaria. El informe cuestiona este modelo de mercados globalizados y corporatizados de la alimentación del mundo, e insta a un cambio necesario con un enfoque regional según los principios de la soberanía alimentaria.

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# Introduction

**Nina Holland, CEO**

The third conference of the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) takes place at the Hilton hotel in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from the 23-24<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The event is intended to help the soy industry move towards more responsible practice, but organisations and movements from across Latin America have criticised the very-existence of the Round Table saying it merely seeks to legitimise the irresponsible and unsustainable practice of industrial soy production and justify even greater expansion, regardless of the human and environmental costs.

This briefing seeks to highlight some of the concerns around the soy industry and the Round Table, focusing on the impacts of soy production in Latin America and on the activities of the corporate members of the RTRS in Europe and Latin America, including their on-going push for further expansion and greater use of GMOs.

The briefing highlights the role of the RTRS as “greenwash” - providing the soy industry with a framework within which they can talk about corporate social responsibility (CSR) without actually providing any solutions for the real victims of soy production and expansion.

## Commodity certification

The development of a Round Table on Responsible Soy follows the establishment of certification systems or Round Tables in other high impact / damaging agro-industrial sectors such as wood (Forest Stewardship Certificate and others) and palm oil (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil). Most of these systems have struggled to involve or include a broad range of representatives. The RSPO, for example, has 202 industry members and 18 NGOs, of whom only a couple are based in the region, and even less directly represent communities that are affected by oil palm expansion.<sup>1</sup>

Monoculture production, as used for soy and palm oil, excludes small producers, in contrast to more successful schemes such as the ‘fair trade coffee’ sector. Big land owners and

agribusiness have a huge competitive advantage in the soy and palm oil markets; not only in production, but ironically also in ‘responsible’ or ‘sustainable’ certification, because they can much better deal with the costs and bureaucracy involved. All these initiatives are voluntary, and intended for a market that is willing to pay a premium.

Certification as an instrument does not put a stop to expansion. Companies selling certified produce can at the same time still be involved in bad practice and expansion operations elsewhere. Many FSC certified tree plantations have been criticised for ignoring the interests of local communities; RSPO members like Wilmar Group have been found to continue illegally logging rainforests, setting forests on fire and violating the rights of local communities in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

Certification initiatives like the Round Table on Responsible Soy could even support the expansion of the industry, for example by certifying soy for agrofuels, thereby legitimising agrofuel targets being set in Europe and elsewhere<sup>3</sup>.

## The History of the Round Table on Responsible Soy

The RTRS was formally established as an organisation in November 2006, following initial conferences bringing together different stakeholders in the industry. Members come from three constituencies: soy producers; industry, trade and finance; civil society organisations, with some members opting for observer status. (See [www.responsiblesoy.org](http://www.responsiblesoy.org))

Soy producers are represented by nine associations plus the very large producers such as APROSOJA (from Mato Grosso, Brazil), AAPRESID (Argentina), Grupo DAP (Paraguay) and Grupo Andre Maggi (Brazil). RTRS outreach activities have recently led to two smallholder cooperatives joining, one from India and one from Brazil.

Industry is represented by 39 companies including food producers like Unilever, banks (Rabobank, ABN AMRO), and animal feed and vegetable oil federations. The IFC, the private

<sup>1</sup>[www.rsपो.org](http://www.rsपो.org)

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2007/Wilmar\\_Palm\\_Oil\\_Environmental\\_Social\\_Impact.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/publications/2007/Wilmar_Palm_Oil_Environmental_Social_Impact.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See: ‘Paving the way for agrofuels’, TNI et al

lending arm of the World Bank, is also represented - and indeed its support for soy in the past has opened the door for much larger loans from private banks<sup>4</sup>. The recent rush to develop agrofuels has brought oil and energy companies on board, including BP, Shell and Greenergy.

There are 12 civil society organisations involved, of which five are either international or from the North, including WWF and The Nature Conservancy. Other NGOs come from producing countries including three from Argentina (FUNDAPAZ, WWF partner Fundación Vida Silvestre and Fundación Habitat y Desarrollo); two from Paraguay (Birdlife Paraguay (Guyra) and Fundación Moisés Bertoni) and two from Brazil (IPAM and Instituto ETHOS).

## Conflict and Opposition

The RTRS has faced opposition from the outset from grassroots organisations and campesino movements who say that this industrial model of agriculture is leading to rural migration, violence and the marginalization of their way of life. It is, in their eyes, a violation of their economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

During the first RTRS event in March 2005, civil society organizations held a counter-conference in Foz de Iguazu to discuss the problems caused by soy production. They concluded that *“sustainability and monoculture are fundamentally irreconcilable, as are the interests of peasant societies and agribusiness.”*<sup>5</sup>

During the second RTRS conference in Asuncion, a declaration against the “2nd Global Conference on Responsible Soy” received supported from a range of civil society organisations in Paraguay and many took part in protests<sup>6</sup>.

According to Obdilón Espinola from the National Peasant Federation in Paraguay, the soy industry is responsible for *“the eviction of peasants from their plots, the contamination of the environment, the migration from rural areas to the cities and abroad and on top of this there are many peasants who are have been taken to*

*court, imprisoned and murdered because of this production model.”*

This has made it difficult for the RTRS to persuade small farmers and NGOs to be involved in the Round Table process and the membership is dominated by a growing number of companies. The people directly affected by soy monocultures and their expansion are not represented at all.

The RTRS was initially set up by WWF and some NGOs have chosen to work with the RTRS, but for the organisations demonstrating in Foz do Iguazu and Asuncion the entire RTRS process is illegitimate including the involvement of NGOs.

Broad membership however is crucial for the legitimacy and the success of the RTRS. As Jeroen Douglas of Dutch NGO Solidaridad told a business seminar in Brussels: *“The broader the alliance, the more inevitable the RTRS becomes... There is still an imbalance in participation. We strive to become a global institution having inevitability as a target.”*<sup>7</sup>

The RTRS, through the Dutch Task Force on Sustainable Soy and Solidaridad, is currently working to try and reach out to potential new members in China, India, the US, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia.



Photo 1. 2006. Protest in Asuncion against the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Table on Sustainable Soy.

Photo: An Maeyens

## Conflicting views of “responsible soy”

Another problem facing the Round Table is a lack of consensus among members as to what

<sup>4</sup> Paving the Amazon with Soy – World Bank bows to audit of Maggi loan, Special to CorpWatch, December 2004

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.grr.org.ar/iguazu/docfinal-en.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.grr.org.ar/ceparaguay/>

<sup>7</sup> RTRS Business Seminar, Brussels, 19 March 2008



constitutes “responsible soy”, with some still refusing to recognise any problems relating to deforestation.

These views were paraded at a business seminar held in Brussels in March 2008 to promote RTRS membership among European companies.

At one end of the spectrum is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), one of the NGOs that works inside the RTRS. The IUCN's Tamas Marghescu warned the seminar of the consequences of the current model: *“We are importing and exporting unhealthy environments. We are heading for a collapse.”*

He highlighted the problems caused by illegal deforestation, the misuse of labour and the misuse of land. But he said by co-operating, a solution could be found. All parties should “come out of the trenches” and start creating “win-win situations” for both business and social and environmental interests.

WWF promotes RTRS membership as a way for business to reduce the risk to its reputation from being involved in damaging practices, pointing out on its website that soy traders in Europe and soy producers in Latin America are under attack for deforestation, displacement of small farmers and violating labour laws. *“These allegations carry serious risks. By joining the RTRS, you commit your company to carry out sustainable activities, avoid illegal practices, which allows you to reach new markets for responsible soy”*, it says.<sup>8</sup>

But industry speakers at the seminar “accuse” NGOs of spreading misinformation on the impacts of soy. Some even argue that soy production is playing no part in deforestation in the Amazon, that there is no need for a moratorium on soy production in the Amazon and that farmers who are legally there should be entitled to increase their production.

Industry figures such as Agustin Bianchini of AAPRESID, Argentina's large RoundupReady soy producers, blame population growth and changing diets for the expansion problems and

suggest that Latin America currently has the “biocapacity” to fill this demand..

RTRS members, such as AAPRESID and APROSOJA, are involved in other certification projects. AAPRESID has developed its own ‘Certified Agriculture – an evolution of “No Till” (‘no till’ referring to the combined technique of direct sowing with chemical weed control and herbicide-resistant seeds - using Roundup Ready) and APROSOJA is working with the Nature Conservancy, on “Greener Soy” - whose only aim appears to be compliance with Brazilian environmental legislation.

### **What about the smallholders?**

The RTRS has suffered from the beginning from a lack of representation from small holders (who supposedly might benefit from ‘responsible’ soy production) and from other stakeholders, including communities affected by soy farms. FETRAF, a Brazilian family farmers’ organisation, pulled out of the RTRS because it was not sufficiently addressing concerns it had, including the production of GM soy.

But some within the industry do not think there is a place for the smallholders, because “sustainable soy” from small-scale producers is not considered feasible.

*“You have to benefit from economies of scale,”* Van Mierlo from the Dutch bank, Rabobank, told Milieudéfense Magazine in 2006. *“Otherwise you get products in the supermarket that are three times the price. And people primarily take the cheapest products, unfortunately not the sustainable ones”*. Rabobank has a long track record in investing in large scale agribusiness and with 12% of its investments (\$580 million) in the soy sector.

Many of those within industry continue to claim that soy production brings jobs and rural development to the countryside. So called “Soy towns” in Brazil, they say, have the highest Human Development Index in the country. They choose to ignore the expulsion of the rural poor, those without land and the small holders who now eek out their existence living on the edges of cities, where they struggle to get by.

### **Third time around: Buenos Aires**

The third RTRS conference takes place under the slogan: “Food, feed and fuel for a future

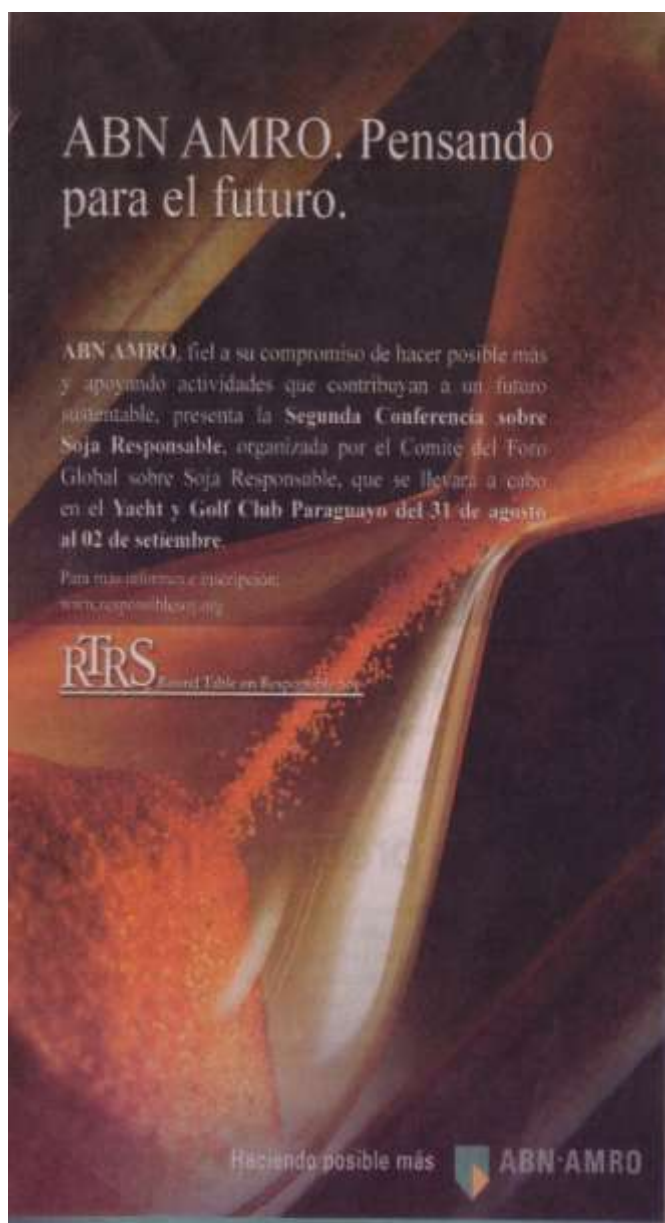
<sup>8</sup>[http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/what\\_we\\_do/forests/our\\_solutions/responsible\\_forestry/forest\\_conversion\\_agriculture/roundtables\\_soy\\_palmoil/round\\_table\\_on\\_responsible\\_soy/index.cfm](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/forests/our_solutions/responsible_forestry/forest_conversion_agriculture/roundtables_soy_palmoil/round_table_on_responsible_soy/index.cfm)

world". The agenda includes looking at the draft RTRS principles and criteria; the debate around feed, food and fuel, developments in the retail sector, and new technological developments. No smallholder representatives (and very few NGOs) are scheduled to speak.

One contentious issue that is not on the agenda is GM soy. As things stand, the RTRS draft principles and criteria do not discriminate between GM and non-GM soy. This means that GM soy is likely be certified as "responsible" by the Round Table.

Given the organisations represented on the Round Table, this is not surprising. AAPRESID, the organisation representing Argentina's producers of GM Round-up Ready (RR) soy (who produce 95% of all Argentinean soy), are on the Steering Committee. As Kees Vis of Unilever has pointed out, excluding GM soy from the criteria would effectively exclude most of the world's soy growers.

Social movements and organisations worldwide have published a counter-declaration ahead of the third RTRS conference in Buenos Aires, rejecting: "all attempts by corporations and NGOs to mobilize public opinion in support of their notion of sustainable or responsible GM soy monoculture. We disapprove the projects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that through roundtable dialogues and voluntary measures attempt to cover up the crimes committed by corporations... "Where there are monocultures, there cannot exist sustainability!"<sup>9</sup>



**Photo 2.** ABN-AMRO's classic greenwash. ABN-AMRO advertisement for the 2nd RTRS conference in Paraguay "...Supporting activities that contribute to a sustainable future".

Photo: From Newspaper, Nina Holland, 2006.



**Photo 3.** ABN-AMRO in the real world of soy monocultures. Encarnacion, Itapua Paraguay: "Reliable in Agriculture".

Photo: Nina Holland, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.grr.org.ar/mesaredonda/ingles.pdf>

## **This Briefing**

This briefing sets out some of the key barriers to developing “responsible soy”, looking at the environmental and social impacts of the soy industry, with some detailed case studies looking at “responsible soy” production in Paraguay.

It will then examine the different perspectives of the RTRS members in relation to tackling the challenge of “responsible soy” and look at the current lobbying behaviour of some of the companies which belong to the RTRS, and show how this is in stark contrast to their involvement in developing “responsible soy”.

# Chapter 1. The Impacts of Soy in Latin America

An Maeyens, ASEED

Reto Sonderegger, BASEIS

**Soy monoculture extends throughout South America displacing rural populations as it spreads. It devastates forests and grasslands weakening the foundations of food production within each nation. The countries where soy is grown become soy republics, whose sole purpose is the production of animal fodder and fuel to maintain standards of living in the West.**



**Map1.** Southern Cone of South America.

Today, Brazil is the biggest producer of soy in South America, with some 20.6 million hectares - an area almost the size of the United Kingdom - under soy cultivation. According to Greenpeace, 1.2 million hectares of Amazon rainforest were destroyed as a result of soy expansion in 2004-05 alone<sup>10</sup>. Argentina has 16.13 million hectares of soy<sup>11</sup>, making up more than half of the nation's agricultural area. Soy is also expanding in Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile. GM soy accounts for 98% of production in Argentina, 100% in Uruguay, 93% in Paraguay and 64% in Brazil<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup>Greenpeace (2006) *Devorando la Amazonia*.

Downloadable from

[www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/espana/reports/devorand-o-la-amazonia.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/espana/reports/devorand-o-la-amazonia.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>SAGPyA (2008) *Estimaciones Agrícolas Soja 2006/2007*. Buenos Aires: Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentos

<sup>12</sup>ISAAA (2007) *Global status of Commercialized biotech/GM Crops: 2007*. Philippines: ISAAA, FAO (2006)

## Spreading Poverty

The spread of soy is leading to increases in poverty levels, according to research carried out by two Paraguayan anthropologists<sup>13</sup>. An examination of the main impacts of soy expansion, including the socio-economical, environmental, health and political impacts on communities shows why.

In Paraguay, soy expansion is taking over former grazing land and farmland which previously belonged to small-scale farmers. At a socio-economical level the expansion increases the concentration of land in the hands of more and more, often Brazilian, large scale soy producers and investors. This exacerbates the already unequal distribution of land, creating problems for small scale producers. It also affects labourers who see their income reduced.

Soy production is not a traditional form of agriculture, using land for cultivation on a moderate scale to supply the national market and provide employment. Soy production is a form of farming without farmers. In GM soy monocultures, labour levels decrease by between 28% and 37%, compared to conventional farming methods<sup>14</sup>. In Argentina, high-tech GM soy production needs two workers per 1000 ha a year<sup>15</sup>. This goes hand-in-hand with a short-term vision of profit in which the destruction of habitats and cultures is an unfortunate but necessary price of economic growth.

Small-scale agriculture is not compatible with the large-scale mechanised cultivation of soy. Soy production requires knowledge about issues such as patents, knowledge that is in the hands of industry, not farmers. This leaves the farmers dependent on agri-business, undermining their

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Pollution from industrialized livestock production. Rome: Livestock Policy Brief 02 on

[http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/policy-briefs/02/EN/AGA02\\_EN\\_08.pdf](http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/policy-briefs/02/EN/AGA02_EN_08.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>Fogel, R. en M. Riquelme (2005) *Enclave Sojero. Merma de Soberanía y Pobreza*. Asunción: Centro de Estudios Rurales Interdisciplinarios.

<sup>14</sup>Gudynas, E. (2007) *Perspectivas de la producción sojera 2006 / 07*. Montevideo: CLAES. Downloadable from <http://www.agropecuaria.org/observatorio/OASOGudynasReporteSoja2006a07.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>Giarracca, N. and M. Teubal (2006) "Democracia y Neoliberalismo en el Campo Argentino. Una convivencia Difícil" in *La Construcción de la Democracia en el Campo Latinoamericano*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

independence. Soy production also requires considerable capital to be able to invest in the GM seeds, the pesticides and the machinery, which all form part of the so-called “no till” package. “No till” farming is particularly effective for soy because it conserves water in the soil, and require less labour. But it also means that soy is only profitable on a large scale. Peasant farmers have limited or no access to the level of capital required.

Even medium-sized producers are vulnerable as they need to keep on increasing production to stay competitive. And the scale of soy production tends to mean reduced incomes for labourers. Case studies from rural areas of Paraguay<sup>16</sup> show that when peasant farmers try to grow soy on a small scale, they find themselves trapped in a spiral of debt and often forced to sell their land. In soy areas, evidence shows that employment rates are falling, with most available jobs precarious and short-term. For many peasant farmers, leasing their land to soy producers is the only way of benefiting at all from the soy industry - and this is only an option for peasant farmers with substantial areas of land. But even this can lead to debt. Without land they are unable to grow food for themselves - and so may end up forced to sell rather than lease their only asset. Peasants with little or no land do not even have this opportunity.

In Paraguay 90.000 small farmers have abandoned their communities since 1990 because of soy expansion<sup>17</sup>; and it is the landless and small scale farmers who suffer the most. More and more, young people migrate to the slums of cities which are becoming increasingly overcrowded and where there are few employment prospects for non-educated farmers. Many end up in dangerous or poorly paid jobs that nobody in the First World would consider doing any more. According to the findings of the research carried out in Paraguay, it is impossible to guarantee the rights of peasants alongside large scale, export-

<sup>16</sup> Rulli, J. (ed.) (2007) *Republicas Unidas de la Soja. Realidades sobre la Producción de Soja en América del Sur* Asunción: GRR. **Downloadable ( English and Spanish) from** <http://www.lasojamata.org/?q=node/85> and Palau, T., D. Cabello, A. Maeyens et al. (2007) *Refugiados del Modelo Agro exportador. Impactos del Monocultivo de Soja en las Comunidades Campesinas Paraguayas*. Asunción: BASE IS. **Summaries (Spanish, English and Dutch) on** <http://www.lasojamata.org/?q=node/92>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

orientated agriculture. The process of soy expansion results in the violation of their cultural, economical and social rights. People are effectively being forced from their land. Research looking at the impacts of soy expansion and so-called “soy development initiatives like the Roundtable on Responsible Soy in Paraguay<sup>18</sup> and Brazil<sup>19</sup> found that the weakest bore the worst impacts.

Soy production also causes considerable damage to the environment and to human health. According to the World Rainforest Movement, the deforestation of tropical rainforests has been taking place at a rate of between 10 and 16 million hectares per year in recent decades<sup>20</sup>. Displaced cattle farmers are being forced of their land, moving into the forest - often resorting to burning to clear the land, causing environmental devastation and pollution for communities living nearby<sup>21</sup>. An area equivalent to 16% of the total Amazon rainforest has already been lost, and each day another 7.000 hectares of forest (an area of 10x7 kilometres) disappears. Soy is one of the main drivers of this expansion<sup>22</sup>.

The destruction of natural habitats, such as forests, wetlands, or steppes, always signifies a great loss in biodiversity, as many species of plants and animals lose their natural habitats and run the risk of extinction. With the loss of many plant species, the traditional knowledge of their medicinal properties is also lost, and consequently illnesses are treated less frequently with herbs and more through the use of chemical products from the pharmaceutical industry. This creates an extra financial burden for rural families.

<sup>18</sup> Maeyens, A. (2008) *Paraguayaanse boerengemeenschappen in de greep van sojamonocultuur. De invloed van soja-expansie: migratie en verzet*. Downloadable (Dutch) from [http://www.aseed.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=60&Itemid=107](http://www.aseed.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=60&Itemid=107)

<sup>19</sup> Steward, C. (2007) “From Colonization to “Environmental Soy”: A Case Study of Environmental and Socio-Economic Valuation in the Amazon Soy Frontier” in *Agriculture and Human Values* 24: 102-122

<sup>20</sup> WRM, 2004. *Palma aceitera y soja: dos cultivos comerciales paradigmáticos de la deforestación*. Montevideo: World Rainforest movement. **Downloadable at** <http://www.wrm.org.uy/boletin/85/palma.html>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601086&sid=aBtKTifD3uMc&refer=latin\\_america](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601086&sid=aBtKTifD3uMc&refer=latin_america)

<sup>22</sup> WRM, 2004 as above

## Investment Funds Take Over Farming

Lilian Joensen, GRR

The high levels of capital needed to develop “no till” soy production have led to the development of a new investment structure, known as “sowing pools”. According to FAO “sowing pools” provide financial, commercial and agronomic management for large-scale production. The aim is to give the investor returns that are superior to those of other financial options. “Sowing pools” developed rapidly when prices were high in 1996 and 1997, with some 20 funds, each managing between 10.000 and 50.000 ha, were established .

These sowing pools have caused concern in some parts of the world, as they are seen as concentrating land ownership, increasing monoculture production and contributing to the eviction of farmers. In Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, seven mayors presented a document to the local Minister of Agricultural Affairs raising concerns that “sowing pools” were increasing agricultural exploitation. “It is well known that these sowing pools are constituted by investment groups ... What they are looking for is higher profit disregarding land conservation and today, soya is what is worth most. Minister Rivara has stated that the sowing pools don't even buy bread in the places they go to. They bring seeds, machines, fuel, agrochemicals and trucks and leave nothing in town. We will be condemned to have a rich countryside with towns in poverty? ”

One of the leading agriculture investment groups, Grobocopatel (Grobo) cultivates 150,000 hectares of soy in Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Grobocopatel owns just 10% of this area, but Gustavo Grobocopatel says that even without owning a single hectare, he would be able to work. Owning the land, is not important from his perspective. The important thing is knowing how to use it , . Grobocopatel defends No-Till agriculture with an evangelical passion and dreams of exporting his model to Eastern Europe and Africa .

Grobocopatel's approach neatly illustrates what Adolfo Boy, an agronomist with the Argentine Grupo de Reflexión Rural describes as the worst aspect of the export-orientated model, leaving defenceless societies with no capacity to respond. He argues that the concept of land reform has been bastardised by international organisations such as the World Bank, with the result that ownership of land by peasants is not important as long as agribusiness can decide what and where to produce .Gustavo Gobrocopatel will speak on "Sustainability from the point of view of Grupo Los Grobo" at the third conference of the RTRS.

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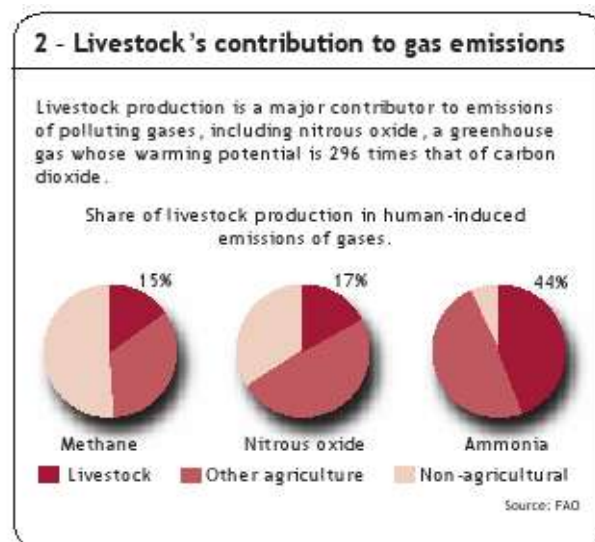
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The loss of the forest affects the water cycle, reducing the amount of rainfall: the loss of forest prevents the formation of clouds that accumulate humidity and discharges this as rain. The droughts suffered in Paraguay at the start of the century are a result of the indiscriminate felling of native scrub and forest and lead in turn to forest fires.

As forests disappear, the quality of the soil is affected as it is exposed to strong rains and the hot sun. Large-scale soy or maize monocultures suffer from erosion problems as a considerable amount of fertile soil is washed away by the rain. The remaining soil becomes poorer as it slowly loses fertility. During every hour of every day 1.370 hectares of soil worldwide are turned to desert<sup>23</sup>.

The massive imports of soy for animal feed in the EU and China have led to a concentration of intensive livestock production near harbours, water ways and big cities, where it causes huge environmental problems. Industrial livestock production itself is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions (see graph below)<sup>24</sup>.



**Graph 1.** Livestock's contribution to gas emissions. Source FAO. 2006

Soy expansion is also responsible for generating high levels of carbon dioxide emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>). Forest burning accounts for 20% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally. Modern industrial agriculture is a major source of global warming greenhouse

<sup>23</sup>Guillet, D. (2007) “Planeta Tierra, ¿Planeta Desierto?” in Realidad Económica. Buenos Aires: IADE on <http://www.iade.org.ar/modules/noticias/article.php?storyid=1800>

<sup>24</sup>FAO. 2006. Livestock policy briefing. [http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/pol-briefs/02/EN/AGA02\\_EN\\_08.pdf](http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/pol-briefs/02/EN/AGA02_EN_08.pdf)

gas emissions - it is responsible for 25% of global carbon dioxide emissions, 60% of methane gas emissions, and 80% of nitrous oxide emissions. In a recent study published in *Science*, researchers calculated that converting natural ecosystems to grow agrofuel crops like corn, sugarcane or soybeans, could release between 17 and 420 times more carbon than the annual savings from replacing fossil fuels. Producing soybeans in the Amazon would take 319 years of soy biodiesel to offset the carbon debt<sup>25</sup>.

But, when Greenpeace Germany carried out tests to determine which vegetable oils were used for blending as part of the compulsory biodiesel, they found that 20% was soy-oil produced in countries where deforestation takes place<sup>26</sup>

Modern agricultural practices consume 70% of the world's fresh water<sup>27</sup>. This resource is becoming increasingly scarce and good quality drinking water is unavailable for millions of human beings. In Argentina it is estimated that between 52,000 million and 66,000 million cubic meters of water have been lost as a result of soy exports<sup>28</sup>.

The expansion of soy monocultures and their dependency on a single herbicide have created increased tolerance and/or resistance with more pests and crop diseases because crop rotation methods are no longer used. Because "weeds", fungi, insects and other pests are surprisingly adaptable: 500 species of insects have already developed a genetic resistance to the pesticides used<sup>29</sup>, as have 150 plant diseases, 133 weed species, and 70 species of fungi. This has resulted in the use of larger quantities of glyphosate and other stronger herbicides. Although GM soy has been genetically modified to resist glyphosate herbicides, the results were similar.

Pesticide spraying also affects the peasant farmers in the area, destroying subsistence crops (which are not resistant to the herbicides used on GM soy), poisoning their animals and

endangering their health. This in areas where public health care is practically non-existent.



**Photo 4.** Pesticide spraying of soya monoculture.  
Photo: An Maeyens

An investigation carried out in four departments in Paraguay with the highest soy production revealed that in the communities studied 78% of families had some kind of health problem caused by the frequent soy field pesticide sprayings and 63% had health problems caused by water contamination<sup>30</sup>.

Deforestation itself also has worrying health impacts. The loss of wild habitats leads to increased contact between wild animals and humans, resulting in the spread of new diseases. According to epidemiologist, Dr. Oscar Daniel Salomón, Director for Centro Nacional de Endemo Epidemias (CENDIE), Argentina, the recent expansion of soy has led to the urbanisation of *leishmaniasis*, a parasitic disease, which used to be a disease of the forest<sup>31</sup>.

When local people try to protect themselves from the spraying, police are brought in to protect the soy producers, often reacting violently towards the local people. The increased pressure on land is also leading to land conflicts which include local people facing eviction, arrest, the destruction of their houses, harvests and personal belongings<sup>32</sup>. There are numerous examples of violent evictions and peasant movements are becoming criminalised in many parts of South America. In Paraguay,

<sup>25</sup> Polasky et al, (2008)

<sup>26</sup> <http://uk.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUKL0282570220080402>

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/environmentNews/idUKL0282570220080402>

<sup>27</sup> <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/meeting/011/j9096e.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Pengue, W.A (2006)

<http://www.ecoport.net/content/view/full/65102>

<sup>29</sup> Guillet, D. (2007) "as above"

<sup>30</sup> Palau et al (2007) as above

<sup>31</sup> Joensen, L (2007) in "Towards a Reality Check in Nine Key Areas" <http://www.tni.org/reports/ctw/agrofuels.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> FIAN (2006). La Reforma Agraria en Paraguay, Informe de la Misión Investigadora sobre el Estado de la realización de la Reforma Agraria en tanto obligación de Derechos Humanos, en: [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org) and Rulli.J. et al 2007

more than 100 rural leaders have been assassinated since the end of the dictatorship in 1989. Of these, only one case has been investigated and the murderer convicted<sup>33</sup>.

The criminalisation of demonstrations has also become a serious issue. In 2004, rural organisations recorded 1,156 arrests within a population of 2.3 million people. This is an alarming figure when compared to the same year in Brazil, where 421 arrests were made in a rural population of around 32 million<sup>34</sup>.

Finally the impacts of soy expansion are felt indirectly in other parts of the global South. Over-production of European industrial livestock, particularly the millions of chickens fed with soy, has been disastrous for local markets in West Africa. Yet the EU maintains export subsidies for the over-production of chicken, which is then exported. European chickens are sold at far cheaper prices than the West African grown chicken on the market. Ultimately this leads to rural migration and loss of employment in the traditional chicken chain affecting everything from fodder production through to chicken sales on local markets<sup>35</sup>.

Concerns about soy expansion have been raised at the UN, with the United Nations' Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights pointing out that "the expansion of soy cultivation has entailed the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals, causing the death and illness of children and adults, the contamination of water, the disappearance of ecosystems, and has affected community's traditional food resources."<sup>36</sup>

## **In Summary**

Industrial-scale production of soy creates serious environmental and social problems, changing patterns of land-use, livelihood, and even our climate. It is contributing to major social and environmental change across South America, and affecting the food and agriculture worldwide.

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<sup>33</sup> CODEHUPY (2007) Informe Chokokue, Coordinadora de los Derechos Humanos del Paraguay

<sup>34</sup> Rulli, J. (ed.) (2007) as above

<sup>35</sup> Homann, D. (2004) Chicken Connection: Agrobusiness, dumping, souverainité alimentaire: Le poulet africain étouffe par l'Europe. Brussels: GRESEA

<sup>36</sup> Final Observations of CDESC, Economic and Social Committee, E/C.12/PRY/CO/322\_10-2007, p.3



# Chapter 2. The Round Table of “Responsible Soy”

Stella Semino, GRR

Given the widespread impacts of soy production, it is worth looking at the origins of the draft criteria being put forward by the Roundtable on Responsible Soy and assessing whether these can effectively guarantee a “responsible” production.

Initial standards for soy production, known as the Basel Criteria<sup>37</sup>, were drawn up in 2004, in consultation. These criteria, which only allow non-GM soy, recognised the damaging impacts of soy expansion, including the loss of biodiversity.

But in 2007 the RTRS decided to develop a “responsibility standard” that could also be applied to genetically modified soy, moving away from the Basel Criteria, stating:

“The principles, criteria and indicators will be developed with the potential to be implemented by committed stakeholders in the soy value chain regardless of size of operation or geographical location, and with the intention to be used within a verification system. They will not prescribe a particular technology or patented item.”<sup>38</sup>

## RTRS DRAFT PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR RESPONSIBLE SOY-PRODUCTION AND TRADE<sup>39</sup>

### RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

*“RTRS considers that transparency and accountability are core values for a multi-stakeholder initiative, that clear cost-benefit assessment of requirements for responsible soy production and related agronomic practices are necessary to enhance the benefits and reduce the negative impacts of soy production, and that legal compliance should constitute the minimum threshold to which*

<sup>37</sup>[http://assets.panda.org/downloads/05\\_02\\_16\\_basel\\_criteria\\_eng\\_l.pdf](http://assets.panda.org/downloads/05_02_16_basel_criteria_eng_l.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Draft Document: RTRS Principles and Criteria for Responsible soy ...

[www.mvo.nl/duurzame-productie/download/ADM%20RTRS%20Outline%20document.pdf](http://www.mvo.nl/duurzame-productie/download/ADM%20RTRS%20Outline%20document.pdf) –

<sup>39</sup>[http://responsiblesoy.org/news/2007/08/DRAFT%20RTRS%20PC%20for%20consultation\\_ENG.pdf](http://responsiblesoy.org/news/2007/08/DRAFT%20RTRS%20PC%20for%20consultation_ENG.pdf)

*actors in the soy value chain should commit, while implementing management practices based upon the concept of continuous improvement related to economic, social and environmental responsibility”<sup>40</sup>. “The objectives of the RTRS are to promote the growth and use of responsible soy through co-operation within the soy value chain in an open dialogue with stakeholders”.*

### RESPONSIBLE LABOUR CONDITIONS

*“The soy value chain shall comply with all applicable national and local labour occupational health & safety regulations and all applicable ILO conventions”.*

### RESPECT FOR LAND RIGHTS

*“The soy value chain shall ensure that soy producers and other suppliers comply with all applicable national and local land regulations related to land rights, including but not limited to, ensuring legal title to land, compliance with contractual obligations and respect for the formal and/or customary land rights of local communities including indigenous peoples”.*

### SMALL SCALE AND TRADITIONAL LAND USE

*“The soy value chain recognizes the importance of small scale and traditional land use systems and shall adopt measures to integrate and support small scale producers into the chain of value in accordance with local conditions and practices”.*

### RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY RELATIONS

*“The soy value chain shall adopt practices that contribute to the long-term social and economic well-being of local communities”.*

### ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

*“The RTRS will promote better practices and a continual improvement approach for mitigating environmental impacts and ensuring conservation and improvement of natural resources in accordance with (its) Environmental Principles”.*

### RESPONSIBLE WATER MANAGEMENT

*“The soy value chain recognizes the importance of water as a key resource for agriculture and human development and should evaluate and address all qualitative and quantitative hydrological changes induced by or related to soy production, with a view to maintaining available water resources in quantity and quality.”*

### RESPONSIBLE SOIL MANAGEMENT

*“The soy value chain recognizes that soil quality is key to maintaining agricultural productivity and should adopt agronomic practices that avoid soil erosion and degradation, in addition to maintaining and enhancing overall soil quality”.*

<sup>40</sup>Introduction to RTRS Final Draft Principles, Nov. 8, 2006

## RESPONSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND NEW AREAS OF CULTIVATION

*"The soy value chain shall ensure, within the scope of activities of individual stakeholders, that due consideration is given to enhancing benefits and mitigating the impacts of infrastructure investments on ecosystems and local communities required by production, transport, processing and trading of soy".*

The RTRS draft criteria (above), which can be achieved by GM soy producers as well as conventional growers, have provoked a number of questions. Can the standards as set out be enforced? Or are they in fact mere rhetoric, intended to mask the damaging reality? An examination of some of the examples is revealing:

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

*"The soy value chain supports the overall reduction of agrochemical use order to minimize impacts on human health and the environment" RTRS Draft Principles and Criteria".<sup>41</sup>*

Minimising the use of agrochemicals is supposed to be a key aim of the RTRS, yet it is difficult to see how such a goal can ever be achieved.

Ninety eight per cent of the soybean planted in Argentina is genetically modified (GM)<sup>42</sup>. This GM crop relies on the use of agrochemicals and is primarily responsible for the growth in the use of agrochemicals in Argentina<sup>43</sup>.

GM soy is modified to make it resistant to the herbicide Glyphosate - a non-selective herbicide which kills all kinds of plant including grasses, perennials and woody plants. Plants treated with glyphosate die slowly over a period of days or weeks<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>41</sup>[http://responsiblesoy.org/news/2007/08/DRAFT%20RTRS%20PC%20for%20consultation\\_ENG.pdf](http://responsiblesoy.org/news/2007/08/DRAFT%20RTRS%20PC%20for%20consultation_ENG.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Monsanto, 2008. Conversations about plant biotechnology Argentina <http://www.monsanto.com/biotech-gmo/asp/country.asp?cname=Argentina>

<sup>43</sup> Pengue, W. 2003. El glifosato y la dominación del ambiente Biodiversidad 37-Julio 2003 [http://www.grain.org/biodiversidad\\_files/biodiv37-1-glifosato.pdf](http://www.grain.org/biodiversidad_files/biodiv37-1-glifosato.pdf)

<sup>44</sup>PAN. 1996. Glyphosate fact sheet Pesticides News No.33, September 1996, p28-29 <http://www.pan-uk.org/pestnews/actives/glyphosa.htm>

Until recently glyphosate has been considered as a relatively harmless herbicide<sup>45</sup>. However there is now some controversy concerning the herbicide itself as well as the surfactants (or wetting agents) used and about its effects on the environment and human health.

Recent studies in Argentina show that current agricultural practices, which rely heavily on glyphosate, appear to alter the nature and function of many natural aquatic environments<sup>46</sup>. The EU classifies Roundup as "*toxic to aquatic organisms, may cause long-term adverse effects in the aquatic environment*"<sup>47</sup> Glyphosate has been banned in Denmark following contamination of water supplies.

Research has also shown that intensive use of glyphosate on soybean farms, following the recommended concentrations, could represent a threat to the living organisms within the soil<sup>48</sup>.

Most forms of glyphosate contain a wetting agent, used to help the agrochemical stick to its target when sprayed. Some of these agents cause serious irritation to the eyes, respiratory tract and skin. Some have been found to be toxic to fish, and can contain contaminants which are carcinogenic to humans<sup>49</sup>.

In January this year the World Health Organisation (WHO) included glyphosate in a list of pesticides causing "acute pesticide poisoning" An acute pesticide poisoning is any illness or health effect resulting from suspected or confirmed exposure to the pesticide<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> GM Williams, R Kroes, JC Munro (2000). "Safety evaluation and risk assessment of the herbicide Roundup and its active ingredient, glyphosate, for humans". *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology* **31-N2**: 117-165.

<sup>46</sup>Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology© Springer Science+Business Media, Effects of the Glyphosate Active Ingredient and a Fomulation on *Lemna gibba* L. at Different Exposure Levels and Assessment End-Points M. C. Sobrero<sup>1</sup>, F. Rimoldi<sup>1</sup> and A. E. Ronco<sup>1</sup> LLC 2007

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.monsanto-ag.co.uk/content/industrial/products/amenity\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.monsanto-ag.co.uk/content/industrial/products/amenity_booklet.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Ecotoxicological assessment of the effects of glyphosate and chlorpyrifos in an Argentine soya field Author(s): Casabe N, Piola L, Fuchs J, et al. Source: JOURNAL OF SOILS AND SEDIMENTS Volume: 7 Issue: 4 Pages: 232-239 Published: AUG 2007

<sup>49</sup> PAN. 1996. Glyphosate fact sheet Pesticides News No.33, September 1996, p28-29

<http://www.pan-uk.org/pestnews/actives/glyphosa.htm>

<sup>50</sup>WHO. 2008. Josef G Thundiyil et al Bulletin of the World Health Organisation; type, policy and practice. Acute pesticide poisoning: A proposed classification tool.

When GM soybeans were introduced in Argentina, it was thought that just one herbicide could be used to control all weeds, but this has proved not to be the case. In 2007, for example, a field experiment on weed tolerance to glyphosate revealed that just 40% of the weeds were affected by a dose of three litres per hectare (l/ha) - considered a normal dose. Even an application of 12 l/ha was insufficient to destroy all of the weeds in the field<sup>51</sup>.

Where as one liter of glyphosate per hectare used to be enough, in Paraguay between 1.25 and 1.74 litres are now used per hectare<sup>52</sup>. In total, some 20 litres of insecticides, fungicides and herbicides are sprayed on every hectare of soy<sup>53</sup>.

It is in fact now necessary to use a wide spectrum of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides on soy plantations<sup>54</sup>. Glyphosate-tolerant weeds have developed, alongside new infestations such as isopods and slugs. A new glyphosate-tolerant weed was discovered in September 2007, which it is estimated will mean an extra 25 million litres of other herbicides will be needed to combat the strain<sup>55,56</sup>

One academic, Steve Bowles, has suggested that in order to make glyphosate use sustainable, different forms of weed killers should be used in rotation alongside other forms of non-herbicide weed control<sup>57</sup>.

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<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/3/07-041814.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Papa. 2007. Papa JC Malezas tolerantes a glifosato Determinacion de la eficacia de glifosato para el control de Dicotyledon tweediana- EEA Oliveros del INTA 11/2007 [http://www.inta.gov.ar/region/sf/proteccion\\_vegetal/alertas/2007-11-eficacia-glifosato-Dicotyledon-tweediana.pdf](http://www.inta.gov.ar/region/sf/proteccion_vegetal/alertas/2007-11-eficacia-glifosato-Dicotyledon-tweediana.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> 25-02-2008. Interview with Guillermo Terol .

Responsible Soy program in DAP, Desarrollo Agrícola del Paraguay. By Sonderegger ,R)

<sup>53</sup> Palau, T., et al. (2007) mentioned above.

<sup>54</sup> Via Rural. 2008. Insecticidas Para cultivos de Soja- Ordenados por marcas - viewed 2/2008

<http://www.viarural.com.ar/viarural.com.ar/agricultura/soja/insecticidas.htm>. Curasemillas Para cultivos de Soja Ordenados por marcas - viewed 2/2008

<http://www.viarural.com.ar/viarural.com.ar/agricultura/soja/curasemillas.htm>

<sup>55</sup> Tuesca et al. 2007. Para estar alerta: el sorgo de alepo resistente al glifosato-INTA EEA Oliveros 2007

[http://www.inta.gov.ar/oliveros/info/documentos/soja/soja\\_malezas1.pdf](http://www.inta.gov.ar/oliveros/info/documentos/soja/soja_malezas1.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Dow Jones Newswires. 2007. September 26 [http://lists.eco-fam.org/pipemail/ge\\_news/2007-September/000048.html](http://lists.eco-fam.org/pipemail/ge_news/2007-September/000048.html)

<sup>57</sup> Bowles .S.B. 2008 Evolved glyphosate-resistant weeds around the world: lessons to be learnt. Pest management science Pest Manag Sci. Mar 13;64 (4):317-318 18340651

But the non herbicide weed control tools referenced by Bowles are only in the early experimental phase<sup>58</sup> and the mix of pesticides are already being applied to soybean fields. Depending on the size of the soy plantation, these chemicals are sprayed from the air or on the ground. Glyphosate is commonly mixed with other herbicides and insecticides including Metsulphuron, Atrazine, Paraquat, Endosulfan and in recent years, fungicides. Some of the pesticides applied on Argentinean soy have been categorised as highly toxic by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the European Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

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<sup>58</sup> Pedersena. P. Nevea, Andreasen, C. and Bowles. S. 2007. Ecological fitness of a glyphosate-resistant *Lolium rigidum* population: Growth and seed production along a competition gradient bolette a Basic and Applied Ecology Volume 8, Issue 3, 7 May 2007, Pages 258-268

## IMPACTS OF THE MOST USED AGROCHEMICALS ON SOYBEAN CULTIVATION IN ARGENTINA ON HUMAN HEALTH

<b>Glyphosate Herbicide</b>	Airway, skin, and mucous membrane irritation abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, shock, dyspnoea, respiratory failure. O or Respiratory (WHO)	Oral Respiratory	Permitted
<b>Atrazine Herbicide</b>	Mucous membrane, ocular and dermal irritation.(WHO) in drinking water has been linked to prostate and breast cancer.	Oral, Respiratory, Derma	Banned (PAN 2004)
<b>Paraquat Herbicide</b>	Mucous membrane and airway irritation, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, vomiting , gastrointestinal bleeding, pulmonary oedema, dermatitis, renal and hepatic damage, coma, seizures (WHO)	Oral or via broken skin	Banned (Curia EU 2007)
<b>Endosulfan Herbicide</b>	Acute, subchronic, developmental neurotoxicity, and chronic/carcinogenic endocrine disruptor. (EPA)	Oral	Proposed to ban the product. (EC 2007)

### The Effect of Pesticides on Biodiversity

The effects on biodiversity of the pesticides used in growing GM soybeans are well known. But because it is impossible to separate out the effects of the pesticides from the effects of genetic modification, the damaging impacts on biodiversity have become synonymous with GM soy.

For example, crop spraying appears to be affecting the owl population, which has fallen dramatically in recent years. Owls hunt rats, keeping the rodent population down, but now villagers report that they are plagued by rats. In 2007, a major epidemic of *leptospirosis*, a virus carried in rat urine, occurred in Entre Ríos, infecting animals and causing a number of human deaths.

Evidence also shows that partridge and heron populations have been affected by spraying<sup>59</sup>. Bee-keeping, traditionally found in what are now soybean areas, is in decline as a result of the reduction in biodiversity in the area<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Gigena E . La perversa cadena de una preocupante enfermedad. Leptospirosis: hay 8 criaderos ilegales con cerdos portadores. El día de Gualeguaychu 22-5-07 [http://www.eldiadegualeguaychu.com.ar/portal/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=20297&Itemid=8](http://www.eldiadegualeguaychu.com.ar/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20297&Itemid=8)

<sup>60</sup> Production of raw materials for future biofuel processing plants in Entre Rios, Semino/Joensen/ wijnstra [http://www.lasojamata.org/And Por bajos rendimientos, anunciaron la Emergencia Apícola Provincial June 2003 Sociedad Argentina de Apicultores http://www.sada.org.ar/Noticias/Emergencia\\_cordoba.htm](http://www.lasojamata.org/And Por bajos rendimientos, anunciaron la Emergencia Apícola Provincial June 2003 Sociedad Argentina de Apicultores http://www.sada.org.ar/Noticias/Emergencia_cordoba.htm)

### Agrochemicals and Urban centres

While soy is grown in rural areas, the chemicals used for production are often stored in built up areas near ports and transport hubs. This has led to some concerns being raised by people living nearby about the effect on their environment, and their health.

One resident of San Lorenzo in Argentina reported: *"...I live three blocks away from a silo used to store 38000 tons, of ammonium nitrate which if combined with the dust of the soybeans could explode, obliterating half the city in a second. Every day we breathe in glyphosate, and every day we hear about new cases of cancer, which are increasing especially in children and adolescents. Most doctors, perhaps out of fear, refuse to find a connection, but there are several studies in the world and in the country that directly link certain types of cancer with contact with agro-chemicals. People in the villages and fields, who are literally watered with glyphosate, are asking for them to stop the spraying. We are asking them to take the silos out of the city..."*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Los herbicidas, San Lorenzo, el campo y la vida <http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2008/04/593091.php>

## RESPONSIBLE WATER MANAGEMENT

*“The soy value chain recognizes the importance of water as a key resource for agriculture and human development and should evaluate and address all qualitative and quantitative hydrological changes induced by or related to soy production, with a view to maintaining available water resources in quantity and quality”*

### Water consumption

According to the agronomist Walter Pengue, in 2004/5 Argentina used 42,500 million M<sup>3</sup> of water to produce 38.3 million tons of soybean, almost all of which was exported. This hidden water export is referred to as “virtual water” because the costs associated with it are not taken into account. Argentina is one of the countries which are net exporters of virtual water. Most countries importing soybean have water shortages<sup>62</sup>.

### Water Contamination

Recent research has found concentrations of pesticides used in soybean farming in the fat of amphibians, snakes, birds, and mammals found in ponds and fields in soy growing areas. The studies confirm that pesticides and chemical fertilizers are the main source of water contamination in a number of different soybean regions in Argentina<sup>63,64,65</sup>.

In 2003, an Entre Rios NGO told a local newspaper: “There are a number of children who have bathed in ponds and streams near the crops. They have lesions on their skin as if they had been covered with fungus. There are dead fish in many of the streams and ponds.”

<sup>62</sup>Pengue, W. 2006 Agua virtual, agronegocio sojero y cuestiones económico-ambientales” (Realidad Económica N° 223) <http://www.ecoportel.net/content/view/full/65102/>

<sup>63</sup>Lajmanovich, de la Sierra P, Marino P, Peltzer P; Penardón; Lorenzatti E. 2005. Determinación de residuos de organoclorados en vertebrados silvestres del litoral fluvial de argentina. Temas de la biodiversidad del litoral fluvial argentino ii, insugeo, miscelánea, 14: 389 – 398 F. G. Aceñolaza (Coordinador) Tucumán, 2005

<sup>64</sup>Peltzer, P.M, Lajmanovich R, Sanchez Hernandez, 2007. Effects of agricultural pond eutrophication on survival and health status of *Scinax nasacul* tadpoles. Elsevier Ecotoxicology and environmental safety (2007) doi 10.1016/j.ecoenv.2007.06.005

<sup>65</sup>S. Jergentz et al. 2005 Assessment of insecticide contamination in runoff and stream water of small agricultural streams in the main soybean area of Argentina <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science>

There are also reports of hares and other wild animals lying dead across the countryside.”<sup>66</sup> The provincial branch of the National Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA) published a report in May 2007 in which it recognised that the “increasing and out of control” use of agrochemicals within the province is the major cause of fish mortality”<sup>67</sup>

## RESPONSIBLE SOIL MANAGEMENT

*“The soy value chain recognizes that soil quality is key to maintaining agricultural productivity and should adopt agronomic practices that avoid soil erosion and degradation, in addition to maintaining and enhancing overall soil quality”*

Soil experts from the National Institute for Argentinean Technology said in 2007 that soy production will put the future of the soils at risk, and urged a doubling of fertiliser use on commodity crops such as maize, and wheat. In Argentina, current fertiliser use is approximately 3,000,000 tons, so a doubling would mean increasing this to 6 million. It is like a drug trafficker talking to an addict: the more nutrients you lose, the more fertiliser you need, the more business generated<sup>68</sup>.

Adolfo Boy, the agronomist with the Argentine Grupo de Reflexion Rural (GRR) said: “The people from INTA/AAPRESID are not interested in having ‘soil’. All they need is support for the plant roots. An inert substrate would probably be better for them, as it would not have any disease or pests!”<sup>69</sup>

## RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

*“Legal compliance should constitute the minimum threshold to which actors in the soy value chain should commit, while implementing management practices based upon the concept of continuous improvement related to economic, social and environmental responsibility”*

While obeying the law is considered a minimum threshold, according to the Round Table criteria, many of the companies active within the Round Table go to some lengths to avoid complying

<sup>66</sup>Mascheroni. 2004. “Aguafuertes Ambientales No creo en la contaminación...pero que la hay, la hay” Ricardo Luis Mascheroni. rimasche3@yahoo.com

<sup>67</sup> INTA. 2007. Baqueano del Sur INTA de Gualeguaychu 2007

<sup>68</sup> INTA. 2007. La soja podría poner en riesgo el futuro del suelo INFOBAE Junio 2007 <http://www.infobae.com/notas/nota.php?Idx=320052&IdxSccion=0>

<sup>69</sup> Personal contact October 2006

with local laws. The following case study from Brazil is just one example of where powerful companies seem to have found ways of evading the legal process.

## RESPONSIBLE LABOUR CONDITIONS

*“The soy value chain shall comply with all applicable national and local occupational health & safety regulations and all applicable ILO conventions”*

There are frequent accounts of soybean producers in South America<sup>70</sup> failing to respect labour conditions, particularly in regard to workers’ health and safety. From stories of children being placed in the fields as human flags to guide aerial spraying<sup>71</sup> to accounts of workers being asked to handle and inhale agrochemicals unsafely. The RTRS “Adequate handling of health and safety issues criterion” aims to correct these problems, but limited public health services in most soybean growing areas, make it difficult to carry out appropriate inspections or even diagnose acute or chronic poisoning - making any commitment to health and safety standards of little real value<sup>72</sup>. It can also be difficult to hold producers to account through the RTRS because of the way in which they are represented through bodies like AAPRESID and ACSOJA. The RTRS’ “Provision of fair salaries” criterion is also difficult to enforce. Where a breach of labour legislation occurs, it is too far removed from those who represent the producer on the RTRS to be tracked down, let alone held to account. In the past, there have been problems with suppliers relying on slave labour<sup>73</sup>, and employing workers on the black market, forcing down ages and undermining workers’ rights<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>70</sup>Testimonio JANE SILVA (CPT)le soja contre la vie.  
[http://www.sojacontelavie.org/enjeux\\_temoignages\\_cpt\\_es.php?P\\_HPSESSID=7484ed4f6ce7b10caba81cf5d8176b44](http://www.sojacontelavie.org/enjeux_temoignages_cpt_es.php?P_HPSESSID=7484ed4f6ce7b10caba81cf5d8176b44)

<sup>71</sup> Denuncian trabajo infantil en tareas de fumigación [Argentina]  
<http://www.business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/347653/jump>

<sup>72</sup> SALUD-ARGENTINA: Peligro en el campo Por Marcela Valente  
Febrero 2008 <http://www.taringa.net/posts/noticias/1133366/Soja:-Peligros-del-Monocultivo.html>

<sup>73</sup> Amazonia 2005: IFC funding linked to soybean purchase from farms using slave labor”, 30-05-2005,  
<http://www.amazonia.org.br/english/noticias/noticia.cfm?id=163097>

<sup>74</sup> El gremio de camioneros ocupó una planta del grupo Grobocopatel  
<http://www.criticadigital.com/index.php?secc=nota&nid=1879>

## Cargill in Santarem—a case study Andrea Samulon, RAN

Many people living in Santarem, in the state of Para, like to say that they live in the heart of the Amazon—halfway in between Manaus to the west and Belem to the east. Santarem is a small city at the meeting point of two powerful and important rivers—the blue Rio Tapajos and the muddy Rio Amazonas.

They are also quick to explain that in recent years, the region has taken center stage in Brazil’s burgeoning soybean boom. The increasing global demand for soy, IMF restructuring of the Brazilian economy, government policy and local development projects have come together to push soy production into the Amazon. There are 1 million hectares (approximately 3,861 square miles) of soy planted in the Amazon.

Seeking to capitalize on this Amazonian soy expansion, Minnesota-based Cargill decided to build a \$20 million dollar port and grain terminal on the banks of the Tapajos—just down the road from the Santarem boardwalk. Cargill has operated in Brazil since 1965 and was quick to see new opportunity and profit in Santarem. A port in Santarem would allow them to ship their cargo to the east coast and directly to Europe, saving them the extra costs of transport via roads to the south and then across to different ports.

Local activists and environmental groups warned that a Cargill port in the heart of the Amazon would encourage more soy production and speed up rainforest deforestation. Nevertheless, Cargill began work on the port in 1999, but were immediately order to stop until a proper Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) had been completed and approved. Cargill appealed and was allowed to continue building; the port was completed in 2003. In the same year the Federal Tribunal in the capital of Brasilia upheld the original ruling and ordered the port to shut down and pay compensation for environmental damages. Cargill continues to operate and has filed an appeal with the Supreme Court. In March of 2007, the Supreme Court of Brazil judged that the port had been built illegally. Federal police and environmental agents shut down the port in accordance with that Supreme Court decision. Cargill had been operating illegally since 2003. But the port was open and operating again within 20 days.

The struggle for justice in Santarem continues. Community members, activists, and environmental groups are seeking to expose Cargill for continuing to operate with impunity, never having completed the court mandated environmental impact assessment.

The numbers speak for themselves: Cargill's presence in Santarem has created the incentive to expand soy production further into the Amazon. The soybean boom and subsequent expansion of soy plantations increased deforestation of the rainforest. Between 2003 and 2004, 6.950 square miles of rainforest were cleared. During the same period, 4.600 square miles of soybeans were planted. Between 2005 and 2006, 6.450 square miles of rainforest were lost due to deforestation, a decrease of 11 percent from the year before, according to Brazil's Environment Ministry.

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#### In summary

The current "No Till" technique used for producing soy using chemical weed control and Roundup Ready soy, is bound to aggravate the damage done already done by agrochemicals. The increased resistance of weeds to glyphosate will lead to the use of a larger cocktail of agrochemicals being used. This production system is dependent on the use of these chemicals, applied at large scale by

planes or tractors. It is hard to see how a criterion on responsible use of agrochemical use can be fulfilled in this context.

It is also hard to see how the current impacts on water and soil of this monoculture system can be reduced given the industrial levels of expansion.

There are also questions about how these standards can be monitored, let alone enforced. The huge imbalance in economic and political power between the land owners and those working on the land or living nearby make it difficult to enforce criteria on labour rights, land rights and community relations.

# Chapter 3. The Reality of Responsible Soy in Paraguay

Javiera Rulli, BASEIS

In Paraguay, an initiative run by the conservation charity, Guyra Paraguay - a member of the Round Table on Responsible Soy - is involved in monitoring "responsible soy" projects, which are listed on a Guyra website<sup>75</sup>.

Several projects are underway, including two working with big landowners, Desarrollo Agrícola Paraguay<sup>76</sup> (known as DAP) and Terra Viva Paraguay; and two with smaller farmers, the ecological producers association COPEP, (Central de Organizaciones de Productores Ecológicos del Paraguay) and the COPAAR cooperative (Comercializadora de Productos Artesanales y Agroecológicos). This chapter looks at the approach taken by Guyra and includes reports from visits to two of the "responsible soy" initiatives in Paraguay.

## Guyra Paraguay and Responsible Soy

Guyra is a board member of the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) and monitors "responsible soy" projects in Paraguay. Guyra Paraguay is the largest national conservation organisation in Paraguay and is the national partner organisation of the worldwide charity Birdlife. Guyra works closely with another nature conservation organisation, The Nature Conservancy, USAID and the Moses Bertoni Foundation.

Guyra's main priorities are forest conservation, rather than company behaviour, environmental pollution and community development. Guyra is known as being an advocate of debt-for-nature swaps (where national debt is purchased and the funds raised used for conservation schemes) and also raises funds to buy up land and create private reserves. Guyra does not oppose GMOs, but argues that there needs to be an "increase in the yield not in the area." Increasing the yield per hectare of production alleviates the pressure on forests. According to Guyra, new technologies such as genetic modification allow this to take place.

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.agriculturasostenible.org.py/proyectos.php>

<sup>76</sup> Agricultural Development in Paraguay

It is perhaps worth noting that Guyra's assessments of the "responsible soy" projects do not look at whether farms use GM or conventional soy, the quantities of pesticide used or whether there have been changes in land use. Nor do they assess whether the producers have a history of human rights violations or violence against the local population. Guyra only looks at whether these properties are complying with Paraguay's environmental laws that is whether they respect the requirement to maintain the forest on 25% of the land. Guyra aims "to find six large producers in three years in Paraguay to produce Responsible Soy".<sup>77</sup>

One of the biggest projects under the "responsible soy" initiative is with the Ñacunday estate in Naranjal, Alto Paraná; which is owned by the Terra Viva group. Its operations in Paraguay concentrate on growing soy, sunflowers, corn and wheat. The Ñacunday Ranch covers some 5,200 hectares of which 2,800 ha are farmed. The remaining area is forest of which 53% is used for timber and the rest is left for conservation. Terra Viva responsible soy project is supported by the DOEN Foundation in the Netherlands.

Guyra is also negotiating with the Belgian company Parex - which owns 8,500 ha of estates in Alta Parana - and Frutika to encourage them to join the Round Table on Responsible Soy.

Parex has come under criticism for human rights abuses. In 2002 it was reported that some 250 farmers and peasants were left destitute after their cooking utensils, food, clothing, tents and other belongings were destroyed when they were evicted from properties belonging to Parex. During the eviction at least 20 tents were burned down with all the belongings inside.. The landless people (sintierras) claimed that the police fired on the group, although the police claim there was an exchange of gunshots".<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> 3-03-2008. Interview with M Arevalos (Responsible Soy program in Guyra) By Sonderegger, R.

<sup>78</sup> Riquelme. Q. 2002. Represión y movilizaciones en periodo de crisis. Movimiento Campesino (Informativo Campesino, N° 168; La Nación; 18/10/02). Centro de Documentación y Estudios. (CDE) <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/paraguay/cde/cde2002/campesino2002.pdf>



Frutika is part of the Kress Group and owns more than 18,000 hectares of land, of which 11,000 ha are used for grain, with the rest used for fruit trees, market gardening, and reforestation and forest reserves. In 2007 it harvested 24,640 tons of soybean.<sup>79</sup> According to press reports, the group hopes to increase production by using Roundup Ready seeds which have been specially developed for the area.<sup>80</sup>

### **DAP - Agricultural Development of Paraguay**

Guyra is also involved with Desarrollo Agrícola del Paraguay (DAP). DAP is a joint stock company, with shareholders in Paraguay, Argentina, America and Europe<sup>81</sup>. The company is a typical "sowing pool", that is an agribusiness investment group.

DAP was formed in 2005 as a consortium of three companies, and it now controls five estates covering some 22,000 hectares in different areas of Paraguay. These estates were previously used as pasture for cattle but have been converted to industrialised monoculture for growing soybeans, corn and sunflowers. They also lease land across the country.<sup>82</sup>

Ninety per cent of the soybean production uses Monsanto's GM Roundup Ready seed. At the last Roundtable on Responsible Soy technical workshop in May 2007, DAP took over as vice president.<sup>83</sup> Like any "sowing pool", DAP works by trying to invest as little as possible in the areas where they produce. They rely on contractors to carry out the planting, spraying and harvesting, with contracts covering labour conditions and environmental issues, auditing and monitoring. This means the consortia does not need to invest in machinery or labour.

DAP carries out tests on the water in streams near the farms and if they find pesticide residues can punish the contractor and delay payment.

<sup>79</sup>[http://www.frutika.com.py/nuestra\\_empresa.htm](http://www.frutika.com.py/nuestra_empresa.htm)

<sup>80</sup> 7-02-08 Pequeños sojeros del Mercosur rechazan cultivo transgénico. <http://agenciadin.com.ar/0070208.htm>

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Guillermo Terol. Responsible Soy program in DAP, Desarrollo agrícola del Paraguay. By Sonderegger, R.

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.dap.com.py/>

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Guillermo Terol. Responsible Soy program in DAP, Desarrollo agrícola del Paraguay. By Sonderegger, R.

The cocktail of pesticides used on DAP land is no different from any other farm growing GM soy. Glyphosate is applied before the harvest (1.25 to 1.75 litres per ha) and then Paraquat is used to desiccate the plants to obtain uniform mature grains. It also reduces losses from mature beans falling to the ground. DAP soy is reportedly sold to Cargill, ADM and Dreyfus or through the port in Buenos Aires.<sup>84</sup>

### **A Visit to DAP's La Fortuna Estate**

In February this year, researchers visited DAP's Fortuna estate in Villa San Pedro, New Germany. The group consisted of researchers from Base Social Investigations (a Paraguayan organisation) and two campaigners and researchers from Rainforest Action Network (RAN). The visit was arranged through the National Farmers Organization (ONAC) and the local Farmers' Association Oñondivepa (A.A.O.) in the area. This is an extract from the report:

"The leaders of Oñondivepa had told us that soybean monoculture had taken over in their area in the last 2-3 years, with the construction of new silos and ports. This had resulted in increasing violence and attacks on the peasant organisations that were against the expansion of soy.

We drove to the village of "Colonia Andres Barbero" where we were met by some 30 people who wanted to talk to us. They came from different communities around the edge of the La Fortuna estate and were part of a neighbourhood committee formed in 2006 to resist the development of a soybean monoculture in their area.

They told us that when DAP acquired the estate, it was all forest and pasture and DAP faced fierce opposition from the neighbouring communities. The neighbourhood committee sent letters and documents in protest, objecting to the Environmental Impact Study (EIA) that the company had submitted. In August, 2006 some 50 people travelled to the capital of San Pedro to demonstrate, demanding a public hearing. They formally submitted their demands to the municipality, the public prosecutor's office, the Dirección de Extensión Agraria, (the public office for agriculture technical assistance, known

<sup>84</sup> 25-02-2008. Interview with Guillermo Terol. Responsible Soy program in DAP, Desarrollo agrícola del Paraguay. By Sonderegger, R.

as DEAC), and the ministry of agriculture (MAG)<sup>1</sup>. They set up a protest camp at the entrance to the estate, denouncing the use of GM and agrochemicals in their territory.

DAP were apparently indifferent to the opposition of the local population, moving into the area regardless of the public opposition. Similarly the authorities seemed to turn a blind eye to the legitimate concerns raised by the local people.



*Photo 5. People were waiting for us when we arrive at a house to the community. In the background the pasture land that has been cleared from trunks and the soy monoculture belonging to DAP.*

*Photo: Andrea Samulon. 2008.*

DAP's arrival in this region follows the same pattern that has been repeated throughout the north-east. Many big landowners in the Eastern Region are taking advantage of rising land prices and selling their estates to soy producers, including many Brazilians. They then move with their cattle to Chaco where land is significantly cheaper.

Deforestation rates in the Chaco have risen to 150,000 hectares a year.<sup>85</sup> In recent years the expansion of soybeans in Paraguay has been mainly on land once used for ranching or belonging to *campesino* communities. The new trend of agribusiness taking over is creating a new pattern of land use in Paraguay with soybean production concentrated in the eastern zone and livestock in the Chaco in the west.

Augustine Konrad, president of Colonias Unidas, one of the biggest cooperatives of soy farmers predicts that as much as 7 million hectares could be converted to soybean

<sup>85</sup>3-03-2008. Interview with M Arevalos (Responsible Soy program in Guyra) By Sonderegger, R.

production in the eastern area.<sup>86</sup> According to him, the livestock which is currently the main type of farming in the area should relocate to more suitable areas such as the Chaco. Arrellana, director in Paraguay of the Espiritu Santo Group, a Portuguese conglomerate with 120,000 hectares (see below), is reported to have said that soy production could grow to more than a million hectares if the market is right. This would mean an increase of 50%.

In the meeting at Colonia Barbero we told the local people that DAP is involved in the Roundtable on Responsible Soy and showed them information about DAP's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme and the newsletters it circulates<sup>87</sup>. They had never heard of "responsible soy" or the Roundtable on Responsible Soy and when we showed them DAP's CSR bulletins and newsletters, they got angry. They had not seen any of newsletters and did not know they existed. They didn't realise that DAP used its community activities for publicity purposes. In some cases they said that the benefits DAP said it had provided had in fact been carried out by others. DAP for example had not carried out a health programme bringing doctors to the villages - but had simply provided the transport, they said.

According to the people locally, DAP initially needed labour from the community, employing people to dig out old tree trunks so that machinery could be used on the fields<sup>88</sup>. But now the company uses very few local workers as everything is done by contractors. They say the local community has not benefited at all from DAP. They complained that people were suffering from the dust and pollution generated by the trucks going to and from the farm, especially at harvest time.

They were also worried about the chemicals used. Spraying takes place at night, but some people say they can smell the chemicals and they have noticed an increased number of abortions among their livestock. At one farm a malformed pig had been born. Some said that new pests and diseases were affecting their

<sup>86</sup>7-02-08 Pequeños sojeros del Mercosur rechazan cultivo transgénico. <http://agenciadin.com.ar/0070208.htm>

<sup>87</sup>[www.dap.com.py](http://www.dap.com.py)

<sup>88</sup>Much of the pastureland in Paraguay was once forested and although the trees have been cut down, the roots and trunks often remain. These have to be removed manually if the land is to be farmed with machines.

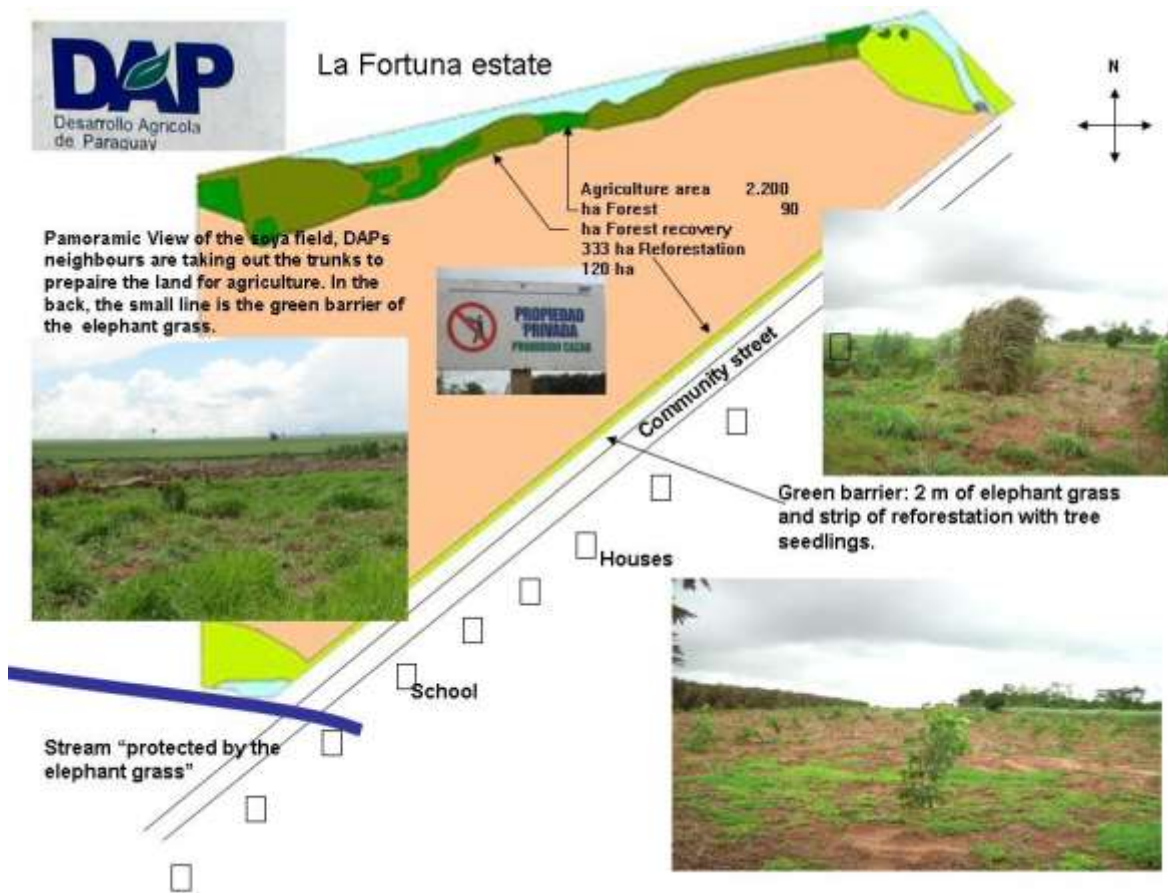
crops, and they thought this was because of the heavy use of pesticides on the plantation.

We travelled closer to the DAP estate, surrounded by fields of soybean. DAP has leased 520 ha from a neighbouring landowner, extending their plantation. On the other side the other neighbouring landowner was removing tree trunks ready to make way for planting. This leaves houses on the street exposed to the new fields.

We saw how trees had been cleared from beside a stream, leaving just a narrow strip of grass. On the other side of the farm, just two-metres of grass separated the fields from the “reforestation” area, planted with saplings. Roundup had clearly been used to clear the weeds,

Overall, looking at the maps of the areas of fields and the areas left as forest, we found that forest makes up just 90 hectares (3%) of the farm, with “forest restoration” covering a further 333 ha (12%) - well below the legal limit of 25%.<sup>89</sup>

When we visited the Fortuna estate, the soybeans had just been harvested and maize had recently been planted. It is sad to visit. Just as with other GM soy monocultures in Paraguay, the fields at Fortuna are silent, with just the sound of the wind and no birds. The only thing to break the monotonous soybean horizon is a solitary tree. After the soybeans have been harvested, the soil is left bare, except for a minimum level of stubble. Looking at this sight, we wondered how soy monoculture was any different from any other sort of monoculture. What makes it more sustainable? We cannot find an explanation”.



**PHOTO 6** Map and scheme of the ranch La Fortuna in the colony Andres Barbero. Made by Javiera Rulli. Source: [http://www.dap.com.py/nuestro\\_campo-fortuna.php](http://www.dap.com.py/nuestro_campo-fortuna.php) and own pictures.

## DAP's Sustainability Program

DAP has signed an agreement with Guyra to be involved in developing the criteria for "responsible soy" in the RTRS and so "consolidate progress" towards a future market for responsible soy. The agreement involves capacity training in biodiversity issues and information sharing on statistics and progress of the soybean crops.<sup>90</sup>

DAP is also part of the Agenda for Corporate Social Responsibility Programme for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, a project run by the Christian Association of Employers<sup>91</sup> (ADEC) and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF). DAP's criteria for sustainability is "that four contractors will benefit from the development of the project". This program has various partners including as Vision Finance SA, Petrobras, Unilever, ABN-AMRO Bank, Sanatorio San Roque Ltd, Security and Interbanco SA de Seguros SA.

### "Helping the neighbours"

DAP's own social responsibility programme includes supporting neighbouring peasant communities with technical assistance and programmes to grow sesame, maize, market gardening and beekeeping. The programme supports 150 families in Barbero near La Fortuna and 37 families near the Ybycai estate.

When researchers met people from Barbero, the people told them that the support offered by DAP is to provide machinery (tractors, spray equipment) for some of their land to allow them to grow hybrid corn and cotton. This support is not free but paid for from the harvest. DAP staff also offer microcredit through the Microcredit Fundacion Paraguaya, they said, but these credits are for just six months at a rate of 25% interest. This kind of "support" generates conflicts in communities, with in effect the big soyfarmers buying the support of the peasants by providing services to them. The peasants that take-up the services become allies for the landowner who in turn provides agricultural services and guns so that the peasants can form neighbourhood guards to keep the "peace" between the different sectors.

In one community, DAP planted a nursery of native trees and provided medicine, school supplies, food and even teachers for the school during the 2007 drought. But many civil society and peasant organisations reject these charitable programmes. Indeed many of the peasant organisations see them as an attempt to "manipulate poverty" buying their favour so as to divide the community.

In this sense, community leaders say business is using corporate social responsibility to try to usurp the State and create private, social policy making.<sup>92</sup>



*Photo 7. Field of newly planted corn on the estate La Fortuna. Photo: Reto Sonderegger.*

### 3. Small producers

Guyra is also developing two projects with small producers of soy. NGOs are involved in both projects, helping with "strengthening the process of diversification and marketing of organic products."

The first is based in Itapúa (High Vera) near the San Rafael reserve where 30 producers are committed to producing non-GM soy over 27 hectares with 7 hectares of reforestation or forest regeneration. This group produces some 60 tonnes of soy annually.

The second project is in the same department, but near Mary Auxiliadora and the producers are the Association of Ecological Small Producers

<sup>90</sup>3-03-2008. Interview with M Arevalos (Responsible Soy program in Guyra) By Sonderegger, R

<sup>91</sup>Asociación de Empresarios Cristianos

<sup>92</sup>Statement – March 2008- For a third time we reject the fallacy of Responsible Soy. [www.grr.org.ar](http://www.grr.org.ar) and [www.lasojamata.org](http://www.lasojamata.org)

(COPAAR)<sup>93</sup>. The 28 producers have 25 hectares of soy and 7 hectares of reforestation and forest regeneration, producing a similar quantity of soybeans. Together the two producers grow about 120 tons / year compared to the 6 million tonnes of GM soya that is produced each year in Paraguay.

Guyra offers technical assistance to the small producers in these projects. They can opt for organic or conventional soybeans and have access to crop machinery. The theory is that planting soybeans improves their standard of living as it is the only crop that has a market in Paraguay. Organic soy is a niche market for farmers that pay 30% more than the conventional crop.

### Visit to La Golondrina- Espiritu Santo Group

La Golondrina is not part of Guyra's "responsible soy" initiative but was presented as a successful case of responsible soy production at the Second Meeting of the Round Table on Responsible Soy<sup>94</sup> and some of the participants in fact tried to visit the estate after the meeting had finished.<sup>95</sup>

La Golondrina belongs to the Portuguese group Espiritu Santo, a conglomerate formed by the Espiritu Santo Financial Group SA, the Espiritu Santo Resources Limited, Espiritu Santo Tourism and Espiritu Santo - South America.

In Paraguay the Espiritu Santo group of companies owns an area of about 120,000 hectares. The company arrived in Paraguay during the Stroessner dictatorship in 1976, when it acquired to Golondrina estate.<sup>96</sup>

Cotton, GM soya, wheat and cattle are farmed at La Golondrina, with some 10,000 ha of forest reserve (Ypeti Nature Reserve), supervised by the Moses Bertoni Foundation and Paraguay Unique Wood. This reserve has been certified as "Forest Stewardship Council" (FSC) since

<sup>93</sup> Asociados a la Coordinadora de Productores Agropecuarios Artesanales Ecológicos.

<sup>94</sup> Ana María Macedo, Director Natural Land Trust, Luis Enrique Arréllaga, Director Grupo Espiritu Santo Sociedad Agrícola Golondrina S.A.

<sup>95</sup> 2nd Global Conference about Responsible Soya "From the problems to the solutions" Day 1, 31-08-06, Models of Responsible Production: experiences in Paraguay. Day 3, 2-09-06 Field Visit: Estate Golondrina. <http://espanol.groups.yahoo.com/group/amigosdeguyra/me ssage/122>

<sup>96</sup> [www.grupoespirtosanto.com.br](http://www.grupoespirtosanto.com.br)

2003. There is also a tourist business on the estate and in total, La Golondrina employs 150 people.

In February a group from BASEIS and the researchers from RAN accompanied by the Xavante leader, Hiparidi Topiro, MOPIC, of Mobilization of Povos Indígenas del Closed from Brazil, visited the Golondrina estate. We wanted to make contact with the indigenous communities Ka'atymi of the Mya Guaraní who live within La Golondrina's estate, who we had read about in a report on pesticides<sup>97</sup>. The report described how they had been systematically exposed to indiscriminate spraying when the GM cotton and soya plantations were treated.

We made contact with the Social Pastoral Indigenous Tava'i who work with them. The nuns told us the story of the community's long and ultimately unsuccessful battle to get the titles to their land. They managed to get government permission, but La Golondrina set such a high price for the land - \$4,000/ha - that buying it was impossible.

Two indigenous communities known as the Ka'atymi live in the remnants of forest on the estate. In the 90s almost massive area was cleared to make way for cattle grazing. In 2003 the pastures were replaced by cotton fields, which were sprayed with agrochemicals from aircraft. That is when the community started to suffer from pesticide poisoning. In 2007 the cotton fields were replaced with GM soy, which are sprayed from tractors. But the communities still suffer from the pesticide pollution..

During our visit we met with some of one of the Ka'atymi communities. Some 200 families make up the group, living on a strip of forest totally surrounded by soya plantation. They were very concerned by the deterioration of their living conditions as a result of the introduction of monoculture farming. They complained that they only have a tiny strip of forest left and this area is no longer enough to survive. They told us how their culture is based on the forest and access to natural resources, but they are not allowed to

<sup>97</sup> 2007. Informe de la Sociedad Civil sobre el Cumplimiento del PIDESC en el Paraguay 2000 - 2006. Uso Indiscriminado de Agrotóxicos en Paraguay. Atropello a los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales de Comunidades Campesinas e Indígenas. Mesa de Concertación para el Desarrollo Rural Sostenible - Mesa DRS -Asunción, Paraguay.

hunt or fish on the estate. They do not have enough land to grow their own crops and so struggle to be self-sufficient. They are not even allowed to take timber from the forest for their houses, yet they can see workers cutting trees and piles of logs line the side of the roads.



Photo 8. The Ka'atymi community near their homes - just 20m from the soya fields.

Photo: Andrea Samulon.2008.

Members of the Ka'atymi community told us that pesticide spraying takes place once a week, regardless of the environmental conditions, the temperature or the wind. The community's houses are just 20 meters from the soy fields and people often have to flee into the forest to escape from the toxic cloud. They reported various symptoms of poisoning such as diarrhoea, coughing, vomiting, and headaches after each spraying. They also fear that a nearby stream that they use for drinking water has been contaminated.

According to the Pesticide Report herbicides including gramoxone (Paraquat) and insecticides such as the phosphorade Azodrin are used in this area. The chemicals are sprayed from October to February. People from the community used to work in the cotton fields and were often sprayed while they were working. No-one from the community is currently employed on the estate.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup>2007. Informe de la Sociedad Civil sobre el Cumplimiento del PIDESC en el Paraguay 2000 – 2006. Uso Indiscriminado de Agrotóxicos en Paraguay. Atropello a los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales de Comunidades Campesinas e Indígenas. Mesa de Concertación para el Desarrollo Rural Sostenible - Mesa DRS -Asunción, Paraguay.

Some of the indigenous people came with us to show us the way and to go shopping for food in store on the estate. They do not have access to any other stores nearby and have to accept paying higher prices for food. They have no means of transport and generally walk through the estate entrance, where they have to have their identity checked each time by La Golondrina's private security.

Driving from Ciudad del Este to Asuncion, we cross the whole state, driving for more than an hour through extensive soya plantations. On the horizon we cannot even see any trees. We drove for around 40 minutes through soy without seeing any forest. When I look at the map included in the presentation made to the second Roundtable on Responsible Soy, I can't see where we drove, because according to the map the area has a number of forest reserves.

After the visit, I really wondered whereabouts the Ypeti reserve was and I asked myself what significance it could have in the context of such a large estate. It is an island of forest, surrounded by toxic GM soy plantations, where indigenous people are not allowed to enter but a "sustainable" company can extract timber. The Golondrina estate is the only place with FSC certification in Paraguay. It really is amazing to think that representatives of the Natural Land Trust could be so cynical as to present this feudal farm as a success story in the second Roundtable of Responsible Soy.<sup>99</sup>

### In summary

"Responsible soy" in Paraguay appears not to be making any difference to the practice on the ground so far. Local communities are still losing access to their land, still suffering from pesticide pollution and struggling to maintain their livelihoods. For the smaller farmers involved in Guyra's initiative, there may be some benefits with access to more resources. But the main difference appears to be the benefits for the big companies involved who can claim they are producing "responsible soy" at no great cost and without making significant changes to their operations on the ground.

<sup>99</sup> Example of responsible soy.  
<http://www.campoagropecuario.com.py/noticias.php?not=3723>

**SOCIEDAD AGRICOLA  
GOLONDRINA  
SAGSA**

  
ESTANCIA GOLONDRINA

Agriculture  
production

Cattle ranching



Agriculture  
production

Indigenous  
community

Total surface  
23.911 ha  
Production surface  
10.319 ha  
Ypety Reserve  
13.592 ha



Borders  
Ypety Reserve



Forest management  
FORCERPA



Map 2. State of La Golondrina. Downloaded from [www.responsiblesoy.org](http://www.responsiblesoy.org)

# Chapter 4. Beyond the RTRS: GM and Industry's Expansion Plans

Nina Holland, CEO

RTRS members promote their Round Table membership as a form of 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR), suggesting that they are improving how they do business. But their lobbying agenda outside the RTRS shows clearly that they have no real concern or commitment to making genuine improvements.

Their political influence is directed at expanding their business, including improving access to cheap raw commodities through "free" trade measures, or arguing for export subsidies where these meet their needs. Some are lobbying for policies to promote agrofuel use so that soy oil can be used as a feed stock, increasing its market value. Many are also actively engaged in a campaign to break down the EU GM policy, which they say is to blame for problems in the intensive animal production sector in Europe.

Growth and continued access to cheap raw commodities are key issues for the lobby association for the food and farming industry, the CIAA (Confederation des Industries Agro-Alimentaires de l'UE). The CIAA represents RTRS members including Unilever and Friesland Foods, and is calling for opportunities to access new markets outside of the EU.<sup>100</sup>

The CIAA also supports bilateral trade agreements and warns that the delay in implementing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) - a form of bilateral agreement - could mean higher prices for raw material for EU industry.<sup>101</sup> Despite the free trade rethoric, the CIAA is simultaneously pushing for European export subsidies to be continued for the benefit of the industrial meat and dairy sector. These subsidies are effectively destroying local markets around the world.<sup>102</sup>

The growing policy support for agrofuels has led to an increased interest in soy from oil and energy companies, and these companies are now getting involved in the RTRS. New RTRS members from this sector include Shell, BP, Greenergy, Biofuels Corporation Trading, Biopetrol Trading, ED&F Man, Patagonia Bioenergia, and Neste Oil.

Some of the existing soy industry are also moving into biodiesel. Bunge is building biodiesel plants in Spain in cooperation with Acciona and Repsol. FEDIOL member Unimills is building a biodiesel plant in the Netherlands with a large subsidy from the Dutch government that is going to use soy as a feed stock, next to oil seed rape and palmoil.

The growing awareness of the devastating impacts that will result from large scale agrofuel production mean access to "responsible" soy will be crucial for oil and energy companies if they want to be able to use their oil as agrofuel within Europe. The number of agrofuel refineries using soy oil is increasing - often with substantial government assistance, reflecting how the market is likely to expand in future years.

Against this backdrop, initiatives like the RTRS are receiving growing attention from some European governments. The UK and the Netherlands are both promoting a so-called "meta-standard approach" to accreditation, building on existing sustainability criteria. This would mean that agrofuel feedstock certified by FSC, RTRS or RSPO would automatically qualify as accredited agrofuels.

This could lead to a vast expansion in the market for "responsible soy" with potentially devastating consequences for people and the environment. Civil society organisations across Europe are fighting EU proposals for a mandatory target of 10% biofuel in transport fuel by 2020 and demanding a moratorium on all incentives and targets.

Round Table member WWF stands alone in not backing the demand to drop the 10% target. As drivers of many certification initiatives including the RTRS, they argue that a mandatory target is an opportunity to increase the market for certification. But others argue that it is certification that is making market growth feasible - and given that the criteria cannot

<sup>100</sup>[http://www.ciaa.eu/documents/brochures/memorandum%20slov\\_lr.pdf](http://www.ciaa.eu/documents/brochures/memorandum%20slov_lr.pdf)

<sup>101</sup>[http://www.ciaa.be/pages\\_en/documents/positions\\_list.asp?pos\\_id=328&year\\_crit=2007&search\\_crit=&search\\_where=](http://www.ciaa.be/pages_en/documents/positions_list.asp?pos_id=328&year_crit=2007&search_crit=&search_where=)

<sup>102</sup>[http://www.ciaa.be/asp/documents/detailed\\_doc.asp?do](http://www.ciaa.be/asp/documents/detailed_doc.asp?do)



make the industry sustainable, the target is in fact promoting an unsustainable expansion of a damaging industry.

### **Lobby to break down EU GM policy**

The use of GM RoundupReady technology has already caused great damage because of its reliance on glyphosate and the way it has facilitated an accelerated expansion of soy monocultures over areas that once belonged to small scale farming or nature. This way of producing soy (no till, direct sowing and chemical weed control) is very capital intensive which has further promoted the concentration of land and production in the hands of the large producers.

There is a clear link between agrofuels and GM promotion by business. For biotech companies, the growing market for agrofuel presents not only an opportunity to sell more new GM seeds, but also to bring down the public resistance to GM crops in Europe by promoting GM agrofuel crops as 'climate friendly'. Indeed Brazil's president Lula da Silva argued back in 2005 that the use of GM soy for agrofuels would 'solve' the debate on GM oilseeds. *"In stead of eating GM soy, we will make biodiesel for the car, which will not reject it. People will eat the good soy",* he said<sup>103</sup>.

Prominent members of the RTRS recently took part in an aggressive lobbying campaign to get the EU to weaken its GM policy. Key RTRS players involved include industry association FEDIOL, which represents the highly concentrated vegetable oil industry (mainly Cargill, ADM, Bunge and Saipol) in Brussels, FEFAC (the European association for animal feed producers), the Dutch Product Board for Margarine, Fats and Oils, fats (MVO), and the food and drink industry lobby association CIAA.

Increases in the prices of animal feed have caused what these companies call a crisis in Europe's factory farm sector, with companies concerned about the effects on competitiveness. And they argue that because the EU approval process for GM animal feed takes longer in the EU than that in the US, European meat producers are missing out on access to cheaper supplies, putting them at a disadvantage. The EU approval process should be speeded up, they argue, and the current EU zero tolerance

policy for *unauthorised* GM ingredients in food and feed stuffs should be dropped.

In September 2007, FEFAC president Pedro Corrêa de Barros warned EU Farm Ministers that *"The current EU GM policy will cripple the EU livestock industry. Livestock producers in third countries will be able to use the GMO crops not yet approved in the EU to feed their animals and will increasingly sell their products of animal origin to EU consumers at a lower price compared with EU operators"*.<sup>104</sup>

FEFAC, FEDIOL and COCERAL (the European Grain Traders Association) have all warned that European restrictions on GM feed are proving a barrier to access to imports, pointing to warnings from the Brazilian and Argentinean Farm Ministers that they would not be able to guarantee the absence of non-EU approved GM material in grain and oilseeds exports, even for supplies which carry a "non-GM" certificate".<sup>105</sup>

These lobby groups argue that when cultivation of new GMO varieties in South America starts before EU authorisation, the EU zero tolerance rule will mean that: *"...all soybean meal imports and the crushing of soybeans in the EU will stop with a dramatic impact on all of the EU animal feeding industries."*

This, they claim, will cause *"irreversible damage"* to the EU's livestock sector with the loss of up to 44% of poultry and 35% of pig production.<sup>106</sup>

The Dutch Product Board MVO - a government installed body that is financed by industry but which has some legal powers and is therefore supposed to also take the public interest into account - has prioritized speeding up the EU GMO approval process in its action plan. It is particularly keen to facilitate authorisation for Liberty Link soy (another herbicide resistant variety), the second generation of Monsanto's Roundup Ready soy and T45 canola. Liberty Link soy might be grown from 2008 in the US, says MVO, and therefore *"the presence of this variety in bulk loads destined for the EU will increase"*.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup><http://www.fefac.org/file.pdf?FileID=9000>

<sup>105</sup>[http://www.allaboutfeed.net/home/id102-30821/fevac\\_eu\\_needs\\_gm\\_feed\\_supplies.html](http://www.allaboutfeed.net/home/id102-30821/fevac_eu_needs_gm_feed_supplies.html)

<sup>106</sup><http://www.fefac.org/file.pdf?FileID=12138>

<sup>107</sup><http://www.mvo.nl/organisatie/download/MVO-Jaarplan-2008.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.lead.org.br/article/view/2313/1/179>

A Friends of the Earth Europe report accuses the animal feed industry of “scaremongering”, and shows that its arguments don’t hold. For example, the feed industry argues that China will buy all the cheap GM feed stuff from the US, but this is unlikely given China’s more precautionary approach to GMOs.<sup>108</sup>

It is not a coincidence that many of the companies involved in the RTRS are the same as those involved in preparing for the introduction of GM soy first time round. Then, PR firm Schuttelaar and Partners were hired by Monsanto to ensure the smooth and silent arrival for Roundup Ready soy. Product Board MVO played an important role at the time. Schuttelaar and Partners now runs the Dutch business ‘Taskforce Sustainable Soy’, including many of the companies mentioned above (FEFAC, FEDIOL, MVO, Unilever etc.), while also a fervent RTRS supporter.

### **In summary**

The corporate sectors involved in the RTRS - from soy producers to food and oil companies – want to see a massive expansion in the soy trade. Given their activities at EU level, and elsewhere, it is clear that RTRS certification is being seen as a means of making this expansion acceptable, particularly in the case of agrofuels.

Prominent RTRS members are also lobbying for a further break down of the EU GM policy, and arguing for a speed up of the approval of new GMOs, including the second generation RoundupReady soy, and even for a dropping of the EU zero-tolerance policy for illegal GMOs.

Should these lobbies succeed, it will mean that the soy trade becomes more and more irresponsible, regardless of the certification scheme in place.

### **Getting RR soy accepted in Europe; a retrospective**

Silent, because as the article “Selling a Revolution: the Monsanto PR campaign” by Helen Holder relates, Monsanto’s aggressive PR campaign in the UK proved a “disaster for the desired ‘public acceptance’ and in fact served to blow the GMO issue up into a UK nation wide debate involving leading politicians and scientists.” So a new strategy was needed. Director Marcel Schuttelaar was an former employee of Friends of the Earth Netherlands and also of the large consumer union, and skilled in analysing the ‘societal spectrum’. His colleague Piet Schenkelaars wrote in 1997, one year after the succesfull introduction of RR soy, “The import of [...] transgenic soy into Europe is a good example of an issue that needs to be managed”.

One element of the strategy was to effectively deal with the media, politicians and others well in advance of the actual introduction. Product Board MVO was mobilised to help the introduction of RR soy. A year before the planned introduction of RR soy and at Monsanto’s suggestion, MVO organised a “fact finding mission” to Monsanto’s base in St Louis (USA) for representatives of the relevant Dutch inistries, industry and the large consumer union Consumentenbond. Mission accomplished. Every one who took part was convinced that RR soy was safe. The mission also successfully created a divide between the consumer union and environmental organisations.

RR soy was (and still is) promoted as “environmentally friendly” as fewer agrochemicals are needed for weed control. But by 2000, during a Dutch public debate on GM, Schuttelaar admitted that the hard claims made by the industry about the need for less agrochemicals were unfounded, saying that “.. the short term data looked good, but on the long term it was less clear”. By this time, the damage had already been done and large scale imports of RR soy into the EU were underway. Now, Schuttelaar and his Taskforce actively support the RTRS, that will serve them by labeling RR soy as “responsible”.

<sup>108</sup>[http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/animal%20feed/GMO\\_Livestock\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/animal%20feed/GMO_Livestock_briefing.pdf)

# Chapter 5. Soy's Global Impact

Reto Sonderegger, BASEIS

The social and environmental impacts caused by this highly valued commodity, soy, are often discussed. But the impacts on the countries which buy and consume the soy, primarily China and countries in Europe, are rarely considered.

It is perhaps surprising that the European NGOs who helped initiate Round Table and who are now leading it, have not considered the implications of importing unimaginable quantities of nutrients into Europe. Perhaps their failure to see this comes from their unquestioning acceptance of the dominant economic system? Perhaps it reflects the arrogance of old colonial patterns? Demand for agrofuels is threatening the human food supply. But let us not forget that half of the world's grain harvest ends up in the stomachs of animals.

The rich nutrients now being depleted from South America's soil for the benefit of the soya crop are ending up in pools of liquid manure around the centres of industrial livestock production near major ports like Rotterdam, Barcelona, Hong Kong and Guangdong. Whether in China or in Europe, the effects are similar: eutrophication of the surface water, the leaching of nitrates into the water table and the subsequent pollution of drinking water, an excess of nutrients and heavy metals in the soil, soil and water pollution from waste veterinary products, emissions of ammonia, methane and nitrous oxide and the destruction of fragile ecosystems such as wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs in the South China Sea<sup>109</sup>.

Such impacts have already caused campaigns in parts of Europe, as in the case of the "Eaux et Rivières de Bretagne", a campaign group which has for several years been fighting against the nitrate pollution of drinking water caused by the pig industry in Brittany. This movement is supported by the Confédération Paysanne and other small farmer's organisations who have found common cause in the fight for water quality in rural areas<sup>110</sup>.

<sup>109</sup>FAO, livestock policy briefing 02, [http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/policy-briefs/02/EN/AGA02\\_EN\\_08.pdf](http://www.fao.org/ag/AGAInfo/resources/documents/policy-briefs/02/EN/AGA02_EN_08.pdf)

<sup>110</sup>Bové, J. Dufour, F. 2000. Le Monde n'est pas une marchandise. Des paysans contre la malbouffe.

There are structural similarities between soy agribusiness in the South and industrial livestock breeders in the North. Most of them are equally indebted to financial institutions and are merely pawns in the production system. While in the South nutrients are depleted and the soils need more and more synthetic fertilizers, in the North the livestock farmers are fighting over access to land on which to spread the liquid manure produced on their farms.

Any sense of what "land" and "soil" meant for traditional agriculture has completely disappeared today: "The influence of the capitalist system on agriculture has made us rethink the basics of land use. The race to secure the rights to spread liquid manure is so strong that it seems that the goal is no longer about agriculture and food production, but making a profit from spreading manure. The very purpose and role of the land has been reversed. In the case of highly speculative sectors such as pork and poultry farming, we note that even the land belongs, often, to the creditor bank<sup>111</sup>.

As well as liquid manure, farmers in Europe and China are adding more and more synthetic nitrogen fertilizers to the land which also adversely affects the quality of the soil and the water. According to the FAO, 500 kg N per hectare were applied in the Netherlands during the 1980s, a third of this amount in organic form. The flow of nitrogen away from the farm in the form of milk and meat was just 82 kg per hectare, with an excess of nutrients left contaminating the soil<sup>112</sup>.

Europe imports between 35 and 40 million tons of soybeans each year, almost all of which are used to fatten industrially farmed animals. This amount is equal to more than 70% of the protein needed on the continent<sup>113</sup>.

But NGOs in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe seem to find it much more important to focus on the soybean production in South America rather than questioning this perverse agricultural model in front of their own front doors. They do not want to touch this problem and try to alleviate the impacts without

<sup>111</sup> Bové, J. Dufour, F. 2002. La semilla del futuro - La agricultura explicada a los ciudadanos,

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.fao.org/AG/aga/Is pa / LXHTML/tech/ch2e.htm>

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

questioning the economic interests of Dutch companies in both the agricultural and the financial sector.

Trapped in a neocolonial way of thinking, they show their lack of historical and social consciousness - just as they have done in the even worse case of palm oil from former Dutch colonies in Indonesia.

The French farmers' leader, José Bové, says that "it was because of the problem of soy that I discovered (...) the aberration of a system condemning entire regions of the planet to produce raw materials for raising animals in Europe 'without soil' (...). That was the starting point of my struggle "<sup>114</sup>.

The underlying political reasons for this perversion are not discussed at the Round Table. There will be no questions about the Blair House Agreement between the USA and the EU that prevents Europe from becoming autonomous in vegetable protein production. In 1992 the EU ratified once again the 1958 agreement limiting subsidies for crops of vegetable proteins to an area of five million hectares. As a result of this and because of the low energy prices, European producers buy their protein from the "Third World" and do not produce their own.

It is true that Europe would struggle to find enough farmland to grow enough vegetable protein to maintain their high levels of meat consumption. But by reducing the consumption level of industrially produced meat and by consuming in a more conscientious way, Europeans could reduce pressure on land in the South, currently destined to produce genetically modified soybean monoculture. Planting oilseeds like soy in Europe would also help reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilizer as soy is a leguminous plant that accumulates nitrogen for the next crop.

Instead Europe grows a lot of corn because this plant can absorb a lot of liquid manure from the poultry and pig industry. As with soybean production in the South, corn monocultures in the North need a lot of fertilizer and pesticides. With good crop rotation methods, the use of these oil dependent inputs would be drastically reduced.

Faced with this whole disaster, it is important to highlight the responsibility of citizens as consumers of food around the world. The choices they make as consumers have huge potential to strengthen the family farming system as well as creating the opportunity to develop a new social contract between the countryside and the city in the North and the South.

If they don't, they may as well completely surrender to the control of transnational agribusiness. A paradigm shift is urgently needed. What is the point of agriculture? Producing healthy and diverse foods for people or raw material for a distant and alienated market over which neither the producer nor the consumer exercises any control? That is why food producers and consumers must work together. As Bové says, direct contact between farmers and citizens will be the weapon of the future.

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

# Conclusion

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As the frontiers of soy advance, the land is emptied of life and a toxic green desert begins to take hold. Living conditions for local people get tougher, causing migration and eventually leading to the depopulation of the countryside. Life becomes impossible for those who find themselves surrounded by soy.

Evidence from across South America shows the damaging consequences of industrial scale soy expansion. Yet the criteria being considered by the Round Table do little to address the problems caused. Indeed existing examples of so-called "responsible soy" reveal that the criteria are meaningless without the back-up of a well-resourced and independent body to monitor and enforce the standards set.

For the industry, membership of the RTRS is little more than a hollow phrase, a greenwash exercise. At the same time as being a member of the RTRS (and paying lip-service to the need for "responsible soy"), they are able to carry on lobbying for growth and expansion through trade liberalisation, opening of new markets and a continuation of export subsidies, and for a break down of European policies on GM, using misleading arguments to influence politicians and the media. Certified RTRS soy will mean "responsible" GM Roundup Ready soy, in larger quantities than before.

*Campesino* and other organisations have protested against the RTRS on the base that monocultures are not and will never be sustainable<sup>115</sup>.

Support for on-going small-scale and subsistence farming, including land reform programs, can help create a counter-balance to the growth of soy plantations as well as helping to maintain a rural population and preventing the conversion of the countryside into a sea of soy. In the north the measures should be similar towards ecolocalism based on local and autonomous production chains.

Top down initiatives like the RTRS do not tackle the real scale of the problem, focusing simply on

some of the more immediate harmful impacts - while allowing the livelihoods and the rights of thousands of people to be wiped out.

Within the current framework, it is impossible to see how the Round Table on Responsible Soy could ever create a system that is sustainable or socially just. This is why organisations in the North and the South have rejected the Round Table from the start.

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<sup>115</sup> 1] BASE.IS, CONAMURI, FNC et al. (2006) "La producción de soja a gran escala es inevitable mente insustentable" Asunción: 31/08/06 (mimeo) on <http://www.lasojamata.org/node/42>

# Statement 2008

## For a third time we reject the fallacy of Responsible Soy

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SOCIAL JUSTICE, INDIGENOUS AND RURAL ORGANISATIONS AND URBAN MOVEMENTS OF ARGENTINA, LATIN AMERICA AND OTHER CONTINENTS REJECT THE "THIRD ROUNDTABLE ON RESPONSIBLE SOY"<sup>i</sup> TO BE HELD ON APRIL 23 AND 24 AT THE HILTON HOTEL, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA.

Agribusiness is responsible for the devastation of our soils, deforestation, contamination of rivers and aquifers, biodiversity loss, and the plunder of the natural and cultural heritage which once supported our communities. The expansion of soybean monoculture threatens the territorial, cultural and food sovereignty of countries as well as the rights of the Indigenous and rural communities. Soy agribusiness excludes, impoverishes and weakens the population. This industrial agricultural model violates economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, and as it expands, its destructive methods of operation wipe out everything in its path, resulting in rural migration, marginalisation of rural populations, and ultimately the criminalisation of the poor and social movements.

In spite of this, the soy agroindustry is actually expanding and becoming stronger through the growing markets for processed foods, industrial livestock farming, and the production of agrofuel crops that will purportedly 'save us from climate change'. The reality is that the *hidrovías* (waterways) which are part of IIRSA<sup>ii</sup> are expanding, new rail networks are appearing, more GM crops are being grown and more pesticides and machinery is being imported to speed up the land clearing process.

Agribusiness expands more and more and many European Governments respond to criticisms and complaints about the current situation in our countries by blindly and naively trusting WWF's Round Tables for Sustainable Business. We are dismayed that they are following it as being successful examples, specifically towards the creation of new legal criteria for the sustainable production of biofuels<sup>iii</sup>. By doing this the EU Governments will fall into the trap of corporate green washing.

Social movements from the North and the South reject outright all attempts by corporations and NGOs to mobilize public opinion in support of their notion of sustainable or responsible GM soy monoculture<sup>iv</sup>. We disapprove, the projects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) that through roundtable dialogues and voluntary measures attempts to cover up the crimes committed by the corporations. Through CSR, corporations try to usurp the State and create private, social policy making.

We resist the agribusiness model of neo-colonial domination and the way in which corporations have learned to misrepresent and distort many of our own social movement discourses and statements. We denounce the corporate greenwashing of the niche market of certification.

In March 2005, rural and ecologist organisations from the Southern Cone, including Via Campesina from Argentina, Paraguay and Brasil came together at Foz de Iguazu to denounce the First Roundtable on Responsible Soy<sup>v</sup>. Simultaneously, Dutch activists demonstrated outside the headquarters of the fodder industry PROVIMI in the harbor of Rotterdam<sup>vi</sup>. In 2006, the Paraguayan social movements, urban and rural organisations, demonstrated against the Second Roundtable on Sustainable Soy which took place in Asuncion<sup>vii</sup>. Recently Via Campesina Paraguay rejected publicly an attempt to involve them without their consent in the greenwash of Responsible Soy<sup>viii</sup>.

Due to all that is stated above, we reject once again the corporate project led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and including the soy agribusiness groups AAPRESID<sup>ix</sup> from Argentina, ABIOVE<sup>x</sup>, MAGGI and APROSOJA from Brasil, DAP from Paraguay, Bunge and Cargill from the United States, the ABN-AMRO Bank from Holland, and the NGOs, FUNDAPAZ from Argentina, GUYRA (Birdlife) from Paraguay, Solidarity from Holland, amongst others.

We ratify once again our commitment to a united struggle for the Food Sovereignty of our people and to confront any attempt to misinform and seducement from the agribusiness. We demand the liberation of our territories from these criminal agribusiness companies and justice for all the victims of soy agribusiness!

**¡WHERE THERE ARE MONOCULTURES THERE CAN'T EXIST SUSTAINABILITY!  
¡WHERE THERE IS AGRIBUSINESS CAMPESINOS CANNOT LIVE!**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.responsiblesoy.org/>

<sup>ii</sup> Integration of Regional Structural Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) is constructing a 4200km-long industrial waterway from Bolivia to Uruguay for the export of primary materials including soya. Road and rail networks are planned to feed goods into this system. This will impact extensively on the natural areas, the indigenous and other communities in its path.

<sup>iii</sup> This is confirmed by the new participations in the Roundtable of Shell International;BP International Ltd;Carrefour Brasil;Greenenergy International;Glencore Grain B.V.;Neste Oil;COOP;ED&F Man France;US Soybean Export Council;Wheb Biofuels;Cert ID Certificadora LTDA; Royal Dutch Grain and Feed Trade Association <http://www.responsiblesoy.org/eng/index.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Open Letter to Support the Iguazú Counter Conference: No Greenwash for the soy industry!

28 February 2005. ASEED, XminY <http://prod.biotech.indymedia.org/es/topic/soy2005/archive.shtml>

<sup>v</sup> Counterconference of Iguazu. 16-18 /03/ 2008. <http://www.grr.org.ar/iguazu/>

<sup>vi</sup> Direct action in Provimi - animal feed company : "No Soy for Factory Farming!"Holland, March 16 2005. Organised by ASEED. <http://prod.biotech.indymedia.org/es/2005/03/4101.shtml>

<sup>vii</sup> The Soy Model in Paraguay: Irresponsible, unsustainable, oppressive. June 2006, Paraguay. <http://www.grr.org.ar/ceparaguay/>

<sup>viii</sup> 28 February 2008. Manifest of ViaCampesina Paraguay against the Roundtable of Sustainable Soy

<sup>ix</sup> AAPRESID started in 1988 with funds of Monsanto <http://www.cababstractsplus.org/fts/Uploads/PDF/20023109946.pdf> and <http://www.aapresid.org.ar/>

<sup>x</sup> Abiove represents 17 oil companies, amongst them group andre Maggi, Bunge , Cargill and Louis Dreyfus and Incopa.