
[Tree plantations in the South to generate energy in the North: A new threat to communities and forests](#)

Apparently out of concern over climate change and the urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels, the governments of the North – particularly those of the member states of the European Union, but also those of the United States and Canada – are increasingly promoting the use of a certain type of raw material, considered “renewable”, for large-scale energy generation: wood.

To meet the growing demand for wood in the countries of the North, vast areas of land in the South face the threat of being occupied by monoculture tree plantations, which would even further exacerbate the current process of land grabbing. There are already close to 60 million hectares of land occupied by industrial tree plantations in the South.

According to a report from the European Union, one of the main promoters of the use of woody biomass, “the rising demand for woody biomass energy is likely to push the global price for wood, thus adding pressure on forests and other ecosystems and increasing conflicts between different landuses. More specific risks are deforestation corresponding with the replacement of natural forests by monoculture plantations. Rural communities are potentially harmed in their access to land and water, their food and energy security for decades given the long-term nature of most investments and projects.”(1)

Nevertheless, there is no indication that this concern over the risks posed has been translated into concrete measures to effectively confront the root causes of the climate crisis. On the contrary, there are efforts to legitimize the expansion of biomass plantations by certifying them as “sustainable” through organizations like the FSC.

This WRM publication, “Tree plantations in the South to generate energy in the North”, is primarily aimed at raising awareness of the current and potential impacts of the rapid expansion of these plantations to meet the growing demand in the North on rural communities in countries of the South that depend on access to the land and the local availability of biomass to meet their own energy needs, as well the impacts on the conservation of forests and other ecosystems.

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