
Myth No. 3: Plantations are much more productive than native forests

Anyone that subscribes to this idea must be someone who has either never visited a forest area surrounded by communities, or is simply linked to the plantation business. Local people in the Mekong countries in Southeast Asia who live and rely on their native forests will totally disagree with such a statement. For them, conversion of their forests into plantations has started to be the worst nightmare they have ever suffered in real life.

In the eyes of forest dwellers of tropical rainforest areas in southern China, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, plantations are not only unproductive: they have no value at all. The large eucalyptus, rubber and oil palm plantations that have taken away their native forest areas cannot provide daily food, shelter, medicines – all that serve to meet life's basic needs. Even more than that, Laos and Thai village people who worship the sacred forests inhabited by good spirits told us, “the ancestor spirits will not stay in a plantation”, because the spirits simply cannot dwell in fake forests, and people do not want to stay in a community that has no guarding spirits.

Plantations disguised as “forests” can only provide one product –either timber or palm oil or rubber- that clearly cannot rival the biodiversity, food, cultural and spiritual products that forests provide to local people. So, if the above lie is not exposed as what it really is –an invention produced from a blind perspective- more and more people around the world will be deprived of the foundation of their lives, based on native forests.

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