
Organizations protest against the XIV FAO World Forestry Congress

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On the occasion of the XIV World Forestry Congress, organized by the FAO in Durban, South Africa, between 7 and 11 September, we, members of the Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations (RECOMA), along with diverse grassroots organizations, are disseminating this letter of protest to express our outrage with the erroneous and exclusionary manner in which FAO is once again organizing this event.

RECOMA is a network with representatives of organizations from various Latin American countries whose main objective is to exchange information and coordinate activities to denounce and oppose the expansion of large-scale monoculture tree plantations in Latin America due to their serious impacts on local communities; violation of land rights; destruction of water sources; and replacement of food production areas.

We cannot be silent when once again the FAO, an organization of the United Nations, organizes:

- An event that does not put on its agenda a profound discussion about the serious problems and negative impacts caused by the so-called "forestry model" that promotes large-scale monoculture tree plantations, benefiting the so called "forestry sector," especially a handful of giant forestry corporations;
- An event that suggests that forests would be essential for the climate change mitigation strategy, with the aggravating fact that FAO wrongly includes tree monocultures, and even GMOs in the "forest" category. FAO has sold this idea during its recent campaign for the March 21 - International Day of Forests - with the theme "Forests, Climate, Change". Although using tree plantations to offset carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels is demonstrably a false solution to climate change, this argument has served as a further incentive to the expansion of large scale monoculture tree plantations.
- An exclusive event that is inaccessible to those affected by the forestry model - local communities around the world – due to high registration fees, and thus, is an elitist and anti-democratic event. This is even more serious given the fact that FAO as a public organization should always promote a democratic debate and ensure the participation of all, especially of those affected by the model promoted by FAO itself: large scale monoculture tree plantations.

We propose that FAO should instead invest time and energy, not in one, but in many meetings with an urgent purpose in mind: to rethink its goals and strategies regarding forests. Some key questions are: today FAO serves who and what? And what for and for whom should it be working? These meetings should be open to everyone; they should be hosted in all forest regions and continents and in the areas mostly affected by the "forestry model".

If FAO continues to favor the "forestry sector" and the model that this sector idealizes, our task is to

continue fighting this destructive model of monoculture tree plantations, including those with false green label certifications like FSC; to defend and show solidarity with the communities that are suffering the impacts; and to support them in their struggle for the defense and recovery of their territories invaded by tree monocultures.

Once again, our message is:

Plantations are not forests!

Red latinoamericana contra los monocultivos de árboles - RECOMA
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