
[Brazil: Aracruz Celulose is now facing problems in two states](#)

After five weeks of functioning, the Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry (CPI), created to investigate irregularities related to Aracruz' activities in the state of Espírito Santo, has already revealed a large number of complaints, irregularities and illegal activities of the multinational over the past 30 years.

João Batista Marré, representative of the Movement of Small Farmers and the first person to testify, denounced that during the last year more than 100 farmers in the municipality of Vila Valério were expelled from their lands by Aracruz Celulose and their houses were destroyed to give way to the plantation of eucalyptus in their extremely fertile agricultural lands. He also handed over a 500 pages file that shows that about 22,000 hectares of lands, possessed today by Aracruz, were "bought" by 29 (ex-) employees of the company during the period 1974-1975. These people never lived on the lands, but were used by the firm just to buy the lands. These lands, for the greater part covered by native forest at that time, were mostly inhabited by Afro-Brazilian traditional communities, but these people did not have land titles. Some persons, including military personnel --at a time when there was a military dictatorship in the country-- were used by the company to evict those communities from their lands.

One of those 29 (ex-) employees of Aracruz, Mr. Oreildo Antônio Bertolini, who was questioned during the last meeting of the CPI, confirmed that he bought 600 hectares of lands for Aracruz, without even knowing where those lands were located and also without receiving a penny for it. These 600 hectares, without land titles, were owned by the state of Espírito Santo and only individuals -- and not corporations like Aracruz-- could request this type of lands for cultivation, paying a symbolic price. Mr. Oreildo also confirmed that he went to Aracruz one day before the land purchase to be instructed by the firm's lawyers on how to carry out the operation.

Mr. Luciano Lisbão, the only representative of the company interrogated until now by the CPI --and accompanied by three lawyers-- took back his words that NGO's who were part of the Movement Alert against the Green Desert are being financed by commercial competitors of Aracruz. This false statement, just as many other ones, was made by him on a local radio news station.

Fabio Villas from the Indigenist Missionary Council (Conselho Indigenista Missionário) accused Aracruz of occupying illegally, at present, around 10,500 hectares of indigenous lands, already identified by official governmental studies. He also presented aerial photographs from 1965 and 1975, proving that thousands of hectares of indigenous native forests were substituted by eucalyptus plantations during that period.

Amazingly enough, the local press is not publishing any news about the CPI's proceedings, but is instead carrying huge propaganda advertisements from Aracruz Celulose, which shows the influence of the company with the media. This has been also evident with the publication of a one page letter in the two main newspapers of Espírito Santo with the title: "Let the state grow!", which cost some 15 thousand dollars, totally in favour of Aracruz Celulose. Among other organizations, the letter was signed by the Agriculture departments of all the 75 municipalities in the State. Afterwards, many of

them declared that they did not know anything about this letter. And the question is: who paid the 15 thousand dollars for this one-page notice? As a result, the CPI decided to send letters to all secretaries of agriculture asking them if they had been consulted about signing this letter.

Things are no better for Aracruz in the neighbouring state of Espírito Santo. As a result of the banning of eucalyptus planting in Espírito Santo, the company is trying to get the approval of the Rio de Janeiro State government for the plantation of 42,000 hectares in this state. To achieve this goal, the firm signed an agreement with the state government, without discussing this with civil society. This was one of the reasons that led to the creation of a Movement Against the Green Desert in Rio de Janeiro, involving rural workers' movements, trade unions and environmental organizations. In the state Parliament of Rio de Janeiro, a similar law as the one recently passed in Espírito Santo is being analysed, proposing to prohibit eucalyptus plantations until an agro-ecological zonation has been carried out. Additionally, the National Land Reform Institute (INCRA) has publicly supported the resistance movement against Aracruz's plantations, saying that the expansion plans of the company will make it impossible to implement any land reform in Rio de Janeiro. At present, opposition to Aracruz is increasing in Rio de Janeiro and, differently from the situation in Espírito Santo, the press is following and disseminating the debate.