
[Brazil: Eucalyptus plantations banned in Espirito Santo!](#)

What has recently happened in the Brazilian state of Espirito Santo is a great motivation for people struggling throughout the world to halt the further spread of monoculture tree plantations. The news is that the State Parliament finally passed a law --after lifting the Governor's veto by 20 votes in 25-- which bans eucalyptus plantations in the state until an agroecological mapping --which will determine where eucalyptus can and cannot be planted-- is carried out. To our knowledge, this is the first case where a law is passed to stop this type of damaging plantations and therefore sets an extremely important precedent on the matter, which can be used by people being impacted by plantations in other countries.

Within such context, it is incredible to note that the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) has chosen to ignore that reality in issue 3 (2001) of its newsletter. Instead of informing about the situation and to reach conclusions about what went wrong with Aracruz's plantations, the ITTO uses its newsletter to tell its readers an amazing fairy tale with a happy ending.

Obviously based on information received from Aracruz (Mr Luiz Fernando Brandao, the company's communication manager is mentioned as a source for further information), the ITTO article ("compiled by the ITTO Secretariat") does not even mention the above law and describes an idyllic and totally untrue picture of the situation, concluding that, despite some troubles (with local indigenous peoples), "Aracruz has a hard-won reputation as a progressive company with good environmental practices." Additionally --according to the ITTO-- Aracruz's example "shows the importance of stakeholder participation, or 'buy-in', given the long-term nature of plantation forestry" and that "an harmonious social setting is crucial."

May we then ask: why did the State Parliament pass a law --and later lifted the veto imposed on it by the Governor-- banning further eucalyptus plantations in the state? If the "social setting" was so "harmonious", if the company's "environmental practices" were so good, if "stakeholder participation" was so successful, then why did that law receive so much support from parliamentarians, trade unionists, local farmers, AfroBrazilian communities, indigenous peoples, landless peasants, environmentalists and fishing communities among others?

The answer is quite simple: because the serious social and environmental impacts of Aracruz's plantation and pulp production activities forced all those people to do something about it, which they successfully did! Giant Aracruz has received a major blow and the situation has positively changed for local people. The expansion of the Green Desert --as plantations are called in Espirito Santo-- has been stopped and now a new battle starts to ensure that the agroecological mapping is carried out in a participatory and open manner, starting at the local level. But whatever the outcome, the people of Espirito Santo have already achieved a huge victory that will certainly motivate other people, within and outside Brazil, fighting their own battles against similar damaging plantations.

