
[Weyerhaeuser's president promotes plantations in Guyana](#)

Dr Conor Wilson Boyd --president of Weyerhaeuser Forestlands International, a company owning a total of 28 million acres of forest in North America and established in 32 countries-- made a presentation during a meeting organized by the Iwokrama International Rainforest Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development last October in Georgetown.

Weyerhaeuser president's presentation was largely focused on the promotion of plantations. However, if --as Dr Boyd said-- "the business perspective of companies should take into consideration the social and environmental impact on communities", then it should be clear that tree plantations should not be promoted at an industrial scale, which is precisely what companies such as Weyerhaeuser do.

Large scale monocultures --these are the plantations currently being implemented by companies such as this throughout the world-- have already proven to have deleterious effects on both people and environment, among which deforestation. Plantations do not "ease the pressure on the indigenous forests." On the contrary, they constitute the final step of a process of forest degradation which ends by substituting the diverse local forests with alien tree monocultures.

The above is not only an "environmental" issue: it is a social one. Forest and forest-dependent peoples view plantations as an even worse disaster than logging, because plantations expropriate their whole territories permanently. This means that they are deprived of all the resources provided by the forest, including food, medicines, fibres, firewood, building material, etc.

Dr Boyd also said that tree plantations provide employment, and further stated that they provide more jobs than intensive agriculture projects. This is in fact totally untrue. Plantations provide very few, seasonal and low quality jobs and even those only during the plantation phase. Once the trees are planted, employment drops dramatically until harvest. But even at harvest, the current technology in use implies that only few workers are needed to operate the modern harvesting machines.

The real problem that Weyerhaeuser is now facing --the same as other logging companies-- is that they have depleted the world's forest resources through unsustainable forest mining practices and they now quickly need vast amounts of cheap raw material to continue in business. In line with that, what they are now doing is moving South to find cheap land, cheap labour, low environmental standards and fast tree growth in order to ensure their own --not "the world's"-- provision of wood to continue promoting unsustainable levels of consumption in the North. The same discourse as the one presented in Guyana is being deployed by company executives throughout the South. In the meantime, local people and the environment continue suffering from the impacts of the "sustainable" plantations that those companies promote for their own benefit.

Article based on information from: Andrew Richards, "Plantations seen as vital to forest sustainability", Stabroek News, 26/10/00

