
[Brazil: Aracruz caught red handed destroying native forests](#)

For almost a decade, Aracruz Cellulose has been spending much time and money to portray itself as an example of a socially and environmentally responsible corporation. It has consistently denied the negative impacts of its operations in the Brazilian states of Espírito Santo and Bahia and has gone as far as to state that it has never carried out deforestation operations. A recent information proves the contrary.

On October 20, while a public hearing organized by the Centre for Environmental Resources (CER) was taking place to discuss the further expansion of Aracruz Cellulose's eucalyptus plantations in the extreme South of the State of Bahia, local civil society organizations were able to establish that native trees were being cut down in a property recently purchased by the company in the municipality of Caravelas.

This environmental crime was filmed by the organizations and presented on the same day at the public hearing held in Posto da Mata, Nova Vicosa. Several executives from Aracruz, including the company's environmental manager, were present at the meeting.

Melquiades Spinola --coordinator of local NGO CEPEDES-- said that this episode shows that the company's environmental discourse is very different from its environmental practice. "Aracruz underestimates civil society organizations and State agencies. Even during the process to obtain the licence for the expansion of its plantations, its field activities are carried out in a predatory manner", Spinola said.

According to activists from CEPEDES and from the Centre for the Defense of Human Rights --who presented the exact geographic coordinates of the written report-- Aracruz had recently purchased that land from Carlos Ancine Fae. Workers from the company contracted by Aracruz, declared that no-one from the environment department of the contractor had been present during the work carried out with the use of a tractor, nor during the application of herbicides.

Jose Augusto Tosato, representative of CEPEDES, stated that the CER needs to increase its monitoring of Aracruz, to find out if all the conditions imposed for the granting of the previous licenses had been fulfilled and particularly to continue carrying out the ecological and economic zoning of the extreme south of Bahia, as decreed by Governor Cesar Borges on 17 May this year, but that has still not begun to be implemented.

According to the coordinator of the Bahia Environmental Group, the government decided to suspend the licensing of Aracruz until the zoning process is completed. "We hope that this decision is carried out, because if zoning is implemented in a participatory manner and with the adequate instruments and methodologies, it will result in safeguarding the interests of the region's society as a whole, restricting the uncontrolled expansion of monocultures and guaranteeing better conditions for environmental conservation."

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