
[True forests for Chile](#)

Since late August, Chilean forestry companies are carrying out an aggressive publicity campaign under the slogan of "Forests for Chile." Many of us Chilean people feel that we are being attacked by this campaign, which is being very strongly promoted through the mass media.

According to the timber corporations' organization CORMA, which groups the large wood and pulp industries, this campaign will be implemented during five years and during its first phase it will cost one million dollars. The total cost of the campaign is estimated in 6 million dollars. The campaign will be carried by all the communications media (television, radio and press), accompanied by different opinion articles written by prominent executives from the more important forestry companies.

The aim of the campaign's messages is to generate confusion. For instance, the TV spots show pine tree plantations, saying that they are "Forests for Chile." The same publicity shows a house, furniture and other wood products and says: "wood, a renewable resource", repeating "Forests for Chile." Radio publicity is not very different. The sound of a hand knocking on wood is heard and the broadcaster names different musical instruments (piano, guitar, violin, etc.) and repeats: "Forests for Chile." The campaign obviously aims at improving the image that the Chilean public has on the forestry sector, given that the results of a survey carried out by CORMA itself showed that 97% of Chileans believe that forests are endangered.

Through this strategy the Chilean forestry companies aim at hiding the impacts they have caused with the establishment of large scale tree plantations: soil erosion resulting from clear-cutting, the use of agrochemicals which end up polluting water courses, the poor working and living conditions and miserable salaries received by forestry workers. It also aims at concealing the serious impacts that these plantations have inflicted on biodiversity by occupying extensive areas, fragmenting the habitats of native species and substituting at least 200,000 hectares of native forests during the past 25 years. The campaign says nothing about the way in which the lands now occupied by plantations were acquired, nor about how the state has during all these years subsidized the establishment of alien tree plantations with the consequent enrichment of large scale plantation owners. Neither does the campaign explain that the objective of these plantations is not to produce high value-added wood products, but are instead oriented at producing raw wood and pulp for export.

The environmental, ecological and consumer organizations are extremely worried about this and we have begun to carry out actions in response to this campaign. The first is to request support from organizations and individuals to a "public clarification" which we have named "True Forests for Chile." Each of the supporting organizations will commit itself to carry out, within its possibilities, actions to expose the corporations' campaign.

However, in spite of the difficulty of counteracting the effects of such a well funded campaign as that being implemented by the corporations, the Chilean non governmental organizations can feel very proud about their success. Through the launching of this campaign, the forestry sector is acknowledging its increasing social discredit resulting from its own actions and from the permanent fundamented critique of civil society organizations over the serious impacts that tree monocultures

have had on Chilean forests, on other ecosystems, on biodiversity, on water, on soils and on the local populations in the regions invaded by plantations. They have been forced to take 6 million dollars from their pockets in order to improve their image. And even though they have more than enough, taking dollars from their pockets is for them always painful.

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