
Venezuela: increasing conflict with Jefferson Smurfit

Smurfit Cartons Venezuela --a subsidiary of the US-based transnational Jefferson Smurfit-- has been operating in Venezuela's Portuguesa state since 1986. Its extensive pulpwood plantations for the production of paperboard have resulted in equally extensive social and environmental problems. This situation has been analysed by the Venezuelan Senate's Environment Commission, which has recently produced a 120-page report documenting such impacts.

We have been informed about some of those impacts, which include human rights violations, dispossession of local peoples' lands, corruption, disregard towards national legislation, substitution of riverine forests by tree monocrops.

Jefferson Smurfit is a vertically integrated corporation, including forestry operations, pulp production from virgin fibre and recycled paper, cardboard, paper and packaging production. Its facilities are located in the USA, Europe (Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and the UK) and Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Venezuela). In May 1998 it signed an agreement to merge with another giant paper manufacturer (Stone Container Corporation) to create one of the world's largest manufacturers of paperboard and paper-based packaging products. The combined entity, with annual sales of US\$8 billion, will be called Smurfit-Stone Container.

In order to be able to confront this giant, our friends in Venezuela require as much information as possible concerning Jefferson Smurfit, and in particular:

- negative impacts in other countries
- planned expansion in Latin America
- environmental or other restrictions in the USA

They are also interested in receiving information on a consulting firm linked to Smurfit, called Monitor Company (which might have links with Jaakko Poyry).

If any of our readers is able to facilitate information on the above, please send it to us and we will forward it to Venezuela

Source: personal communication with Venezuela and Jefferson Smurfit's