
Mexico: the beginning of the plantations' invasion

Acting under pressure of international forestry companies and funding agencies, the Mexican Government is trying to modify the Forestry Law in order to promote large monoculture tree plantations in several regions of the country. As surprising as it may seem, one of these regions is Chiapas -one of the poorest states of Mexico- which has been the scene of a major armed uprising by the Zapatista movement. In June 1995 Edward Krobacker, from International Paper, a company interested in establishing industrial tree plantations in the state of Chiapas, sent a letter to the Mexican Government, pushing for changes to the national forestry law in order to "create a more secure legal framework" for IP's investments. Two years later, this seems to have been wholly accepted, and the Council of Ministers has presented a project to Parliament, which provides enormous facilities for foreign investment in the Mexican forestry sector, among which a subsidy of 65% of the plantation costs.

Other regions targetted by the planned industrial tree monocultures are Veracruz and Oaxaca. In the former, a vast eucalyptus plantation plan is being implemented by Temple Island and Simpson -both American companies- while in the latter, pine plantations are being promoted. The aim of such plantations is the production of pulp and paper and lumber. Not only such kind of "forestry development" is a menace for the ecological sustainability of the territory, but also ignores indigenous and rural communities' rights, since their lands will be occupied by plantations. As Jaime Aviles, journalist from "La Jornada", wrote in May 1st. 1997: "Without the agreements (between the Zapatista National Liberation Army -EZLN- and the Government), disorder will manifest itself in many ways; even if Mr. Krobacker gets his forestry law, nobody can guarantee that it will be applied. The plantations will be invaded, sooner or later, and will be the source of many conflicts... The areas selected for the eucalyptus plantations are simply condemned to desertification".