WRM
Monthly Bulletin | Boletín Mensual | Boletim Mensual | Bulletin Mensuel

Issue 156 - July 2010

Printable version | For free subscription | Previous issues also available in **French**, **Portuguese** and **Spanish**

OUR VIEWPOINT

Shopping carbon in forests: the wrong road to Cancun

For many years now the world expansion of the pulp and paper business has been increasingly covering millions of hectares of land with large scale monoculture tree plantations. Mainly disguised as "forests" these "green deserts" have encroached on vast territories and rich ecosystems mostly in the global South.

FAO has greatly contributed to the distorsion when it included tree plantations in its definition of forests under the category of "planted forests". Other UN bodies –like the Conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Climate Change (UNFCCC) have adopted the FAO's definition.

But for communities whose land, soil, water resources, livelihoods and culture have been seriously impacted by monoculture tree plantations, and for environmental and social groups who are aware of the rich biodiversity of the forest and the barren life of an industrial tree plantation, the difference between both is crystal clear.

Strong voices have been growing denouncing that “tree plantations are not forests”. Recently the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) – a large world professional society on tropical forests - has released a resolution urging the UN to change its definition of 'forest' covering tree plantations (see article in this same issue).

The importance of a true and genuine definition of forest is crucial for the future of the world’s forests, which means the future of a large part of terrestrial biodiversity and eventually of life on Earth including human beings.

However, forests have been increasingly subject to exploitation by corporate interests which look at the rich complexity of forests through very reductionist eyes. For forest peoples the forest not only provides them food, clothing, medicines, fuel and livelihoods but is also the schoolhouse of their children and the resting place of their ancestors. Meanwhile, for big logging, oil, mining, pharmaceutical, or pulp and paper companies, this biodiversity-rich ecosystem becomes just a source of a single profitable component - either wood, oil, gold, diamonds, biogenetic resources.

The reductionist approach to forests has recently moved to an even less tangible “product” called carbon. As a result, forests have become synonymous of “carbon stocks” that could be traded in the global carbon market through a mechanism called REDD (“Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation”). REDD has thus become one of the main topics being discussed by governments at the UN Convention on Climate Change.

Several rounds of climate talks are now taking place in an effort to reach an agreement at the upcoming Climate Change Conference that will take place in Cancun, Mexico by the end of the year. However, up to now the main results of those negotiations refer to guidelines for carbon reporting and assessment and eventually “creative” accounting that could allow polluting countries not only escape any reduction obligation but also increase their emissions without having to account for them.

On the other hand, real proposals for addressing climate change are being ignored, such as those agreed upon at the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth held in April 2010 in Bolivia.

The People’s Agreement strongly stresses that “The definition of forests used in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which includes plantations, is unacceptable. Monoculture plantations are not forests. Therefore, we require a definition for negotiation purposes that recognizes the native forests, jungles and the diverse ecosystems on Earth.”

Rejecting “the illegitimate ‘Copenhagen Accord’ that allows developed countries to

offer insufficient reductions in greenhouse gases based in voluntary and individual commitments" and "market mechanisms such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and its versions + and + +", the agreement calls for the next Cancun Conference on Climate Change to approve "an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol for the second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50% based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions."

The government of Bolivia presented a submission to the UNFCCC Secretariat incorporating the main content of the People's Agreement and pushing for key proposals to be included in negotiations. However, the new text produced by the Secretariat does not include any of those proposals.

Forest peoples themselves are also making their voices heard. The Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola Communities in Cameroon, where the government is seeking funding from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility to establish projects under REDD, have recently stressed their mistrust on REDD projects (see article in this same issue).

While the dominant global development paradigm is being challenged by the present climate crisis, its driving forces are reluctant to change. That is how "solutions" for climate change are devised that imply carbon trading and offsetting and the use of markets as financial mechanism for programs and actions. Those business incentives for big companies not only fail to promote a shift in the processes and actors that are at the root or the climate crisis – particularly large corporations – but also contribute to keeping "business as usual" and distract from taking the urgently needed measures of cutting fossil-fuel emissions at source.

Within such context, shopping carbon in forests is clearly the wrong road to Cancun.

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COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

Ecological Mangrove Restoration: Re-establishing an ecosystem with community participation

Mangrove forests are vital for healthy coastal ecosystems in many regions of the world. They support an immense variety of sea life in intricate food webs associated directly with the mangrove trees themselves.

They are refuge for juvenile fish, crabs, shrimp and mollusks. Mangroves are also prime nesting and feeding sites for hundreds of migratory bird species. Additionally manatees and dugongs, crab eating monkeys, fishing cats, sea turtles and Mud Skippers utilize and depend upon mangrove wetlands, as do the spotted deer and the endangered Royal Bengal tigers of the Sundarbans of South Asia.

Healthy mangrove forests play an important role in carbon sequestration -their

ecosystems and corresponding wetlands account for nearly a third of the world's terrestrial carbon stores (Ramsar Secretariat 2002).

Intact mangroves also form a natural coastline protection shield against floods, storms or other natural events such as hurricanes and tsunamis that usually cause disaster.

Beyond these irreplaceable ecosystem services, mangroves also provide important socio-economic benefits to coastal communities. In regions where the forest has been destroyed, local coastal communities are left with marginal or unproductive fisheries and without their traditional livelihoods.

In spite of those important functions, more than 50% of the global mangrove forests have been destroyed over the last 100 years, mainly caused by human harmful projects. In addition, mangrove ecosystems and salt marshes are vulnerable to negative effects caused by climate change such as rising sea levels, higher temperatures, storms, floodings and so on.

Reforestation programs in these areas would therefore rebuild mangrove forest protection and increase the potential for sustainable development. The improvement of mangrove ecosystems will enhance their function as a natural water treatment system and spawning grounds for fish, improving health and fishing possibilities while benefiting marginalized local communities.

However, very few organisations so far have dealt effectively with mangrove restoration and relatively few experiences exist on successful, long-term mangrove rehabilitation. partly because these have not corrected the problem(s) which caused the mangrove loss in the first place. Too often, due to economic reasons and traditional forestry practices favouring charcoal production, single species mangrove plantations are established. However, these plantations are often established in mud flats, salt flats and even sea grass beds, thus converting one viable and important ecosystem into another, which is not a wise solution when attempting to "restore" ecosystem functions, even if these projects do successfully establish some mangroves.

This practice of hand planting propagules and seedlings is aptly described as the "gardening method," whereby monoculture plantations of usually one or two varieties of mangrove are established. These plantations are also less resilitant to natural disaster, disease or insects. In tropical areas where there may be two or more dozen mangrove species, it makes little sense to label this "gardening" approach as "restoration" because the natural biodiversity and productivity of the original healthy mangrove forest is not an outcome under this simplified technique. Most often, these "gardening" efforts fail to establish any significant mangrove cover.

In search of a compromise between economic value and biodiversity, Mangrove Action Project (MAP) promotes the concept and practice of Ecological Mangrove Restoration (EMR). EMR is based upon a set of basic ecological principles and capable of restoring a much more naturally functional and biodiverse mangrove ecosystem when compared to other more capital and labour intensive methods such as hand-planting alone.

Ecological Mangrove Restoration is defined as "the process of repairing damage caused by humans to the diversity and dynamics of indigenous ecosystems" (Jackson et al. 1995). It is a holistic approach to mangrove restoration that also includes a view of the proposed plant and animal community to be restored as part of a larger ecosystem with other ecological communities that also have functions to be protected or restored. It has been reported that mangrove forests around the world can self-repair or successfully undergo secondary succession over periods of 15-30 years if: 1) the normal tidal hydrology is not disrupted and 2) the availability of waterborne seeds or seedlings (propagules) of mangroves from adjacent stands is not disrupted or blocked.

Unfortunately, many mangrove restoration projects move immediately into planting of mangroves without determining why natural recovery has not occurred. There may even be a large capital investment in growing mangrove seedlings in a nursery before stress factors are assessed. This often results in major failures of planting efforts.

EMR approach can be a first step to re-establish an ecosystem that benefits nature and livelihoods at the same time. With mangrove restoration, the natural functions of the mangrove ecosystem will be revived. Water quality, health and fish fauna will be improved and new income opportunities will be created, positively affecting the livelihood of the rural communities.

Moreover, adaptation to climate change and increased disaster risk through cost-effective natural vegetative protection shields such as mangroves is a relatively new concept and relies on ecosystem services instead of engineering technologies and hard infrastructures to reduce the severity of disasters.

MAP's EMR projects include direct involvement of local communities in the restoration of mangrove ecosystems, as well as in building up sustainable solutions that will benefit them directly, as a way to ensure the success and the longevity of the project. Critical to the process is development of a community mangrove management plan by the local group which will be the primary force preventing the repeated degradation of the restoration site.

Reaching far beyond just planting of seedlings, EMR, which restores natural water flows, greatly increases the overall success rate for restoring large areas of degraded mangrove forests producing a more biodiverse restoration with long-term results.

By Mangrove Action Project (MAP), sent by Alfredo Quarto, e-mail: mangroveap@olympus.net, http://www.mangroveactionproject.org

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Brazil: Follow-up on the Juma REDD project in the Amazon

On 15 July we received a message from the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS) expressing that "the article 'Brazil: Juma REDD test case in the Amazon',

published at the WRM monthly bulletin issue 155, presents various inaccuracies regarding both information and overall understanding of the Bolsa Floresta Program, as well as the Juma REDD Project. Therefore, the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS) sent clarifications to WRM in order to be published at the WRM's website."

We have published FAS's message in full in our website. However, the "clarifications" –posed as a question and answer game- do not clarify much. On the contrary, they basically serve to strengthen what the WRM article said.

Their first clarification asks: "Do Families have additional costs to obtain the benefits from the "Bolsa Floresta Family" Program?" The answer is: "No, they do not. The families withdraw the money when they go to the nearest cities, which they often do every two months. If they wish, they can wait several months and withdraw the money which has been accumulated over the period. For example, if the family goes to the nearest city every six months, then they can withdraw the money accumulated. Thus, there is no need to the family to go to the city just to withdraw the payment of the "Bolsa Floresta" Program."

All the above explanation assumes of course that every single family does go at some time to the nearest city and that none of them really need the money on a monthly basis for their livelihood needs. Both assumptions are questionable. However, our article simply said that "for residents like Dalvina Almeida, it takes a two-day roundtrip journey by boat just to receive their 28 monthly dollars." We never mentioned any "additional costs". Interestingly enough, the response confirms that local people are forced to go to town to receive their money.

FAS explains that "The Bolsa Floresta Program is not a welfare program. The "family" component within the Bolsa Floresta Program IS NOT MEANT to provide all needed resources to keep and improve the life of the community residents. The concept of this cash payment is that it is a reward, a short-run return to the families which have agreed on **zero-deforestation** [emphasis added] commitment."

The above is in clear contradiction with point 4 of FAS's response, which asks: "Are the participants of the Bolsa Floresta Program forbidden to plant crops and to maintain their agriculture practices? No, they are not. The participants of the "Bolsa Floresta" Program are allowed to keep their traditional agriculture practices on secondary forests as they are used to do. They have a formal commitment not to cut primary forests."

That seems to imply that "participants" –who formally commit to not cutting primary forests- are allowed to cut down secondary forests in order to maintain their traditional agriculture practices. Even though WRM can support that approach, it contradicts FAS's own stated commitment to "zero-deforestation", because cutting down secondary forests is also a form of deforestation. It is also in contradiction with the testimony of a local person (mentioned as Dalvina Almeida's husband in our article) who said "When this became a reserve they told us that we could no longer plant in the forest."

The second question posed by FAS is: "Is the monthly payment of BRL 50.00 [US$28] the only benefit provided by the Bolsa Floresta Program? No, it is not. The

“Bolsa Floresta Family” is just one of the four components of the whole Program.” The other 3 components are:

- “Bolsa Floresta” Income (BFI), “which invests annually about BRL 4,000 [US$2270] per community …”
- “Bolsa Floresta” Social (BFS) “which invests annually about BRL 4,000 [US$2270] per community in order to improve education, health, transportation, and communications .”
- “Bolsa Floresta” Association (BFA) “which provides support to local organizations …” [no monetary figure is provided in FAS’s “clarification”]

The above means that families only receive –as stated in our article- “US$ 28 per month [that] represents US$ 0.93 per day.” The WRM article stressed that “For an average rural family of at least 5 people the per capita income drops to US$ 0.18 per day. It would be good to inform the Juma Project managers and funders that this meagre payment is well below the poverty line, estimated by the World Bank as people earning less than 1.25 US dollars per day.”

The money invested annually in communities –some 2270 US dollars in BFI and the same amount in BFS- is equivalent to monthly payments of US$190 in each case. Clearly very little for BFS’s stated aim of “improving education, health, transportation, and communications.”

Additionally, no figures are provided regarding how many people live in each community, thus making the amount mentioned almost meaningless.

After showing the amount of money received by families, the WRM article compared those sums with the “US$ 25,000 per month payment received by the Juma Project foundation director.” The FAS response on this is a new question: “Is the salary of the FAS’s CEO over the market?”

That is clearly not the right question, because WRM never said that the salary was “over the market”. We only mentioned the sum of money. The adequate response would have been: “No, the FAS CEO’s salary is US$1000” or whatever amount the person receives.

FAS’s answer to that question is fascinating though clearly not an answer at all. It says:

“No, it is not. The value published by the WRM is nonsense and it is obviously incorrect. The salary of FAS’s CEO, according to a survey by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, considering the major Brazilian NGOs, requested by WWF, is 5% less than the national average. In addition, the costs of FAS with human resources are also lower than the national average considering the Brazilian NGOs as well.”

May we ask a very simple question -just to know how nonsensical and incorrect WRM’s article was on this issue: How much does this person earn?

Another question raised by FAS was: “Will the conservation of such forests allow polluters to continue to emit carbon due to fossil fuel use?”

That question is related to the last paragraph of WRM’s article, which stated: “What

makes matters even worse is that the preservation of this forest will allow polluters to continue emitting fossil fuel-related carbon. This means that the inclusion of the Juma forest into emissions trading will in fact contribute to climate change, because it will allow polluting corporations and rich countries claim that they are 'offsetting' their carbon emissions by conserving a patch of forest in Brazil."

FAS's answer is: "No, it will not. The conception of the offsetting initiative proposed by FAS is that the major effort on emission reduction should be made by the developed countries and their industries. Our vision comprehends that offsetting must be limited to a small part (e.g., 10%) of the overall emission reduction targets of such countries and industries. Therefore, the most of part of emission reduction is on consumption patterns and improvement on production systems."

According to the above the "offsetting initiative proposed by FAS" will "be limited to a small part (e.g., 10%) of the overall emission reduction targets of such countries and industries." Which means that FAS is proposing offsets for a 10% reduction, thus allowing –as said in the WRM article- "polluters to continue emitting fossil fuel-related carbon." And may we remind FAS that that 10% is not a "small part" of emissions.

The second paragraph of the response is yet more illustrating: "The offsetting shall be also seen as an opportunity to all economic sectors in developed countries, as the hotels' one, in order to be summed to a global effort on reducing greenhouse gases emissions. Within that context, innovative projects, such as the Juma Project, provide opportunities to the guests of Marriott International to offset their personal carbon footprint."

FAS should know that you cannot "offset" a ton of carbon emitted through the use of fossil fuels. Once emitted, it simply increases the carbon pool in the atmosphere. The Juma project is supposed to be aimed at avoiding emissions from deforestation and not at providing "opportunities to the guests of Marriott International to offset their personal carbon footprint." However, the response simply confirms that what the WRM article said is correct.

The last part of FAS's response is much less diplomatic. They say that "it is not worth to pay attention to a catchpenny article" and they add: "We shall also pay attention on how this article has been used by people and institutions that have political and institutional motivations against the "Bolsa Floresta" Program."

So please everyone be careful with how you use this article, because FAS will be watching you!

Ricardo Carrere
WRM International Coordinator

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Cameroon: Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola distrust REDD

Most Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola, recognised as "people of the forest," still rely on hunting and gathering to secure their livelihoods, and even though some also cultivate annual crops, the majority still rely on the forests. For them, the forest is their ancestral home, their reliable grocery, the root of their existence, and their customary right (see WRM Bulletin Nº 87).

However, their life has been long affected by restrictions imposed on their use of the forest such as when the government created the Campo Ma'an national park as compensation for the environmental damage caused by the Chad-Cameroon pipeline. The recent push for REDD projects has raised the alarm regarding their possible impacts on their rights and livelihoods.

As a result, the Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola forest people – together with their local support NGOs – have been conducting consultations in southern Cameroon to inform their communities about potential REDD projects. The Government of Cameroon is seeking funding from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) to establish these projects which are intended to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

A civil society workshop, held in Yaounde on June 30th 2010, brought together a range of civil society organisations and indigenous peoples to reflect on the consultations and prepare recommendations for a subsequent meeting with representatives of relevant Government Ministries on 1st July 2010.

The Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola Communities made it very clear:

1. That ***climate change is happening now in their forests*** and, to stop this, industrialised countries must stop polluting, which means that any protection of forests must not be through market mechanisms (like carbon credits) which allow this to continue, nor through mechanisms which end up funding industrial logging (presented as 'sustainable forest management') industrial plantations (presented as 'reforestation') and the exclusion of local people (presented as 'conservation').

2. That ***they fear that REDD projects will not benefit them*** but will exclude them and benefit others (including industrial plantations, loggers, conservationists, more powerful neighbouring communities, and state and local authorities). ***They insist they be included equally in benefit sharing***, which (from their experience of, for example, not receiving any portion of the Annual Forest Royalties) requires they be treated separately so that benefits actually reach them.

3. That***their rights to their forests must be recognised***, and that their right to be included in decision-making be realised. The Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola have not been consulted (as required by the World Bank's own procedures) in the process of drawing up Cameroon's application to the World Bank for REDD funding.

In conclusion, they made clear that: (i) if their right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is not realised; (ii) if their rights to their forest are not recognised; and (iii) if there are not clear mechanisms for including them equally in the benefit sharing that should flow from any REDD project, then they will not accept REDD.

The forest peoples and other civil society organisations at the civil society workshop questioned whether REDD in its current form can: (i) help solve climate change; (ii) help secure the rights of forest peoples to their land; or even (iii) ensure all local communities (including forest peoples) benefit from REDD projects. They suggest REDD may simply allow industrialised countries to continue polluting, and allow industrial loggers, plantations and conservation organisations to take more control of the forests.

The Baka, Bagyeli and Bakola point out that their activities have not harmed but have protected the forest, and they would welcome a form of REDD that would support them to continue this, not one that would continue the destruction of their forests and perpetuate their marginalisation."

Source:
http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/africa/cameroon_press_rel_redd_comm_wshops_jul10_eng.pdf)

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COMMUNITIES AND TREE MONOCULTURES

Brazil: The "productive resistance" of Quilombola (1) communities surrounded by eucalyptus plantations

Reaching the 32 Quilombola communities in the Sapê do Norte region of the state of Espírito Santo, located in the municipalities of São Mateus and Conceição da Barra, can be extremely challenging. On the vast plain that comprises this northern edge of the state, where the monotonous and homogenous landscape is comprised almost entirely of eucalyptus trees, there are very few landmarks to point the way. As for signs, there are only those posted by companies: a) prohibitions: "No Hunting", "Do Not Enter: Forest Management Area"; b) publicity: "Sustainable Forest Management", "Protect the Forest"; and c) the location of plantation areas: "CB-113H".

Along the 20 kilometres of dirt road leading to the Quilombola community of Roda d'Água in Conceição da Barra, for example, there are no native fruit trees, rocks, hills, curves, grassy fields, coffee plantations, houses, businesses, people: nothing that could serve as a reference point. Thanks to the monoculture plantations of eucalyptus trees, the only means of locating the community is by GPS: "18° 35' 31" S, 39° 44' 4" W".

Records of times past survive through oral history and the spatial reference points provided by the 1,200 families who still inhabit less than 10,000 hectares of the Sapê region, and whose territory used to include 250,000 and 300,000 hectares according to estimates from the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).

The combination of large-scale plantations and chemical and genetic modification of a

single fast-growing tree species gave rise to a spatial model in which diversity and heterogeneity where eliminated. Isolated in the middle of the 100,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees that comprise the so-called Green Desert, the Quilombola communities mark the historical presence of another land use model, totally removed in time (anachronistic) and space (utopian) by Cartesian agribusiness. In fact, some of the Quilombola communities of the Sapê region, especially in Conceição da Barra, where 70% of the municipality is taken up by monoculture plantations, live off of the waste materials from logging. Access to these materials has been won through ongoing disputes over the eucalyptus plantations. The collection of waste wood and production of charcoal as the last possible means of livelihood reflects the forced incorporation of many young people and adults (primarily men) into the logic of corporate commercial expropriation.

Over the last 40 years, the historical and environmental fate of Sapê do Norte has been directly tied to the capacity for the homogenous production of fibre to feed paper consumption in the North, based on a predatory productive model and devastating agricultural model. First established in the region in the 1970s under the aegis of the Institutional Acts passed by the military dictatorship and subsequently supported by hefty credits from the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES), tax exemptions and relaxation of labour and environmental laws, the major players in the eucalyptus agribusiness sector (Aracruz/Fibria, Votorantim, Suzano, Plantar, Veracel, Stora Enso, Jaakko Poyry) and international paper industry conglomerates (Proctor and Gamble, Kimberly Clark, Siemens, World Bank, Nordic Investment Bank, European Investment Bank, etc.) were responsible for a violent and abrupt transformation of the landscape.

The replacement of Atlantic Forest vegetation with eucalyptus plantations; the construction of new highways to transport lumber and heavy machinery; the building of dams on lakes and streams; the aridization of the climate through decreased precipitation levels; the disappearance of over 100 streams and contamination of a similar number due to agrochemical use; the destruction of schools, mills, houses and community facilities; intimidation and forced evictions: all of these factors conspired to provoke a rural exodus of unprecedented proportions. The Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte estimates that of the 12,000 families who lived in the region, only 1,200 endured. A whole 90% migrated to the urban peripheries of the northern region of Espírito Santo or even the metropolitan area of the state capital, Vitória.

In the Sapê do Norte of the quilombos, the vast territory that sheltered and protected the Quilombolas from the slave system of the colonial powers and from the agrarian aristocracy of the Old and New Republic, as well as, above all, their coexistence with the Atlantic Forest, gave rise to a highly diversified model of small-scale extractivism and family farming, with particular emphasis on raising cassava and the production of cassava flour, a regional tradition dating back to the 17th century.

But over the course of two or three generations, the establishment of huge blocks of eucalyptus plantations came hand in hand with the deconstruction, reprocessing and reconstruction of the socio-environmental space, isolating and burying almost all of the economic, cultural, religious, social – essentially, territorial – reference points of

the Quilombola system. *Almost* all, because even in this new context, Quilombola agriculture survives, through the continued cultivation of small plots of land of between two and ten hectares around their family gardens and communities.

As the heirs to centuries of tradition, in which women play a clearly predominant role, most of the 1,200 Quilombola families in Sapê do Norte plant and raise a diversity of crops. Community members research and preserve different species of cassava, corn, beans, squash, okra, cucumber, watermelons, mangos, jackfruit, bananas and mombins, a plum-like fruit. They rework traditional practices and test new crop management techniques. They access commercial channels to sell their goods in local and regional markets and undertake continuous inter-community exchanges of seeds and agricultural practices, weaving an informal but strong social network.

In the midst of eucalyptus plantations, Quilombola agriculture seeks out new ways to survive and struggle to regain control of the region's natural resources and genetic wealth. In the quilombo of Angelim Santa Clara, in Conceição da Barra, a seven-hectare plot is used as an experimental area for the planting and management of pioneer seedlings of Atlantic Forest tree species. In the quilombo of São Cristóvão, fields devoted to the reproduction of cassava stalks ensure the preservation of regional varieties of this plant. In the quilombos of Divino Espírito Santo, Roda d'Água and Angelim, through cooperative efforts, three traditional cassava flour mills were resurrected. In Linharinho, flour production has been expanded beyond the available capacity for cassava production. The demand for the expansion of these experiments on ancestral Quilombola land is exerting pressure on the eucalyptus business status quo, and is based not only on the argument of past history, but primarily on the future expectations of new generations.

The agricultural model of homogenous plantations interprets this Quilombola productive resistance as an external threat to its spatial control, leading to demands on the state for absolute legal security, even if this is only possible through expulsion and criminalization. On the other hand, Quilombola agriculture is advancing and interprets the territory based on the identification and creation of points of reference for centuries-old traditions that survive in the local communities, leading to demands on the same state for the guarantee of the rights of Quilombola peoples, which were only recognized in the Brazilian constitution in 1988, a whole century after the belated formal abolition of slavery.

In this sphere of productive resistance and the construction of alternatives, Quilombola agriculture confronts the enormous challenge of preparing for the reconversion of lands that have been regained and others currently being disputed. How can the soil be recovered in areas where eucalyptus trees were planted for 40 years? What crops or pioneer tree species should be planted between the rows of eucalyptus stumps during the transition phase? These are questions of concern to the agro-ecology movement in general and Quilombola farming families in particular.

The reconversion of areas formerly occupied by eucalyptus plantations, whether for the planting of Atlantic Forest tree species or food crops, is one of the main technical challenges that needs to be faced. Regaining control of the land is not enough to break the vicious cycle of eucalyptus, which quickly sprouts new shoots after clear-cutting. Recovering control of the land is an essential prerequisite, but it does not in

itself guarantee territorial "reconquest" in terms of identity and culture. Several generations will be needed to re-establish territoriality and use of these lands. In this regard, the transmission of the memory of pre-Aracruz generations to younger generations of Quilombolas is of crucial importance, because that memory holds experiences of the forest and a territory full of cultural identity and reference points, totally unknown to post-eucalyptus generations.

As a result, agro-ecology takes on strategic importance in this reconquest. The agricultural experimentation underway in Quilombola communities, the strengthening of networks for the exchange of seeds and techniques and practices to deal with the re-sprouting of eucalyptus are some of the processes addressed in the field of agro-ecological theory and practice. Therefore, the territorial debate in Sapê do Norte contributes essential questions for the agro-ecological transition, and exerts pressure, from a very specific and unique place, on the entire North-South global model.

In building the counter-hegemony, the Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte has been integrating political resistance with productive resistance, acting through networks aimed at influencing the state and its public policies. To prevent a new boom in monoculture eucalyptus plantation expansion, it has had a critical and intentional impact on a series of government policies and programmes: regularization of ownership of large landholdings, rural credit and extension programmes, agriculture and forestry policies, licensing and land demarcation, tax exemptions, the supply of goods and services, etc. In the face of a wide and extensive array of violations, the Quilombola communities are organizing to demand legal title to their territory and pushing for the guarantee of other rights. The right to water free of agro-toxins, food, education and health are on the agenda of mobilizations, at the Grito Quilombola ("Cry of the Quilombolas"), at the Beiju Festival (named for the most important Quilombola food in Sapê, made from cassava and coconut, and representative of a culinary culture passed down through the generations), on May 13 (the anniversary of the abolition of slavery), and on March 8 (International Women's Day).

In the different political arenas in which the Quilombola communities of Sapê do Norte act, the food debate has been a fertile source of conflict and serves to link the counter-hegemonic struggle at the national and regional levels.

The stance backed by the Quilombola Mission is that the situation of food insecurity in Sapê do Norte can only be resolved through the territorial debate. Government policies that are meant to ensure food security, through the provision of "basic food baskets", family financial assistance and school snacks, are precarious and do not reach all of the 1,200 families in the 32 communities. For the moment, the production of charcoal from eucalyptus waste is still the largest source of income and employment in Quilombola communities, which reflects the most perverse side of this development model. After a study involving a focus group with members from 11 quilombos, the report from a seminar in 2008 entitled "Agro-ecology and food and nutritional security in the Quilombola communities of Sapê do Norte" pointed to monoculture eucalyptus plantations as *the main cause of food and nutritional insecurity in these communities, in that they have provoked a profound process of destructuring of their traditional ways of life and the agro-extractive production system that ensured a*

diverse supply of food for families.

The transition to a new agricultural model, grounded in food security and sovereignty, will require structural territorial public policies that integrate community production with local markets, especially with regard to so-called public purchases, at the municipal and state levels. The snacks provided to students at the few schools still left in the community could be switched from cookies to typical foods like *beiju*, *pamonha* and *cuscuz*, strengthening both community production and Quilombola food culture. The basic food basket could serve as a springboard towards the productive transition and Quilombola agro-ecology, through programmes like Advance Purchasing, which could acquire food in the communities themselves. The family financial aid programme, if made universally available to all of the communities and adapted to extended family ties, could decrease dependence on income from charcoal production. Finally, the state policies that regulate commercial plantations and promote the reduction of social and racial inequalities are key instruments for the future of the Quilombola communities of Sapê do Norte.

On November 6, 2009, INCRA finally published in the official gazette the demarcation of 1,219 hectares of territory belonging to the communities of Serraria and São Cristóvão, in São Mateus. Other reports are being concluded, such as those regarding the territories of São Jorge, Linharinho and Angelim. In all of the territory that is being recovered, the communities are collectively (re-)establishing their points of reference and self-identification. On farms and in community areas, in small corners of the land controlled by companies, on the roads between communities, the landscape of eucalyptus is being gradually modified, through plots of food crops, banners, symbols. Signs of a territory under reconstruction, with the blessing of many *orixás* (Afro-Brazilian deities).

By Marcelo Calazans, regional coordinator of FASE Espírito Santo, member of the Green Desert Network and ACA. Email: marcelo.fase@terra.com.br This article is a summary of the report “Agricultura, identidade e território no Sapê do Norte quilombola”, published in *Revista Agriculturas: Experiências em Agroecologia*, Volume 7, Number 1, “Construção de territórios camponeses”, available at: http://wrm.org.uy/paises/Brasil/Sape_do_Norte.pdf

(1) Quilombolas: Residents of quilombos, Afro-Brazilian settlements originally founded by escaped slaves.

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Equatorial Guinea: possible expansion of oil palm plantations

The oil palm is native to this and other countries of the region, where its sap is collected to make palm wine, its dates used in cooking oil produced in cottage industries. The product was traditionally exported before the establishment of plantations, that by 1968 covered some 7,000 hectares. The seedlings planted

originated from more productive varieties developed in Asia. Although those plantations were abandoned, they continue to produce some bunches, similar to those of the native palms, for family consumption. At all events the harvest is hard to gather as the palm trees are spread out. Although there are some small oil and soap factories, palm tree production is only used for family consumption, as the oil obtained by family artisans is of scant market value due to its irregular quality. (1)

Historically, Colonial agricultural production was geared towards exports. It is important to note that Equatorial Guinea is geographically divided into two areas: a continental area (Río Muni) and an insular area (Bioko and various other islands). Agricultural development was centred in Bioko, where the climate and soil were well suited to coffee and cocoa plantations.(2) The production of Colonial goods did not start until the beginning of the twentieth century with the production of coffee and cocoa predominating although exploitation and plantation of oil palm trees later became more important. (3) In general terms, “during Colonial times, until its independence, [export] agriculture in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea was of a monoculture nature, based on coffee, cocoa and oil palm plantations”.(4)

It should be noted that the country has a long and grim history as regards plantations. During Spanish Colonial times, the export economy was based on the establishment of large coffee and cocoa plantations as well as oil palm plantations. Work on the plantations was generally done in a poorly concealed form of slavery called “prestaciones” (a form of compulsory communal service), where people were obliged to work for no remuneration whatsoever. At the same time, those guilty of minor crimes were condemned to “collaborate” for a time in this “collective work” accompanied by a policy of terror based on the physical extermination of anyone who refused to provide their service. (5)

Generally speaking, with regards to the various types of traditional plantations (coffee, cocoa, banana, coconut, oil palm, etc.), production is presently undergoing difficulties due to the “deteriorated state of the plantations and the lack of labour.” Regarding the latter, it is stated that “the lack of expectations in the sector is causing the massive exodus of labour towards other activities where the workers find better remuneration and more immediate returns for their short and medium-term efforts.”(6)

One of the reasons put forth to explain the scant development of the oil palm sector is “the lack of a good highway network [that] prevents making the most of the improvements in family cottage productions.” This limitation is already being addressed on the basis of various agreements between the government of Equatorial Guinea and several companies –from origins as diverse as Brazil(7), France(8), Morocco(9), Belgium(10), China(11), among others- that are already embarked in building roads and other facilities.

Regarding the scarcity of labour, it is always possible that, if he considers it necessary President Teodoro Obiang Nguema (well-known for his propensity to violate human rights), will again turn to the old, well-known and feared Colonial-time “prestaciones.”

Everything would seem to indicate the possible future development of palm oil plantations. In this respect, it is stated that oil palm plantations “are one of the

resources with the best chances of developing in an exceptionally favourable agro-climatic context with topographically suitable land for industrial plantations associated with family plantations. For this purpose, shortfalls in transport and labour will have to be solved, mobilizing national or foreign investment and, in the short term, resorting to intervention prices for oil seeds."(12)

Obviously, for the benefits of such investment to reach the great majority of poor people who hardly manage to survive in this oil-rich country, it would be necessary to solve some more pressing problems first. For example, distribution of wealth, that ends up in the bank accounts of those holding power and in the coffers of the oil companies exploiting the resources. And, of course, the problem of human rights that have been violated for over three decades by the person who took up office after overthrowing and executing the previous leader: Teodoro Obiang, the current president.

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The FAO insists: monoculture tree plantations are forests!

The FAO insists on the increasingly difficult mission of defining tree plantations as "planted forests." Its latest contribution to this aim is a publication titled "Planted forests in sustainable forest management — A statement of principles".

The document states that "FAO further adopts an important role in facilitating an informed public debate about the controversy of planted forests and in supporting major stakeholder groups, including the public, to better understand the role of planted forests in integrated ecosystem management and sustainable development."

However, FAO does exactly the opposite: it does not facilitate an informed debate, it misinforms the public and the only major stakeholder it actually provides support to is the corporate sector involved in large-scale tree monocultures.

The starting point is to confuse the issue. The FAO knows very well that the real "controversy" about what it calls "planted forests" is not about the plantation of trees –native or exotic- but about the establishment of large-scale, fast-growth monoculture tree plantations. The FAO tries to hide that type of plantation within what it calls "a continuum of appearances from strictly protected conservation forests, to highly productive, short-rotation plantations." It concludes that "In this continuum the boundary between planted and naturally regenerating forests is often indistinct." Clearly not a very useful –or scientific- conclusion for facilitating an "informed debate", though highly adequate for plantation companies: the boundary "is often indistinct."

However, the FAO knows very well that the "boundary between planted and naturally regenerating forests" is extremely distinct, for instance, in the case of large-scale eucalyptus or pine tree plantations in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Uruguay, South Africa, Swaziland –to name but a few.

Those are the types of plantations that are at the centre of the debate that FAO is trying to confuse. Let's compare those plantations with the benefits that FAO says derive from "planted forests".

According to the FAO, "planted forests yield a diverse range of wood, fibre, fuel and non-wood forest products for corporate and smallholder investors pursuing commercial or subsistence purposes."

The above is clearly not applicable to large-scale tree monocultures, which only yield one product –wood- for corporate investors pursuing commercial purposes. To illustrate this point, we recommend readers to see the impressive picture of the mechanized harvesting of a eucalyptus plantation on page 5 of FAO's document.

The FAO goes on to say that "They can also provide a number of social and

environmental services, ranging from rehabilitation of degraded lands, combating desertification, soil and water protection, sequestering and storing carbon, recreation and landscape amenity."

Again, the above is not applicable to large-scale fast-growth tree monocultures, that are not established on degraded lands –because the trees do not grow fast enough- that deplete soil nutrients and water resources –thereby promoting desertification- that do not store carbon –because the trees are harvested in short rotations- and that convert the landscape's amenity into a monotonous sea of identical and even-aged stands of trees.

The FAO even argues that "Planted forests conserve genetic resources". How can Australian eucalyptus conserve genetic resources in Thailand or South Africa? How can Asian gmelinas fulfill that role in Costa Rica? How can US or Mexican pines conserve Chile's or Swaziland's genetic resources? The obvious answer is: of course they can't!

The above few examples show that if FAO was truly interested in an "informed debate", it should have distinguished between different types of plantations, some of which can undoubtedly be socially and environmentally beneficial while others can be extremely damaging in both ecological and social terms. Within such approach, it should have concentrated on the really controversial type of plantation, described by FAO within its "continuum of planted forests" as "highly productive, short-rotation plantations", which most people prefer to more aptly define as "deserts of trees".

But of course that's simply not possible, because the FAO has taken on the role of defending precisely that type of plantations.

A close look at the 10 "Principles for responsible management of planted forests" included in this FAO document shows that they are mostly aimed at providing advice to the corporate sector as to where and how to plant tree monocultures without getting into too much trouble and at creating an "enabling environment for investment" in large-scale tree plantations.

As part of that "enabling environment", the FAO goes as far as pushing for the inclusion of plantations within the REDD mechanism being discussed by governments at the Convention on Climate Change. Ignoring the fact that REDD has not yet been approved, the FAO states that "planted forests" "can also complement and supplement the REDD and REDD-plus initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries." Which can of course only happen if monoculture tree plantations continue to be defined as "planted forests".

Fortunately, the scientific community is also joining the voices of those who have for years been challenging FAO's unscientific definition of forests. Such is the case of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, whose recent resolution calling for "new forest definitions" "clearly distinguishing between native forests and those dominated by tree monocultures and non-native species" is included in this bulletin.

Will the FAO ever acknowledge what is so obvious for so many people: that

plantations are not forests?

Comments on: FAO (2010).- Planted forests in sustainable forest management — A statement of principles
http://www.fao.org/docrep/012/al248e/al248e00.pdf

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Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation says tree plantations are not forests

The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation -a large world professional society on tropical forests- has recently made public a resolution "urging the United Nations to alter its potentially misleading forest definitions". The resolution states:

"WHEREAS, the current definition of 'forest' used by the United Nations fails to distinguish between natural forests, modified natural forests, and tree plantations; and

WHEREAS, tree plantations are often comprised by monocultures of non-native species that have very limited value for conserving imperiled biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, in many tropical countries, complex, biodiverse forests that were designated as permanent forest reserves are being felled and replaced by plantations; and

WHEREAS, this serious loophole means that such changes would be regarded as having caused no change in the 'forest, thereby allowing forest loss and degradation to occur without sanctions; and

WHEREAS, the conversion of carbon-rich natural forests or peatlands to wood, pulp, or oil palm plantations can lead to major net emissions of dangerous greenhouse gases; and

WHEREAS, the above distinctions are crucial for ongoing negotiations to conserve natural forests to reduce emissions from forest loss and degradation (REDD) as part of ongoing climate negotiations;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, the world's largest scientific organization devoted to the study, protection, and sustainable use of tropical ecosystems:

URGES the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations to immediately clarify natural forest definitions on a biome basis (such as 'cool-temperate', 'wet tropical, and 'peat-swamp forest') to reflect the wideranging differences in carbon and biodiversity values of these different biomes, while clearly distinguishing between native forests and those dominated by tree monocultures and non-native species; and

STRONGLY RECOMMENDS that developing and developed nations immediately implement these new forest definitions to ensure that they are incorporated in ongoing and future REDD negotiations."

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Indonesia: Sinar Mas pulp and paper plantations encroaching on forests and peatlands

Controlled by the Indonesian Widjaja family, the Sinar Mas group is one of the largest conglomerates in Indonesia engaged in clearing rainforests and destroying peatlands for their several bussinesses, including the pulp and paper industry through the Sinar Mas' pulp and paper division, Asia Pulp and Paper (APP).

With a total pulp and paper capacity of over 7 million tonnes per year, APP is Indonesia's largest pulp and paper producer. With its expansion into China in 1992, it became the fourth largest worldwide and, in 2008, it ranked as the world's fifth largest tissue producer. The group has recently set up new sales networks in the US, the UK and Spain, and expanded its production capacities in Australia, Canada, China and the US. In China, where it claims to be the largest producer of pulp, paper and tissue products, APP recently set up the world's largest paper machine at its Hainan Jinhai Pulp & Paper mill, where it expects to produce almost 1.5 million tonnes of coated fine paper per year for products such as magazines and brochures. Sinar Mas affiliated companies, such as Solaris and Mercury, market both APP branded products (Livi, Paseo), and manufacture own label products for retailers. These products include facial and toilet tissue, paper napkins and towels.

The Widjaja family is probably best known for escaping the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s. The APP group, considered the Widjaja 'family treasure', defaulted on nearly USD 14 billion in debt. Although APP was technically bankrupt, the Widjaja family succeeded, with support from the Indonesian Government, in restructuring approximately USD 6.5 billion of the original debt. This was the largest ever restructuring in Southeast Asia.

The final restructuring agreement meant that the Widjajas managed to keep control of APP and would only have to start paying the bulk of the debt between 2015 and 2025. At the end of 2009, APP's Indonesian mills still owed at least USD 4.2 billion of the restructured debt.

By the end of 2007, Sinar Mas Forestry – APP's "exclusive supplier" in Indonesia – controlled at least 2.4 million hectares of concessions for conversion into pulpwood plantations. Over a quarter of these concessions were still forested in 2006. Almost half of the area established with pulpwood plantations is located on peatland.

APP has recently released a series of adverts entitled "APP Cares" in order "to further convey [its] environmental message to the world". The adverts, broadcast on CNN International and published in The Times (UK), amongst other media outlets, aim to

highlight APP's efforts to conserve the environment, protect biodiversity, alleviate poverty and mitigate climate change.

However, this year Greenpeace International released a series of investigative reports on Sinar Mas disclosing the group's expansion and encroaching on Indonesia's remaining rainforests and peatlands. A leaked confidential document written by Sinar Mas in 2007 shows that the group was implementing plans to acquire new forest areas through its 'Area Development Project for Supporting Mill License Capacity'. The Project would be "exposed to government" (i.e. used to lobby government) in order to gain approval for a massive increase of the group's existing licensed pulping capacity and landbanks (i.e. new forest areas to clear for plantation development). While the overall capacity of its two pulp mills in Sumatra was 2.6 million tonnes per year in 2006, the Sinar Mas document indicates that APP was proposing to raise that to 17.5 million tonnes per year, a sevenfold increase in APP's pulp capacity in Indonesia.

In Sumatra, the expansion of pulpwood plantations into rainforest is destroying the natural resources that indigenous communities depend on for their livelihoods, including the Teluk Meranti and Talang Mamak communities in Riau province and the Orang Rimba community in Jambi province. As one Orang Rimba leader stated: *"*One day [the company] came and told us to leave, we were pushed out. They cut down our homes and the forests. We no longer have the forest to live. We don't have food or protection*."* In the Sumatran provinces of Riau and Jambi alone, Sinar Mas was aiming to expand its concessions by 900,000 hectares between 2007 and 2009.

Of the pulpwood concessions Sinar Mas acquired since 2007, around 30,000 hectares are located on peatland areas over three metres deep, and therefore illegal to destroy, and over 100,000 hectares are located on peatland less than three metres deep.

APP is continuing to expand its pulp and palm oil operations into Indonesia's remaining rainforests and carbon-rich peatlands. While most of Indonesia's GHG emissions come from forest-related issues, such as forest fires and deforestation, annual emissions from peatlands are forecast to increase by 20 per cent due to the "continued conversion of peatland."

With this record on its back, Indonesia has just received USD 1 billion as part of a 'cooperation agreement' on REDD with the Norwegian government signed in May this year. The agreement will implement a two-year suspension on new concessions on conversion of natural forests and peat lands into plantations. However, the agreement not only does not include an explicit recognition of indigenous peoples rights, including their land rights but also will not affect existing contracts which means it does not apply to the hundreds of thousands of hectares of forested concessions that Sinar Mas has already acquired but which have not yet been converted into plantations.

Extracted and adapted from "How Sinarmas is Pulping the Planet", Greenpeace International, 2010, http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/reports/SinarMas-APP/; and information from "Norway and Indonesia sign US$1 billion forest deal", Chris Lang, 27th May 2010, REDD Monitor, http://www.redd-monitor.org/2010/05/27/norway-and-

indonesia-sign-us1-billion-forest-deal/

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