



Issue 183 - October 2012

[Printable version](#) | [For free subscription](#) | [Previous issues](#)

also available in [French](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#)

OUR VIEWPOINT

- [Food sovereignty, forests and biodiversity](#)

FINANCIAL MARKETS INFILTRATING THE CBD

- [Convention on Biological Diversity: Opening the way for financial markets](#)

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity paves the way for market instruments aimed at privatizing and commodifying the remaining commons.

- [La Via Campesina at the CDB: "Keep biodiversity public"](#)

The real solution to biodiversity loss is to keep biodiversity public, in the hands of farmers, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, open for use by all people.

- [Gathering support for Indian forest communities at the CDB](#)

An action demanding full implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- [Brazil: Continued destruction of forests and biodiversity in the state of Acre, considered a model of the "Green Economy" in the Brazilian Amazon](#)

Acre is frequently presented to the world as a "model of the green economy". But behind this image there is hidden destruction, caused by supposedly "sustainable" logging activities and the trade in "environmental services", which increase the profits of private actors while providing few benefits for the people, who also suffer from restrictions on their use of the forest.

- [São Tomé and Príncipe: Biodiversity threatened by oil palm plantations](#)

In a highly diverse forest area, 5000 ha have been granted in concession to establish large scale oil palm plantations.

- **Industrial logging cannot be sustainable**

Industrial logging in primary tropical forests that is both sustainable and profitable is impossible, argues a new study in Bioscience.

COMMUNITIES AND MONOCULTURE TREE PLANTATIONS

- **Cameroon: Major impacts of oil palm agribusiness on food sovereignty and livelihoods**

US based Herakles Farms/SGSOC has been granted more than 70,000 hectares to plant oil palm trees in a biodiverse area that would be deforested by the company to set up industrial plantations. Small farmers' communities strongly reject the project that would leave them without land which is the base of their livelihood.

- **Indonesia: Farmers struggle against industrial oil palm and acacia plantations in defense of their land and food sovereignty**

The story of two communities in Jambi Province that struggle against industrial tree plantations: in Geragai District, PT. WKS' acacia plantations are being opposed by local communities while paddy farmers of Mersam Village face PT ICA's plan to establish an oil palm plantation in their village.

- **Portugal: Petition to protest the "eucalyptization" of the country**

The Portuguese government plans to revoke regulations on tree planting, removing all conditions that previously limited the establishment of eucalyptus plantations.

PEOPLES IN ACTION

- **Indonesia: Farmers protest against eviction caused by Debt Nature Swap (DNS)**
- **Brazil: Support the Indigenous Cause of the Guaraní-Kaiowa**
- **Indonesia: Court victory against oil palm company**
- **Burma/Myanmar: Letter of Global Solidarity against land grabs**

RECOMMENDED

- **Brazil: Documentary film exposes FSC plantations as "Sustainable on Paper" only**
- **Motion on Sacred Natural Sites**

OUR VIEWPOINT

- Food sovereignty, forests and biodiversity

This month, while another meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was taking place in India, we also celebrated, on October 16, World Food Sovereignty Day.

For peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and other traditional peoples who live in and depend on forests and other biomes, biodiversity is intrinsically linked to food sovereignty and, in a broader sense, to their autonomy and freedom. For example, the diversity of traditional seeds that they use for small-scale agriculture has guaranteed these peoples, generation after generation, a significant part of their sustenance. Access to the forests and to the diversity of foods that they provide has also been crucial to their food sovereignty.

The time has come to denounce the veritable “war” that is being waged in numerous countries with tropical forests against the traditional agricultural practices of forest peoples, and particularly against the practice of planting small areas of crops in forested areas to grow food, as in the case of upland rice cultivation, a common practice in the mountainous regions of various Asian countries.

Governments and international organizations consider this practice to be one of the main causes of deforestation, and as a result, they maintain that it should be rigorously combated. In fact, however, numerous studies contradict this claim and demonstrate that it is a sustainable activity. Moreover, prohibiting this practice would not only plunge the communities who practice it into a state of hunger, but would also entail the disappearance of a way of life.

It is noteworthy that the same governments that oppose this non-destructive practice continue to grant concessions for forested areas that now add up to millions of hectares in countries like Indonesia. These concessions are granted to big private companies for the establishment of acacia and oil palm plantations or mining projects, to mention just a few of the most common activities, giving them free rein to destroy forests and biodiversity in order to earn quick and easy profits. This type of destruction, despite numerous denunciations by communities and local organizations, is not combated, or only minimally.

Today, the big companies that cause this destruction, as well as the financial institutions and governments who support these projects, use the logic of the “green economy” to argue that the destruction caused by their activities can be “offset” by “protecting” forests in other locations. However, their idea of “protection” turns out to be new threat to communities who live in these forest areas and practice shifting cultivation as a means of ensuring their food sovereignty. For these communities, the “green economy” does not imply “protection”. On the contrary, it represents even more pressures and restrictions, and on many occasions, leads to their expulsion from the forest. In any event, it is obvious that destruction in one place cannot be “offset” in another.

The governments that freely give forest concessions to private companies and also promote REDD projects for forest conservation generally claim that they are doing so as a

means of promoting “development”. But these projects in fact tend to increase inequality and hunger. The small number of jobs offered by plantation or mining companies or in REDD projects do not even begin to compensate for the losses suffered by the communities – something that we have heard a great many times from representatives of these communities during our field visits. While capital gains ever greater control over nature, forests and biodiversity, local communities suffer a decrease or even complete loss of control over their territories, as well as the loss of their ways of life.

We are confident that the struggle for food sovereignty will gain ever greater strength. And we believe that it is vital for this struggle to be interconnected with the struggle for these communities to remain in their forests, with the guarantee of being able to use and control their lands, forests and biodiversity and to practice their traditional forms of agriculture that help to maintain biodiversity and feed their people.

[index](#)

FINANCIAL MARKETS INFILTRATING THE CBD

- Convention on Biological Diversity: Opening the way for financial markets



The 11th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) took place October 8-19 in Hyderabad, India. Among the main themes addressed was the search for means to implement the Aichi Targets and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, which were adopted in 2010 at COP 10 to serve as the new roadmaps to guide countries in the measures to be taken to halt biodiversity loss by the year 2020, since the 2010 target had already failed to be met. (1)

It was stated that there was a need to establish international indicators of compliance, and to build capacity for the application of guidelines and other similar mechanisms, primarily for the countries of the global South. But what was denounced by numerous environmental organizations because of its grave repercussions was the adoption of a revised and updated Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (<http://www.cbd.int/sp/>) resulting from the negotiations. This plan, which was to be the overarching framework on biological diversity for the entire United Nations system, declared the need for new and additional financial resources as a key element for the protection of biodiversity. Mentioned in particular was the need to explore “innovative financial mechanisms”.

From a neoliberal perspective, money is considered the most important mechanism for conserving biological resources, and under this same approach, money is used as the means of valuing environmental aspects of importance. This has numerous implications, which the CBD Alliance (2) has been studying and disseminating in documents prepared for the Nagoya summit in 2010 and the recent summit in Hyderabad. Among the financial mechanisms formulated are payment for environmental services, a green development mechanism, and biodiversity offsets. Advances have also been made in the attempts to place a monetary value on ecosystem services, as in the case of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity or TEEB (see WRM bulletins 175, 176 and 181), an initiative backed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The CBD Alliance reports stress the difficulty of placing a financial value on biodiversity for the purpose of marketing it, as well as the idea, linked to this, that one species or area of high biological diversity can be equivalent, from a monetary point of view, to another. Added to this are the consequences for land rights, as well as the danger of placing priority on one ecosystem "service" over another, based on profitability. (3)

In reality, in order to protect biodiversity, what is important is not so much the amount of financial resources but rather the quality and destination of financing.

In a report prepared for the CBD Alliance that focuses on financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation (4), the authors quote the IUCN's observation that a "vast pot of potential conservation finance" lies in the billions of dollars tied up in environmentally harmful subsidies, such as government fiscal policies that support agricultural practices that destroy forests and deplete water supplies.

Basically – and following a larger trend of moving governance and decisions away from governments and communities – the introduction of innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity protection paves the way for the creation of market instruments that will deepen the privatization and commodification of goods that continue to form part of the commons. These will be new opportunities for profit for companies and even speculative capital, but false solutions for biodiversity loss, because they do not address the real causes of the problem, which are the destructive systems of production, trade and consumption. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 also opens the door to financial speculation, which is expanding in search of all possible spaces that were previously out of the reach of the market.

Nevertheless, a few positive recommendations can be found. BiofuelWatch and the Global Forest Coalition welcomed the fact (5) that COP 11 had acknowledged the SBSTTA recommendation to review and, where necessary, withdraw subsidies and other incentive schemes for biofuels and other economic sectors that cause harm to biodiversity. It further recognized that subsidies and other incentives for biofuel crops can be significant drivers of the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations for this purpose.

In the meantime, it is hoped that, in the words of Helena Paul of Econexus, these recommendations will encourage the European Union "to abolish all support for large-scale

industrial bioenergy.”

Some countries expressed the need to change models of production. As reported by the Brazilian organization Terra de Direitos, Bolivia denounced that financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation such as REDD+ are nothing more than neo-colonialist policies that do not genuinely seek to protect the environment, because they maintain unchanged the production model of the global North, which has caused so much damage to the environment and communities in the South. (6)

This article is based on information from the following sources:

(1) For a synthesis of the Aichi Targets (in Spanish), see: “Guía de la biodiversidad. Las metas de Aichi para periodistas y otras especies en extinción”, Ecologistas en Acción, at http://www.ecologistasenaccion.org/IMG/pdf/guia_de_la_biodiversidad.pdf

(2) The Convention on Biological Diversity Alliance (CBD Alliance) is a network of activists and representatives from non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, social movements and indigenous peoples’ organizations advocating for improved and informed participation in CBD processes. For more information visit: www.cbdalliance.org

(3) CBD Alliance documents: “Resource Mobilization (implementation of the strategy) and Financial Mechanisms”, at http://www.cbdalliance.org/storage/sbstta-wgri/cbda_briefing_wgri4_finances.pdf; “Finanzas, Instrumentos Económicos y

Biodiversidad”, at http://www.wrm.org.uy/actores/CBD/COP10/Informativo2_LosTop10paralaCOP10.pdf; CBD Alliance COP 11 Briefing Notes, at <http://www.cbdalliance.org/cop11-briefing-notes/>

(4) “Civil society views on Scaling Up Biodiversity Finance, Resource Mobilization and Innovative Financial Mechanisms”, compiled by Simone Lovera and Rashed Al Mahmud Titimur for the CBD Alliance, at <http://www.cbdalliance.org/storage/ifm/CBD%20Alliance%20Civil%20society%20views%20on%20Scaling%20Up%20Biodiversity%20Finance.pdf>

(5) “Forest Groups Welcome Global Biodiversity Conference Call to Review Biofuel Subsidies and Incentives”, 19 October 2012, at <http://globalforestcoalition.org/2474-forest-groups-welcome-global-biodiversity-conference-call-to-review-biofuel-subsidies-and-incentives#more-2474>

(6) “11ª COP da Convenção sobre Diversidade Biológica: Dos debates para a ação concreta?”, Larissa Packer and Fernando Prioste, Terra de Direitos, at <http://terradedireitos.org.br/biblioteca/11%C2%AA-cop-da-convencao-sobre-diversidade-biologica-dos-debates-para-a-acao-concreta-2/>

[index](#)

- La Via Campesina at the CDB: “Keep biodiversity public”



La Via Campesina (LVC), the global peasants movement, have been watching the CBD discussions and in a press release asserted that “instead of protecting biodiversity, the CBD discussions are progressively degenerating to allow rapid privatization and commercialization of biodiversity. The attempt is to take biodiversity out of the hands of the farmers, fishers, indigenous people who nurture and protect it, and let it go into the hands of profiteering corporations who seek to control it for commercial ends.”

The organization warned that “CBD is also discussing risky, untested and undebated technologies such as new kinds of synthetic biology, GM crops and geoengineering.”

The real solution, says La Via, “is to keep biodiversity public, in the hands of farmers, fishers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, open for use by all people to develop and use publicly for food production and human survival. It is well known that farmers, fishers and pastoralists have developed and renewed biodiversity over the millennia, their knowledge and expertise is crucial for conserving biodiversity.”

La Via Campesina has called upon the CBD conference to take immediate action and to engage in the following measures:

1. To ban the introduction and cultivation of GMO seeds.
2. To phase out the use of chemical pesticides.
3. To shift from the use of synthetic fertilizers to the use of agroecology methods by using more organic matter in the soil and increasing micro-organism population in the soil.
4. To reject the Green Economy proposal of putting a price on nature and its functions.
5. To affirm and maintain the moratorium on terminator technology and the moratorium on geo-engineering.
6. To urgently place a moratorium on synthetic biology.

See the full press release of La Via Campesina at <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/biodiversity-and-genetic-resources-mainmenu-37/1308-convention-on-biological-diversity-farmers-demand-an-end-to-the-commercialization-of-biodiversity-gm-seeds-and-synthetic-biology>

[index](#)

- Gathering support for Indian forest communities at the CDB



In 2006, the Indian Parliament enacted the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (popularly known as Forest Rights Act). The forest law has attempted to restore and recognize the rights of forest communities over their forests, especially the community forest rights over their common resources; it has been the first time in the history of Indian forests the state formally admits that rights have been denied to forest dwelling people for long. (See WRM Bulletin 115)

However, the Act is not being implemented true to its spirit. Millions of claims are being rejected without citing any reason and the forest communities are being forcibly thrown out from and relocated out of the Protected Areas in the name of wildlife conservation and tiger reserves, in complete violation of the FRA and agreed International Protocols.

While this is being done, market-based tourism is being allowed in an unregulated manner citing conservation as the excuse and a large number of forest communities are thrown out of their lands which are taken over forcibly for development projects such as mining, mega dams, thermal power plants without their consent.

Gathering support from international NGOs, community groups and social movements members of the CBD alliance, the Indian forest communities have sent a letter to the Prime Minister of India demanding full implementation of the FRA and to stop illegal relocation of the forest communities from the protected areas.

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND FORESTS

- Brazil: Continued destruction of forests and biodiversity in the state of Acre, considered a model of the "Green Economy" in the Brazilian Amazon



Over the last two decades, the Latin America and Caribbean region has lost 9% of its forest cover, primarily as a result of logging, the expansion of agribusiness, major infrastructure projects like highways, hydroelectric dams, mining, oil drilling and urbanization, as well as forest fires and the conversion of forests to other land uses, largely caused by these same activities.

National and foreign private agents, together with national governments, have intensified the exploitation of forests, while seeking to upgrade infrastructure through the South American Regional Infrastructure Integration (IIRSA) initiative as a way to facilitate the export of raw materials to the big centres of consumption in the Northern hemisphere and, to a growing degree, to other economies that have adopted this model, such as China.

In order to “mitigate” the effects of this destructive advance underlying the endless accumulation of capital, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in line with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), points to the “green economy” as salvation in a 2011 report.

According to the ITTO, the area of tropical forests under so-called “sustainable forest management” (SFM) has increased, and now totals 53 million hectares worldwide, while the area of timber production forests subject to at least some type of forest management now totals 131 million hectares. In other words, 184 million hectares, or 24% of the 403 million hectares of so-called “production forests”, are exploited under forest management plans. The remaining 358 million hectares are tropical forest areas subject to some type of “protection”.

In order for the exploitation of tropical forests driven by diverse capitalist interests to continue, the idea of a “green economy” is essential, in that it seeks to “offset” destruction with the “protection” of other areas, including those that are managed “sustainably”. The implementation of the sale of “environmental services” not only complements the concept of “sustainable forest management” but also serves to expand the commodification of forests through REDD and payment for environmental services (PES) projects, thus increasing the opportunities for the agents of destruction to reap greater profits.

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the most ambitious initiative towards the “green economy” was carried out in the Brazilian Amazon region under the leadership of the World Bank, through the Pilot Program for the Protection of Brazilian Tropical Forests (PPG-7). The state of Acre is considered the Brazilian state that has made the most “progress” in the adoption of this model of “sustainable development”.

The architecture of this territorial reorganization is essentially based on the establishment of a legal framework instituting the creation of “conservation units”, whose control may be formally designated as communal, community-based and/or governmental, although they are subjected to rules of use to ensure the commodification of nature for the benefit of private capital.

The state of Acre

The state of Acre is located in the Brazilian Amazon region. It has a total area of 16.5 million hectares, of which approximately 88% are still covered with native forests, and roughly 50% of these are in protected natural areas.

The state of Acre became internationally known in 1988 as a result of the murder of Chico Mendes, the president of the Union of Rural Workers of Xapuri. In the resistance struggles against the destruction of the forests that were the source of their livelihoods, the peasant movement led by Chico Mendes became famous for showing that forest conservation could not be approached separately from the peoples who live in and from the forests. The extractive reserves or RESEX initiative was the most concrete reflection of this interaction between society and nature.

As "the land of Chico Mendes", Acre sparked the interest of the international environmental movement, and the state has been publicized worldwide as the most advanced in the Amazon region in terms of the implementation of a "sustainable development model", now relabelled by the UN as a "green economy". The financing received by the state government for over a decade from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES), as well as from big international conservation NGOs like the WWF, is aimed at promoting this "model". Since 1999, the state government of Acre has been headed by a broad coalition of forces led by the Workers Party that encompasses everything from parties considered to be leftist to ultra-right wing parties. During this time, various initiatives have been adopted to adapt state legislation to the canons of the "green economy", such as, for example, the implementation of Economic Environmental Zoning, with the aim of "sustainable management" of land use. While this zoning, if carried out in a participatory, bottom-up way, could signify an advance towards restricting destructive practices and attending to the people's demands, it has mainly been used as just another tool to advance the commodification of the forest.

It should be stressed that the implementation of SFM plans – considered "successful" by the authorities – and of the "green economy" in general have not prevented the following situation:

- Today, Acre is one of the poorest states in Brazil, and has the greatest income inequality in Northern Brazil (Gini index=0.61) and the second greatest in the whole country; public policies are lacking for indigenous peoples, who continue to struggle for the demarcation of part of their territories.

- One of the predominant productive activities continues to be extensive beef cattle grazing, which is a notorious cause of deforestation. In the last decade, the cattle herd has grown from 800,000 head to 2.5 million.

- Another activity that continues to predominate is logging. In 2010, 756,000 cubic metres of timber were extracted, primarily by companies and large rural landholders. In the last ten years, the total area of forest cleared in Acre increased by 730,000 hectares, of which 62% were converted to other land use in the 2000-2005 period, thus surpassing the average

recorded in the previous three decades of approximately 500,000 hectares, prior to the implementation of the "green economy".

- To alleviate this hidden destruction, families are paid for "providing environmental services", in amounts far inferior to the profits earned by those who control the forests today, whether for logging or for selling these "environmental services". The adoption of State Law 2.308/2010 created the State System of Incentives for Environmental Services (SISA). This law is considered one of the most "advanced" in the world in terms of the establishment of the legal bases for the "green economy". According to the Acre News Agency, the "SISA law" paves the way for Acre "to participate in the international carbon market and the markets for other environmental services, such as biodiversity and water," and "policies for the reduction of deforestation are the greatest advertising for Acre carbon."

It should be stressed that SFM is not backed by any scientific evidence regarding forest regeneration and the behaviour of different ecosystems in response to forest exploitation that involves the building of roads and highways for the circulation of heavy machinery and trucks, the diversion of waterways, the contamination of the soils and rivers with burnt oil and other toxic wastes, the noise of the machinery, which scares away birds and wild animals, etc. Added to this is the absence of monitoring and control of SFM plans by government bodies, whether these have been deliberately downgraded as a result of neoliberal policies, or due to the emphasis on "public-private partnership" that characterizes the national government in Brazil.

As for PES policies, their perverse effects are beginning to be felt in forest areas, as clearly illustrated in this statement by Dercy Teles, president of the Union of Rural Workers of Xapuri:

(...) "PES policies only serve to silence these people, who have no opportunities or a voice. They have no voice because they sign a contract which is for at least 30 years. And for 30 years they place the area in which they live at the disposal of the government and the multinationals to do research and use all of the knowledge of the area in exchange for a meagre, insignificant amount of money. And what is even worse is that they can't do anything in this area, they can't fish anymore, they can't remove wood for their own use, they can't hunt anymore, they can't do anything anymore. (...)"

In 2010, the government of Acre signed a REDD agreement with the state governments of California (USA) and Chiapas (Mexico), under which polluting industries in California could continue to generate excess emissions by purchasing carbon credits from REDD activities in Acre and Chiapas. However, the increased destruction of forests and biodiversity under SFM plans, along with the increase in land grabbing and the expansion of extensive cattle grazing, all serve to expose the falsity of the "green economy" in Acre. Added to this are new destructive plans on the part of the state government for gas and oil exploitation.

Moreover, the trade in "carbon" and other environmental services represents a frontal attack on forest peoples' autonomy, freedom and control over their territories, and threatens the

diversity of nature and the communities who have always coexisted in harmony with it.

Based on an article by Elder Andrade de Paula entitled "La doble cara de la destrucción de los bosques tropicales en América Latina y el Caribe: las revelaciones de la "economía verde" en Acre", available at http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Brazil/The_two_faces_of_tropical_forest_destruction.pdf

[index](#)

-São Tomé and Príncipe: Biodiversity threatened by oil palm plantations



São Tomé and Príncipe is one of the countries on the West African coast that stands out when it comes to biodiversity. For this reason, since the end of the 19th century these "beautiful equatorial islands" have attracted enormous interest from international researchers. Their forests have been classified as one of the two hundred most important areas in the world in terms of biodiversity. They are the habitat for around 25 species of endemic birds.

Portuguese biologist João Pedro Pio went to southwestern São Tomé in July 2012. His intention was to find birds and other rare species in danger of extinction, as is the case for the Ibis, which is at the top of the list as one of the critically endangered endemic birds.

The blog *Apenas a minha história* (Just my story), where João Pedro tells his experiences over the course of a year as a foreigner and researcher in São Tomé, describes the scene of devastation he found in the area:

"Well, when the transect started, in an area that used to be closed forest, it became a muddy clearing. There were already no trees at all! They had all been cut down indiscriminately (...) with the exception of one or two *Viru-vermelho* remaining comically alone in the middle of all that destruction, there wasn't a single tree standing.

"In the distance a bulldozer works ruthlessly while the whole landscape seems to cry at the destruction."

Ribeira Peixe, also called Emolve (after the vegetable oil company), was a large semi-abandoned oil palm plantation, a monoculture that always presented a danger to the island's biodiversity. Now the danger is aggravated by plans to rehabilitate and expand the

plantation from the current 610 hectares to approximately 5,000 hectares, a fact confirmed in 2009 when the São Toméan State signed an agreement with Belgian company Socfinco for palm oil operation.

The researcher wrote that “the Government decided that it would be more profitable for the country to swap all its biodiversity, which is unique in the world, for a few tons of oil”.

The São Tomé and Príncipe Government signed a contract with Socfinco’s subsidiary Agripalma giving them 5000 ha. In other words, enough land so that the business of selling palm oil would become cost-effective.

The former International Coordinator of the World Rainforest Movement, Ricardo Carerre, in the report titled “Oil palm in Africa: Past, present and future scenarios” (http://wrm.org.uy/countries/Africa/Oil_Palm_in_Africa_map.html) explained the processes that led to the 50 - 75 million dollar deal in exchange for priceless riches.

These palm plantations aggressively degrade the environment, absorbing the soil's nutrients and leaving it extremely poor until, in less than two decades, it becomes totally barren land, serving only for scrub growth, which is perfect fuel for fires. Furthermore, the factories that emerge to process this oil typically produce a large amount of contaminating waste, represented by husks, water and fat residues and, as it is presumably a monoculture, it will need a large amount of herbicides, fertilizers and pesticides.

There is the saying “learn from others' mistakes”, and the benefit of history is that we can learn to not make the same mistake. In Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, entire forests have disappeared with palm oil operations. Close to two million hectares of forest are destroyed annually and the exploitation in question only seems to benefit large farming operations and corrupt governments.

Summary of the article “São Tomé & Príncipe: Deforestation Threatens Biodiversity” by Mário Lopes, sent by the author. The full article can be read at <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/10/13/sao-tome-principe-deforestation-threatens-biodiversity/>

[index](#)

- Industrial logging cannot be sustainable



Barbara Zimmerman with the International Conservation Fund for Canada and Cyril Kormos, Vice President for policy with the WILD Foundation are the authors of a new study in Bioscience which argues that the ecology of tropical hardwoods makes logging with truly sustainable practices not only impractical, but completely unprofitable.

Jeremy Hance interviewed the researchers for mongabay.com: "Despite decades of trying to log sustainably, the rate of deforestation has barely dipped over the last 20 years, from 15 million hectares per year to 13 million hectares per year—and these are low estimates. Industrial logging has shown no capacity to keep forests standing. On the contrary, logging is usually the first step towards total clearing to make way for agricultural use," said the researchers.

The study found that just three rounds of logging in tropical forests resulted in the near-extinction of target trees in all major rainforest zones—South and Central America, Central Africa, and Southeast Asia—resulting not only in ecological disturbance but economic fallout.

The rich biodiversity, unparalleled variety, and hugely complex interconnections between species of tropical rainforests make them particularly susceptible to disturbance. Targeting only a few key tree species in the forest, loggers quickly plunder these species while leaving the rest standing, rapidly changing the overall structure of the ecosystem.

"Virtually all currently high-value timber species, are exceptionally long lived and slow growing, occur at low adult density, undergo high rates of seed and seedling mortality, sustain very sparse regeneration at the stand level, and rely on animal diversity for reproduction, all of which point to the conclusion that tropical trees probably need very large continuous areas of ecologically intact forest if they are to maintain viable population sizes," Zimmerman and Kormos write in their paper.

Most logging companies simply enter a primary forest, cut all high-value species, and then leave it to colonizers or raze everything for cattle pasture or monoculture plantations (such as pulp and paper, rubber, or palm oil). Logging companies generally cut-and-run, moving from one untouched tropical forest to the next, always looking for the short-term gain. For example, after logging out most of the forests in Borneo, loggers moved into places like Sumatra. Now that Sumatra has been devastated—with many of its forests turned into monoculture plantations—industrial logging went to New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Primary rainforest is vanishing worldwide.

"Logging in the tropics follows the same economic model as is evident in most of the world's ocean fisheries," Zimmerman and Kormos write. "The most-valuable species are selectively harvested first, and when they are depleted, the next-most-valuable set is taken, until the forests are mined completely of their timber."

Some scientists have argued that the solution to this problem is to inject "sustainable forest management" practices into logging companies in the tropics. According to these sustainability proponents, this would ensure harvests over the long-term while protecting

overall forest health.

But according to their paper, even so-called reduced-impact logging—which is currently the exception rather than the norm in the tropics—considerably changes a forest's ecology. With many of the forest's vital seed and crop trees cut, Kormos and Zimmerman point out that "low-impact" logging leaves 20-50 percent of the canopy open, when "even small openings in the canopy (5-10 percent) can have significant impacts on the moisture content in the forest and increase risk of fire." Debris left on the forest floor quickly dries out, creating perfect fodder for fire. Unlike temperate forests, fires in primary rainforests are almost unheard of, but low-impact logging creates a new set of ecological conditions that leave the forest vulnerable to heat, wind, and, yes, fire.

Still, Zimmerman and Kormos, say logging can occur in tropical forests, only it should be small operations run by local communities, and not the industrial logging that dominates the trade today.

"Community logging works when it is implemented at non-industrial scales by communities that have a vested interest in being good stewards of their land," they say. The key here is that local communities govern their own forests, which takes away the cut-and-run problem.

Summary of the article "Experts: sustainable logging in rainforests impossible", Jeremy Hance, mongabay.com, published at <http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0718-hance-sustainable-logging.html>

[index](#)

COMMUNITIES AND MONOCULTURE TREE PLANTATIONS

- Cameroon: Major impacts of oil palm agribusiness on food sovereignty and livelihoods



In a context of massive land concessions in the country over the last five years - be it the expansion of existing plantations or the granting of new land concessions for palm oil or rubber - the US based company Herakles Farms, through its local subsidiary SG Sustainable Oils Cameroon PLC (SGSOC), plans to establish a large-scale industrial oil palm plantation and a palm oil refinery. Both projects would be established in an area

covered by rainforest and surrounded by two national parks, a forest reserve and a wildlife sanctuary.

On September 17th, 2009 SGSOC signed a contract with the Cameroonian Government which granted the company the rights to 73,086 Hectares of land in the Ndian and Kupe-Manenguba Divisions of Southwest Cameroon through a 99-year land lease. The South-West region is already largely covered with palm tree plantations; roads and houses are surrounded by palm trees.

In 2012, the Centre for Environment and Development (CED) and Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim (RELUF), carried out a research (1) on the Herakles/SGSOC's deal and found that the project is exceedingly beneficial to the company: the contract exempts it from paying all export duties and certain social security payments for the 99 years of the project as well as all taxes for a 10-year period to begin when production equals 10 tons of palm fruit bunches on at least 3,000 ha – which leads to SGSOC paying a surface rental fee as little as US\$0.50 to US\$1.00 per hectare per year.

The Herakles project claims it only plans to use 'degraded' land and 'secondary forest' but the company has already built a road deep into the forest – a 3km road near Talangaye clearing out tropical rainforest to set up its plantation in the Bakossi National Park - a reserve area -, without any authorization from the Ministry of Forestry. As a consequence, SGSC was summoned and its equipment was impounded.

The Oakland Institute has also produced a report (2) and a video (3) revealing the impacts already being felt by many small farmers whose land may be taken away by the project, in a country where agricultural production employs 70% of the population. Throughout the villages within the concession [south-west region], farmers are opposed to the Herakles Farms project mainly because many of these families will soon be left with no land to farm if Herakles Farms is allowed to move forward with its plans.

Although the license does not grant the company the right to start operations, SGSOC functions as if it can and has started making demarcations for its plantation without the knowledge or approval of traditional land owners. The farmers tell: "They entered into the forest without the knowledge of the village ... and they demarcated the area". "We want them to go away and leave us alone". "We don't need them, we are fine". "We will fight and we will die for our land".

The company has created nurseries in 3 locations, and now some villagers regret it: "I have to say that we made a big mistake when we let the company set up its nursery in our village. But the company told us if we give it land for its nursery it will build us houses; it will bring light and water; it will build us a hospital. But since then, nothing has been done inside the village", says one of the small farmers.

One of SGSOC's main arguments behind claims that they will bring economic development to the area is that they will create 7,500 new jobs during the duration of the project. But in fact, independent farmers have the potential to make four times as much when managing

their own land and growing different crops sold on local markets than they do working for an agro-industrial company. Most of small farmers grow diverse crops – millet, cocoa, cassava, kola nuts, bush mango, beans, rice, fruits and even oil palms either individually or in co-operatives. Hunting, fishing and collecting forest products, including wild food, and medicinal plants as well as fuel wood are common activities in the area. Indeed, the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) carried out has recognized that the massive use of chemicals typically used in such a large plantation constitutes a major threat to water sources in the area, and to the fish population as well as to the supply of safe drinking water. The ESIA indicates that the negative impact of the industrial oil palm plantation on livelihoods will be “major” and “long-term.”

“Everybody here is self-employed. We have the cocoa farms;” “We don’t need palm, - individuals have their own palms enough,” express many of the people interviewed in the video. The agro-diversity allows them to build their own food sovereignty: “We have everything in our village: cassava, cocoa farm, palm oil, mace, bush mango that we sell; kola nuts, bita kola. We don’t have only one thing in our land, we have so many things that give us money, so we don’t need people to come and disturb us. ... We are not suffering. Then why should you [SGSOC] say we are hungry? We don’t need you [SGSOC].”

The Herakles/SGSOC case in Cameroon is part of the massive land-grabbing by investors that in a little less than one year snatched up around 56 million hectares of land, 29 million of which are located on the African continent, south of the Sahara. CED’s and The Oakland Institute’s reports and video illustrate the problems communities, environment, and the entire country are exposed to when large agro-industrial plantations are developed.

As the president of Nature Cameroon says: “We have to concern: what should be the livelihood of the people ... if we have to give out 70.000 hectares of land to a single individual, as a company? What land is left for the communities?”

Article based on the following reports: (1) “Herakles’ 13th Labour? A Study of SGSOC’s Land Concession in South-West Cameroon”, Samuel Nguiffo and Brendan Schwartz, Centre pour l’Environnement et le Développement (CED): <http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2012/02/herakles-13th-labour-english.pdf> ; (2) “Understanding Land Investment Deals In Africa Massive Deforestation Portrayed As Sustainable Development: The Deceit Of Herakles Farms In Cameroon Land Deal Brief”, September 2012, The Oakland Institute: http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Land_deal_brief_herakles.pdf ; (3) The Herakles Debacle, video produced by The Oakland Institute, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EqrFvayJhE0#!

[index](#)

- Indonesia: Farmers struggle against industrial oil palm and acacia plantations in defense of their land and food sovereignty



The struggle in Geragai District

Up to 2011, a total of 18 companies had licenses over forest areas for a total of 663,809 ha distributed over 8 Regencies in Jambi Province, Sumatra, nearly 50% of which - 293,812 ha - is being controlled by one large corporation, PT. WiraKaryaSakti (PT. WKS), a subsidiary of Sinar Mas Group. The concession land of PT. WKS is divided in 5 Regencies, namely Tebo Regency, Batanghari Regency, Muaro Jambi Regency, TanjungJabung Barat Regency, and TanjungJabungTimur Regency.

In Geragai District, one of the Districts in East TanjungJabung Regency, PT. WKS received 2,467 ha under license in 2004, after the Ministry of Forestry identified the area as a cultivation land - usually called Areas for Other Usage, a category that refers to a non-forestry area turned into a Production Forest area.

The licensed area is adjacent to a Mangrove Protected Forest in the north of Pandang Sejahtera Village. PT. WKS did not establish any tree plantation there because of difficult access to the location so in 2007, communities from several villages took control over the unmanaged land and worked on it. They planted a variety of crops, such as banana, cassava, pumpkin, and vegetables and worked together building a road access and canals for drainage in order to facilitate access to the location.

In 2010, PT. WKS claimed that the land farmed by the community was its concession and started planting acacia on the land without respecting the presence of the communities, who have been using and working on the land long before the company came. To be able to control the land, the company shut the road access and the canals built by the communities, destroyed the communities' crops and evicted the families who did community farming inside of it.

Until now, from the 2,467 ha land under concession PT. WKS have planted 1000 ha with acacia. The rest is still kept by the communities who have made several efforts to prevent the land from being taken by the company, e.g. protesting against Sinar Mas Forestry, sending a letter to PT. WKS, doing demonstration actions, conducting blockades, evicting the employees of PT. WKS at the maintained location and dismantling the camps of the company's employees, as well as holding a dialogue process with the company, which is facilitated by the government of East TanjungJabung Regency.

The struggle in Batanghari Regency

Another case of resistance in Jambi Province takes place at Batanghari Regency. Crossed by the Batanghari River and enjoying a sub-tropical climate, the region has plenty of natural wealth and the land is very suitable for local food farming, i.e. paddy.

At the end of 2011, the Regent of Batanghari highlighted his "Self-Food-Sufficiency Program" which implied to open a rice field area, to provide fertilizer and seed for free, as well as the donation of farming equipment and machinery facility to every food farming group.

However, in mid-2012, the Regent issued a license for PT Inti Citra Agung (PT ICA) to establish an oil palm plantation in a concession area of 7,800 hectares. The area spreads in 9 villages in Mersam District, namely Sungai Puar Village, Sengkati Kecil Village, Sengkati Gedang Village, Teluk Melintang Village, Kembang Tanjung Village, Mersam Village, Rambutan Masam Village, Sungai Lais Village, and Benteng Rendah Village.

Mersam District is a paddy producing district and most inhabitants of those 9 villages are food farmers. Paddy farmers of Mersam Village think that if PT ICA is allowed to establish an oil palm plantation in their village the impact on the food and water resource area would be catastrophic.

The forest area also provides rattan for the community, which they process into various kinds of tools for their daily activities. "If the government wants Self-Food-Sufficiency in the form of rice, it has to revoke the license of PT ICA", said members of the community of Mersam Village who reject PT ICA's oil palm project. They fear that approximately 1,000 hectares of rice-field land would be damaged and lost if an oil palm plantation is established in their village.

The community of Mersam Village was also aware of the land conflicts caused by the oil palm plantation company in other villages: "Just look at Paseban Village. Since the oil palm plantation was established, the land is dry, so the farmers have to buy rice to eat. Industrial oil palm plantations, in fact, result in conflict", utters Mr. Suhaimi, the Leader of Sungai Lais Farmers' group, Mersam Village. "Therefore, it is better for us to defend our land ... Don't let the company take it!" he concluded.

The rejection of the farmer community of Mersam is supported by the Parliament Member of Batanghari Regency as well as by several Non Government Organizations, i.e. Yayasan SETARA Jambi, Yayasan CAPP- Ecological Justice, Perkumpulan Hijaudan Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria (AGRA). "The granting of a license by Batanghari Regent to PT ICA is a conspiracy that will damage food farmers. Why wouldn't the Regent listen to the society? Paddy is local food that grows and develops in harmony with the agrarian life of the farmers. Local farmers do not eat oil palm. Revoking the license of PT ICA that will damage the food land of the farmers is a final decision that must be made by the Regent", said Nurbaya Zuhakim, an activist of Yayasan SETARA, who has been active assisting the food farmers of Mersam.

Together with several Non Governmental Organizations, the farmers' society of Mersam

will continue struggling to defend their food land, upholding their sovereignty on local food and rejecting the expansion of oil palm plantations into their village. The commemoration of World Food Day should be a momentum to support the local farmers, the village community, and grass root communities that firmly struggle for their land rights, their land sovereignty, and against the imposition of the global monoculture industry.

By Rivani Noor, CAPPA, e-mail: rivani@cappa.or.id

[index](#)

- Portugal: Petition to protest the “eucalyptization” of the country



This past September 21, to mark the International Day Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, the Portuguese environmental organizations Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (League for the Protection of Nature) and Quercus launched a petition against a proposed new regime for tree planting and replanting presented by the government.

The petition argues that a number of the problems faced by forests in Portugal – most of which are made up of small plots of privately owned land – result from the expansion of plantations of eucalyptus trees, an exotic tree species that is the most commonly used for monoculture plantations, primarily geared to pulp production.

Eucalyptus monoculture plantations have affected the natural forest ecosystem in Portugal through both the destruction of natural vegetation and the erosion that they have generated due to major alterations in soil composition and the water cycle.

According to figures from the National Forest Inventory, in 2005-2006, eucalyptus plantations occupied 740,000 hectares of land in the country. Since that time, the area of plantations has expanded with no controls. The authorities have adopted neither zoning regulations to minimize the loss of biodiversity nor effective measures to prevent forest fires.

In the meantime, situations have emerged in which fires, the low productivity of the plantations in mountainous areas and other factors have led eucalyptus plantation owners to abandon them, thereby increasing the risk of fire. These areas become permanently degraded as a result of the specific characteristics of eucalyptus and the difficulties in financing the reconversion of abandoned plantations on rural landholdings.

A proposal for the revision of the country's Forest Code presented by the government is aimed solely at changing and revoking the regulations for tree planting, which would allow for the establishment of eucalyptus plantations free of any limitations or conditions. Those who would benefit from this are the pulp industry and their eucalyptus suppliers, to the detriment of the public interest.

The participating organizations have called on the Portuguese public to sign a petition to express their opposition to this "eucalyptization" of the country. The petition can be accessed and signed at <http://www.peticaopublica.com/?pi=PCE2012> and <http://www.quercus.pt/scid/webquercus/defaultArticleViewOne.asp?categoryID=567&articleID=3938>

[index](#)

PEOPLES IN ACTION

- Indonesia: Farmers protest against eviction caused by Debt Nature Swap (DNS)

About 40 farmers of a La Via Campesina member organization (Serikat Petani Indonesia) from Jambi province protested in front of the Germany Embassy on October 16 against the negative impacts of a Debt Nature Swap (DNS), signed in 2007 between the German Government and Indonesian authorities. The objective of the agreement to protect tropical forests in Sumatra led in practice to the eviction, burning of houses and arresting of farmers who have lived long in the area.

Source: <http://www.metrojambi.com/v1/metro/11013-puluhan-petani-merangin-demo-kedutaan-jerman.html>

[index](#)

- Brazil: Support the Indigenous Cause of the Guaraní-Kaiowa

The Brazilian organizations Juízes para a Democracia (Judges for Democracy) and CIMI have launched a petition addressed to various Brazilian authorities to demand the urgent demarcation of indigenous lands in the country, particularly in view of the disastrous situation faced by the Guaraní-Kaiowá people in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The Guaraní-Kaiowá who live in the PyleitoKue/Mbarakay territory announced that they would rather die en masse than leave their territory in response to an eviction order and threats. They are calling on the Brazilian government and courts to revoke the eviction order and to demarcate their territories. (At http://www.avaaz.org/po/petition/Salvemos_os_indios_GuaraniKaiowa_URGENTE/?tPbAKab you can support their demands)

The petition condemns the delays in Supreme Court processes for the regularization of indigenous lands, which have led to critical situations for indigenous communities.

It also expresses opposition to proposed constitutional amendment PEC 215, which would transfer the authority for demarcation of indigenous lands in Brazil from the executive branch of government to the legislature.

You can sign on to the petition, available in English, Portuguese, French, Spanish and Italian, at http://www.causaindigena.org/causaindigena_english.php

[index](#)

- Indonesia: Court victory against oil palm company

The state administrative High Court in Medan, has decided in favor of the organization WALHI, cancelling administrative decisions that led to the issuance of the license to the oil palm plantation PT Kalista Alam for an area of around 1,605 hectares in the Rawa Tripa peat swamp forest, Nagan Raya District, Aceh.

WALHI's National Executive Director, Abetnego Tarigan added, "The decision of PTTUN Medan is a jurisprudence for the enforcement of environmental law and environmental conservation efforts in Indonesia, which has almost never taken side with the environment and the people."

See: <http://www.ejolt.org/2012/09/victory-in-lawsuit-appeal-on-rawa-tripa-a-jurisprudence-for-environmental-law-enforcement-in-indonesia/>

[index](#)

- Burma/Myanmar: Letter of Global Solidarity against land grabs

The "Second Commercial Farm Asia", a fair that brings together corporate investors and governments from Myanmar and other countries in the Southeast Asia, has taken place in Yangon, Myanmar on 11-12 October. The event was to discuss how industrial agricultural and extractive investments can be expanded and facilitated.

In response, farmers' groups, and environmental, social justice and peace organisations from all over the country gathered the day before the agribusiness fair to draw attention to the further destruction that such investments will cause. Large scale industrial agriculture and resource extraction have already resulted in the dispossession of local communities and food producers, and violations of the rights of workers farmers, fishers and indigenous communities. The agribusiness fair will deepen these problems by providing investors with even more legal ways of land and natural resource grabbing.

Farmers, workers and activists came in from all over the country from areas that have been especially targeted in the past few years for large-scale agricultural and infrastructure

investment that have resulted in outright land dispossession. They shared their information, experiences and knowledge, and discussed how to support local communities to defend their lands and resources.

An international letter of solidarity which gathered wide support was read out and shared with networks and activists in other parts of the country, who are struggling to defend their lands, natural resources and rights.

The letter can be read at <http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/21128>

[index](#)

RECOMMENDED

- Brazil: Documentary film exposes FSC plantations as “Sustainable on Paper” only

“Sustainable on Paper”, a documentary film by journalists An-Katrien Lecluyse and Leopold Broers released in Belgium in 2011, is now available on the internet. The film broadly denounces the FSC certification of plantations owned by one of the biggest eucalyptus and pulp companies in Brazil, Veracel Celulosa, a joint venture of Brazilian-based Fibria and Swedish-Finnish transnational Stora Enso.

The documentary reveals that FSC certification does not guarantee “sustainable management”, which means the FSC label is merely a means of deceiving consumers into buying the company’s products. At the same time, it demonstrates that the unsustainability of eucalyptus monoculture plantations, certified by the FSC, is directly linked to the excessive consumption of paper in the countries of the North.

You can watch the film in English at <http://vimeo.com/50781178>

[index](#)

- Motion on Sacred Natural Sites

The IUCN has approved a Motion on Sacred Natural Sites: 'Support for Custodian Protocols and Customary Laws in the face of global threats and challenges.' The initial Declaration was drafted jointly by The Gaia Foundation (<http://www.gaiafoundation.org/>) with input from the African Biodiversity Network (<http://www.africanbiodiversity.org/>) and the Statement on Common African Customary Laws for the Protection of Sacred Natural Sites developed by Sacred Natural Sites' Custodians from Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda; Christopher McLeod of the Sacred Lands Film Project (<http://www.sacredland.org/>), Rob Wild and Bas Verschuuren of the Sacred Natural Sites Initiative (<http://sacrednaturalsites.org/>), Gleb Raygorodetsky of the United Nations University, with support from a network of allies. Text of the Motion available here:

<http://sacredland.org/media/Motion-054-2012-final.pdf>

[index](#)
