



**WRM Bulletin 239**  
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## **In solidarity with communities' struggles against industrial tree plantations**



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# In solidarity with communities' struggles against industrial tree plantations

## Our Viewpoint

### September 21st: International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations



Industrial monoculture plantations of eucalyptus, acacia, rubber, oil palm, pine or teak trees stand for huge profits for those companies that invest in them. But for communities living in and around industrial plantations they stand for massive invasion of their land; destruction of forests, water sources and livelihoods. Industrial tree plantations are also linked with many forms of violence, especially against women.

**In many places, communities, community-based organisations and activists are fighting to stop them. Today, we want to highlight the huge efforts they make, despite criminalization and persecution.** Some are able to halt the advance of plantations, others reclaim their land back from companies. All these struggles of resistance are united in their unambiguous message that says NO to industrial monoculture tree plantations.

In times where the plantation companies continue expanding tree monocultures on all continents, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America, **these manifold voices of resistance against corporate control over community land are crucial.** Companies continue to make the false claim that tree monocultures are forests. They falsely suggest that these large-scale monocultures could be beneficial to communities – when in reality the benefits accrue first and foremost to the companies with communities bearing the cost of lost livelihoods, destroyed forests and water sources and exposure to agrotoxins and violence. Companies use ever new strategies and tactics to invade community land. Now they even make the preposterous claim that monoculture tree plantations can help solve the global climate crisis.

The International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations was created in 2004 in Brazil. Not during an international conference in a big city, but during a meeting of communities facing large-scale eucalyptus plantations. They decided to dedicate September 21st as **the day of coordinated actions and activities to give particular visibility to the invasive, destructive and violent character of industrial plantations.** A Day to celebrate the victories, as well as to highlight the diversity of their struggles, resistances and alliance-building.

**Our solidarity and homage to all of you – women, men, elders and youth – who in many different ways and places make tireless efforts to defend life, to resist and to struggle against monoculture tree plantations!**

Plantations are not forests!!!

September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

WRM international secretariat team

## **Song: Plantations are not Forests!**



A song by Ajele Sunday, Nigerian artist. His community suffer land grabbing from oil palm companies. [Listen to the song.](#)

**WRM:** Can you please share a bit about what was your motivation to write the song for September 21, the International Day of Struggle against Tree Plantations?

**Ajele:** I am Ajele, from Ovia South West Local Government, in Edo State. Nigeria. I and my Community are victims of LAND GRABS.

Ordinarily one would have thought that when a Multinational Company such as OKOMU Oil Palm Plantation Plc is sited around your Community, that it is a sign of good things to come, but little did we know that our problems had just began. The Company robbed us of our identity, our pride, our lands and our future, we have totally lost our means of livelihood.

The worst calamity we had was when FOUR VILLAGES were forcefully evicted, their farmlands and houses were destroyed without compensation. They came up with so many tactics to divide the people.

The Company is full of lies and deception. Now there is hunger in these Communities because the rich biodiversity which provides their means of livelihood is gone.

What prompted me into song writing is the power of music. Music has no barrier. It gets to the rich and the poor. And it cuts across nations.

The song itself is self explanatory. A PLANTATION IS NOT A FOREST. IT IS A GENOCIDE ATTACK ON NATURE, therefore, IT MUST BE DISCOURAGED.

Below the lyrics:

**PLANTATIONS ARE NOT FOREST** | Ajele Sunday - 2018

My brother's  
Health of mother Earth  
My sister's  
Health of mother Earth is getting so critical  
What are we gonna do now  
This is a Clarion call  
It has no exclusion I say  
Am calling on everyone  
Those who believe in  
the sanctity of mother Earth  
Come together  
And let us say no no no

(Chorus)  
Say no no no  
Plantations are not forest  
They are prodigal Children  
distroyin mother Earth (\*3).

They came as investors  
To steal away our land  
With their ism's and skisms  
They enslave the people  
And they put profit above human dignity  
They distroy biodiversity  
They distroy livelihood

Now erosion is threatening  
They keep the people disunited not to speak with  
one voice  
What about the trees  
Going extinction  
What of the reptiles  
Taking refuge in the bush  
They came like Dracula  
to suck the blood of the forest  
No no no no no

Repeat chorus  
Say no no no  
Plantations are not forest  
They are prodigal Children  
distroyin mother Earth(\*3)

Hu. It's getting so critical  
e l ya  
Crops are not forest man  
O u no no no no no  
Repeat chorus.

[Listen to the song](#)



## Oil Palm in Peru: Destruction Advancing Upon the Amazon



Peru. Ph: Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)

The fact is that large-scale oil palm plantations are no longer limited to Southeast Asia, although Indonesia and Malaysia still produce 80% of this oil worldwide. In addition to expanding in several African countries, the total area planted with oil palm in Latin America has doubled since 2001. According to a study that analyzed the types of land converted for palm cultivation in ten Latin American countries, Peru showed the highest rate of deforestation for industrial oil palm production. This is particularly worrying in the Loreto region, where 85 per cent of the palm plantations have been established in areas where there was previously tropical rainforest. (1) These facts, along with the many complaints that peoples and communities affected by this industry have made, make industrial oil palm plantations an emerging threat to the Peruvian Amazon.

### A History of Colonization

Starting in 1832, the Peruvian government promoted policies that granted property titles to Amazonian land for free, to develop agricultural activities. This began what is known as the 'official' colonization of the Amazon. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a more intense territorial occupation began, along with a consequent expansion of the agricultural frontier. In this process, the Amazon was seen as a huge supply of 'unowned' resource to be controlled. Indigenous territories were dispossessed, invaded or destroyed with State support. A key state contribution to this process was the construction of roads and highways, which in turn benefited loggers, land traffickers and construction companies, among others. (2)

In the 1990s, neoliberal adjustments marked the end of support mechanisms for small-scale agriculture (subsidies, credits, buying of production, etc.), and the settlers — most of whom had been encouraged by the State to expand the agricultural frontier in the Amazon — were left behind. New invasions began in the 2000s: the construction of two mega-highways (the Interoceanic North and South highways), the accelerated growth in the exploration and extraction of petrol and natural gas, the implementation of the timber extraction concession system, the boom in river gold mining, and industrial oil palm plantations.

Even though Peru is not a major player in the global palm oil market, according to some statistics, it is the country where this crop is expanding the fastest.

## Destroying Forests and Peoples

In the context of promoting agricultural expansion, the Peruvian government fostered a series of regulatory reforms to encourage oil palm cultivation. Among these reforms, the May 2000 Supreme Decree N° 015-2000-AG stands out. This decree states that it is in the 'national interest' to set up oil palm plantations in areas that have a capacity for greater productivity, in order to — among other things — contribute to the restoration of land deforested by shifting agriculture and the proliferation of illicit activities (3).

It is clear that this so-called 'national interest,' however, is 'economic interest,' — turning into a reality of land grabbing, deforestation, violence and even murder. Iván Flores, indigenous Shipibo-Konibo leader of the community of Nuevo Requena in the Amazonian state of Ucayali, said in an interview in September 2017, "We are all afraid, and no authority is supporting us. Since the [oil palm] company, Plantaciones de Pucallpa, arrived, we are not at peace. They are deforesting ancestral territory; and now, after the chaos, the dead are starting to appear." (4)

The State classifies land according to two kinds of soil in the rainforest: forest capacity and agricultural capacity. On forest-capacity soils, neither crops nor livestock are allowed. Any activity of this kind is illegal. Oil palm plantations should have been planted in deforested areas (with agricultural-capacity soils); however, the vast majority have been planted where there was rainforest (with forest-capacity soils). Companies illegally obtained permits in forest areas for agroindustrial purposes. In some of these areas, peasants had set up small settlements, including agriculture plots. Even indigenous territories were affected.

Usmar, a peasant from the community of Cotoyacu — which is affected by the oil palm company Palmas del Shanusi — recalls: "The company arrived saying that they were going to support us in everything — in health, education, work, and giving people a better life. But that was all a big lie. That's how they trick people. They started buying, and they kept coming. They recruited frontmen to buy from the people who didn't want to sell their land to the company. So it was that we ran out of land as the company began to acquire land. They began to cut down the whole forest and drain the swamps. Then they planted the oil palm. Those of us who still haven't sold are surrounded by the company plantations."

The Palmas Group (part of the Romero group, the second most important economic group in Peru) is one of the oil palm pioneers in the country and is currently the largest producer. This group has developed two large industrial plantations: Palmawasi in Tocache, and Palmas del Shanusi on the border between Loreto and San Martín. Then there is the Melka Group, belonging to Czech-American citizen Dennis Melka, an investor affiliated with industrial oil palm plantations in Malaysia. This group has two large plantations in Ucayali, which together cover about 11,000 hectares.

## The Case of the Palmas Group

In 2006, government agencies, consultants and company representatives promoted the arrival of Romero Group (now called Palmas Group) to Loreto and San Martín as an important development alternative for communities. However, over ten years later, it is clear that this "development" meant destruction and conflicts for these communities.

Unlawfully, the Palmas Group obtained land to set up their oil palm plantations in primary forests, swamps, wetlands and areas with freshwater springs. In 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture granted over 7,000 hectares of primary forest to the Shanusi company — today Palmas de Shanusi S.A. — at a price equivalent to almost 18 *nuevos soles* per hectare (about US \$5). The Empresa Agrícola de Caynarachi — today Palmas del Oriente S.A. — received 3,000 hectares in 2007, at a price equivalent to 150 *nuevos soles* per hectare (around US \$45). Both companies belong to the Palmas Group.

"The company [Palmas del Shanusi of Romero Group] entered the community in 2005 and made trails so that they could set up their camps and cut down our forests. In 2006 they put in machines so that they could deforest, straighten our streams and plant oil palm. There were wetlands and many swamps on that land that gave life to the streams," says Jovina of the Friends of the Forest Producers Association, from the community of Cotoyacu.

Faced with this situation, 14 communities affected by the oil palm plantations of Palmas del Shanusi S.A and Palmas del Oriente S.A. organized a Forum in the city of Yurimaguas in June 2018, in order to expose the impacts in areas next to the Huallaga, Shanusi and Cainarachi Valleys, in the San Martín and Loreto regions (5).

At the Forum, participants claimed that instead of requesting degraded land — as mandated by law — companies have profited from the land and timber extracted from primary forests. Their operations have diverted and drained streams, to the point where many communities no longer have water. Water sources have disappeared, as have hundreds of hectares of swamps. Stream water that communities used for their basic needs has been contaminated, causing fish to disappear as well.

Forum participants also reported that the results of laboratory tests carried out by state institutions to determine water quality had been manipulated, as these results indicated there was no contamination. Yet testimonies about animals that died from drinking the water, and fish that disappeared, confirm a different reality. Participants also noted how oil palm plantations are sprayed using aerial application of pesticides, whose components are not only harmful to water sources, but to human health, wild flora and fauna and subsistence farming areas.

Forum participants stated that the purchase of land has been mostly fraudulent. They claim that a lot of pressure and violence was used in some cases, by way of frontmen and armed vigilante groups. Consequently, there are now communities in which a large part of the population has no land. They also exposed how companies are preventing people from accessing their own land, by putting gates on public roads. They revealed that some peasants are being unjustly prosecuted for crimes against forests and growing stocks, for having allegedly logged without proper permits — when in fact, it is the companies that are deforesting and illegally benefiting from the land and timber.

The Open Letter drawn up at the end of the Forum states: "We never lacked good water for washing, bathing or cooking; nor did we lack fish to eat. Today, they bring water to some communities in tankers, without any guarantee of its quality." They conclude by decrying that the proposed development model is actually the "destruction of peoples' true possibilities to generate their own development." (6)

Communities that live in and around industrial oil palm plantations are still living in tense situations, because Palmas Group companies want to expand their operations even more. And according to community members, they are already looking for ways to take away their land.

In the face of this threat, it is only through organization and unity that peasants will be able to challenge the onslaught of industrial oil palm plantations onto their territories. The case of Cotoyacu provides an example of this. "In 2015, after having endured ten years of contamination and deforestation, we met to see what we can do; and we decided to organize as a community," recalls Jovina. The support of the Pastoral de la Tierra team was fundamental in this process; because in a context where the company flaunts its power, communities feel alone, isolated and end up giving up.

By knowing their rights, tirelessly monitoring their territory to avoid the company's impacts, and filing complaints before various state institutions — complaints which have also been broadcast in the media, they have prevented the company from continuing to deforest and plant on lands bordering their streams.

*Joanna Cabello, WRM International Secretariat, joanna [at] wrm.org.uy*

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(6) Pastoral de la Tierra, Comunidades afectadas por las plantaciones de las empresas del Grupo Palmas escriben a las autoridades, agosto 2018, <http://tierrasselva.blogspot.com/2018/08/comunidades-afectadas-por-las.html>



## Argentina: "Sowing Struggle, We Harvest Land!" Land Recovery in Misiones



Puerto Libertad, Misiones, Argentina.

It is possible to recover land that large-scale tree plantation companies have grabbed, and to grow food again. Grassroots organizations in Misiones, Argentina are showing how. As a result of years of struggle, families from Puerto Piray and Puerto Libertad have withstood the threat of being expelled from their territory. In some cases, they managed this through expropriation; in others, through occupations. Now, with great effort, they are returning life to the compacted and nutrient-deprived soil that pine and eucalyptus plantations left behind.

The Province of Misiones is located in northeast Argentina on the border with Brazil. Mighty rivers course through Misiones, which is part of the Paraná rainforest and is territory of indigenous Guaraní communities who have been severely harmed and threatened by the onslaught of tree plantations.

In 1950, the Celulosa Argentina S.A. pulp mill was set up in Puerto Piray on the banks of the Paraná River. In the following decades, and with the support of the State, two more pulp mills were set up, industrial pine plantations expanded, and the country's largest sawmills were built. Between 1950 and 1977 alone, the expansion of industrial tree plantations and the agricultural frontier advanced onto 53% of the native forest (1). In the last 25 years, pine and eucalyptus plantations have continued to push back forests in the Province: **while in 1992, there were 7,347 hectares of plantations, this area reached 405,824 hectares in 2018.** (2)

This expansion was possible through the implementation of national law 25.080, which has granted enormous subsidies to industrial tree plantations since 1998. In May 2017, the Argentinian government announced that it will extend those subsidies until 2030; and in May 2018, it launched the "Forest 2030" plan, which aims to **increase the country's plantations by 800,000 hectares** (today, tree plantations cover 1.2 million hectares nationally; 60% are in Misiones and Corrientes provinces). The plan is presented as a supposed solution to climate change and a creator of jobs. Behind this initiative, in addition to sector companies and the government, is The Nature Conservancy Argentina (3). This international conservation organization promotes carbon offset and mitigation projects in collusion with large companies and industrialized countries which continue to deforest and burn fossil fuels.

## Arauco in Misiones

The Chilean transnational company Arauco, "landed" in Misiones in 1996 when it purchased the Alto Paraná S.A. pulp mill (located in Puerto Esperanza); it later set up a sawmill and a medium-density fiberboard (MDF) plant in Puerto Piray. **By 2014, Arauco owned 39% of the monoculture tree plantations in Misiones (4).**

Not only was the land concentrated in Arauco's hands, the raw material was too: Small sawmills lagging behind in technology lost access to wood and shut down, increasing unemployment. Meanwhile, the workers were not necessarily absorbed by the new company, because with increasing mechanization, the tasks on tree plantations which originally created jobs—such as planting and harvesting—were replaced by machines and agrotoxins (5).

Luisa Segovia, member of the Independent Producers of Piray (PIP, by its Spanish acronym), remembers having worked collecting resin and planting pine trees. Her husband, Nicanor, would weed, use a machete and apply agrotoxins from a backpack. These jobs were precarious and they caused him serious health problems. "It's a very conflictive company, because they don't care about human beings," he says. "When the certification companies came, the company's engineers threatened us so that we would say that everything was fine," recalls Nicanor.

Starting in the 2000s, when Arauco began to replace employees with machines, workers not only lost their jobs but saw how the plantations began to encroach upon their homes. Many small villages disappeared due to the company's violent actions and the complicity of the State, which stopped providing basic services to the population: **With no work, electricity, health or transportation, they were forced to leave their land.**

## Piray's Struggle

In early 2000, unemployed families in Piray began to organize in grassroots groups. They were worried about the lack of jobs and the encroachment of pine trees onto their land immediately around their homes, which generated pollen and agrotoxin pollution. Their complaints to local authorities went unheard, because the municipality only answered to the company. )

"That was when we started to wake up, and we saw that our fundamental project had to be **to find a way out: to live better,**" says Miriam Samudio, a member of Independent Producers of Piray (PIP). So they began to say: **We need the pine trees to go, so that we can work and produce food on this land.** This became their rallying cry.

In 2003 they held a meeting with Arauco. At the meeting, company engineers said that the company would not give up a centimeter of land. Instead, they offered to build them a shoe, clothing or diaper factory. But the families refused, because they wanted the land. They wanted to produce food.

And so the struggle began. "The first step was **to raise awareness among our own people, the community and the society, so that they would understand our demand. Because we were going up against a multinational corporation,**" Miriam explains. They had meetings and marches, and they created a negotiating table with the authorities. In those

meetings, **the local government's complicity with Arauco was clear.** "We realized that their only goal was to wear us out, so we left the table."

By that time, about 200 families were organized under the name Independent Producers of Piray (PIP). When the negotiating table failed, they decided to start **connecting with peasant organizations in other towns**, such as the Bernardo de Irigoyen Peasants Union and Unidos Ruta 20. "They told us: 'You should not be afraid. They are always going to say no. But we have rights; it is our land, and multinational companies come to steal what is ours.'" One of the fears Piray families had was of being thrown in jail, because the police sometimes tried to blame them for alleged crimes. "To mess with Arauco was to mess with power and its friends," they say.

**Communication within the organization** was an important factor in the struggle. "We would meet every weekend. That enabled communication among families to always be clear, and for decisions to be made as a group," they explain. Another custom they maintained was to **take their grievances to local media.** "We condemned the fact that the pine trees were asphyxiating the community of Piray, and we presented all of our demands."

### Expropriation

In 2012, after ten years of fighting, PIP decided to demand that the government expropriate Arauco. That year, then Argentinian president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, announced the expropriation of the YPF oil company. "From that moment on, we came out and openly said 'expropriation,'" Miriam says. "Before, it was a forbidden word because it went against private property. But once the president said it, we used it as a tool."

From that moment on, and for almost a year, PIP traveled throughout the province and the country, getting people to support the expropriation project. They continued with their struggle in the territory, organized mobilizations, and remained firm in their demand: **"It was the land or nothing. Because otherwise we were going to disappear,"** they say. In June 2013, the Misiones Legislature approved the expropriation of 600 hectares from Arauco. **It was a first major victory.**

### Growing food where there used to be pine and eucalyptus trees

The first return of land took place just in 2017, and the peasants' work has been hard. The company cut the trees and handed over the land in a disastrous, completely degraded state. All the stumps were strewn throughout the field, which was full of branches and other debris left after the wood was removed. The peasants discovered that the soil was very compacted from the tons of weight from the company's machinery, and from the continuous cycles of planting over eight or nine years—which did not allow the soil to recover. Furthermore, **after years of the application of agrottoxins, when crops were planted without chemicals, they became full of insects and pests that had disappeared with the constant use of poisons.**

In the first return of land, the communities received only 166 of the 600 hectares expropriated (Arauco is handing over the land as it harvests the pine and eucalyptus trees). Of those 166 hectares, only about 86 hectares were suitable for cultivation. As part of the expropriated land, the company included 80 hectares where families have been living for over 20 years. PIP decided to accept that as part of the first return of land, **so as not to fall into the**

**company's strategy of pitting families against each other.** But they explained that further down the line, they will fight to make sure that Arauco gives them another 80 hectares that are uninhabited and suitable for cultivation.

The cooperative divided the land into one part for families and another part for collective cultivation. They planted squash, pumpkin, corn, cassava and watermelon, among other crops. **"The land was like concrete where there had been eucalyptus,"** the peasants say. The work is all by hand because they do not have the resources to buy machines, and the State is not providing any support. They tried using an ox, but the animal died of fatigue from the strain of working land that had been so compacted over so many years.

Insect infestations were another serious problem. As soon as the crops began to grow, they were full of "bugs." On the advice of technicians from the local Family Agriculture secretariat (which accompanied PIP throughout the recovery process), the farmers used **natural methods to combat them.** They know that it will take a while before the land returns to its natural equilibrium and the insects cease to attack the crops. But **they are determined not to use agrottoxins.**

With the land damaged from the plantations, and with no machinery, **the first harvest yielded very little.** The farmers estimate that it was less than half of what they would have harvested from healthy land, and that this harvest was possible only thanks to the quality of the land. Indeed, the company develops its plantations on the most fertile land with the best topographic conditions, a fact which peasants condemn—not only in Piray, but in other areas of Misiones, too.

### **Reappearance of Water**

In an area that was once a wetland, the water reappeared once the pine trees were cut. Farmers say that the wetland was always there, just that when the company planted eucalyptus and pine trees in the fields that surrounded it, the water almost disappeared and the wetland was at its minimum expression. In fact, the company later planted pine trees over the wetland, since the water had disappeared. "It is a natural water reservoir. If the wetland dries up, the spring that reaches the neighbors' houses, dries up," the producers explain. Now, months after the pine trees have been cut, the stumps can still be seen throughout the wetland that is coming back. The water is returning.

For now, the farmers grow enough for their own consumption, and this allows them to remain on their territory. They still are not producing enough volume to sell in local markets. But that is their project for the future, as they receive the land they are still due. **"Sow Struggle and Harvest Land"** is PIP's motto.

### **Occupations in Puerto Libertad**

70 kilometers north of Piray, in Puerto Libertad, Arauco owns almost 80% of the territory. Of the 80,000 hectares that comprise the municipality, 65,000 are controlled by the company (6). The town has about 7,000 inhabitants and is literally surrounded by pine trees.

There too, Arauco's mechanization caused hundreds of layoffs in the 2000s. Most were chainsaw operators who worked for companies contracted by the multinational corporation. Furthermore, in the urban center of Puerto Libertad there was no longer space for new

houses. All this led many families to seek space outside the city to live and simultaneously be able to grow food for subsistence and as a source of family income. **Here, the recovery of land for cultivation happened primarily through occupations.**

About 100 families today make up the "Parajes Unidos" cooperative of Puerto Libertad. Through this cooperative, they organize the production of food, which they sell in different markets. Each family farm is two to three hectares, and they grow cassava, corn and green onion, and raise animals.

The land occupations took place in several stages. One occupation was in 2006, on "capuera" land (rainforest area that was opened up years ago for cultivation). Then, in 2015, land where there had been Arauco plantations were occupied after the company harvested the pine trees. In other cases, former chainsaw operators paid for "improvements" on farms (structures built on a piece of land, but not the land itself), which Arauco later claimed to be their land.

Since they are on occupied land, many peasants face conflicts with the multinational company or with landowners who grow pine trees for the company (due to a national law which limits foreign land ownership, Arauco cannot buy any more land in Misiones). Because of these conflicts, peasants are often harassed by local police.

### Returning Life to the Soil

Nora Duarte is one of the women who participated in several land recoveries; and she has the experience of cultivating land where there were plantations before. She explains that where there were pine plantations for more than 20 years, the land is dry and hard. "There, you can't grow vegetables. Onions, maybe, but not cassava." She says that one of the ways to restore the soil is by planting legumes. After three years of working the land, they are able to harvest about half of what they plant. In other fields, where there were pine plantations for only ten years, they can harvest a greater variety of crops.

Small-scale farmers emphasize **the great investment of money and time they have made to restore the fertility of the land.** While the soil is being restored to the point where it can produce enough for them to live, families have to do "*changas*" (informal jobs). Neighbors also help each other: they loan each other plots of cultivable land and they exchange food. In some cases, it takes them up to ten years to live solely from their own production.

They do not have support from the State either: "We don't have formal education, but we know what is right and what is wrong," says one of the peasants. **"Why does the government make it so easy for companies to buy machines, and we don't even have enough money to buy a machete?"** they wonder.

The farmers maintain that if they could take more land and transform it into gardens and farms, many families from nearby towns would join this life project.

*Emilio Spataro, Guardianes del Iberá (Argentina), [emiliospa@gmail.com](mailto:emiliospa@gmail.com)*

*Lizzie Díaz, WRM International Secretariat, [lizzie@wrm.org.uy](mailto:lizzie@wrm.org.uy)*

*Lucía Guadagno, WRM International Secretariat, [luciag@wrm.org.uy](mailto:luciag@wrm.org.uy)*

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compiled by Gabriela Merlinsky. - 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. - Autonomous City of Buenos Aires: Fundación CICCUS, 2016. p. 115. Available at: <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/se/20160920011305/Cartografias-del-conflicto-ambiental2.pdf>

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(3) Dirección Nacional de Desarrollo Foresto Industrial. “El Gobierno nacional lanzó la plataforma Forestar 2030” [https://www.agroindustria.gob.ar/sitio/areas/ss\\_desarrollo\\_foresto\\_industrial/?accion=noticia&id\\_info=180605122251](https://www.agroindustria.gob.ar/sitio/areas/ss_desarrollo_foresto_industrial/?accion=noticia&id_info=180605122251)

(4) Idem 1. p. 118.

(5) Grupo Guayubira. “Misiones, Argentina: pinos, pasteras y mentiras” <http://www.guayubira.org.uy/2009/10/3394/>

(6) Alvez, Sergio. “El 80% de la superficie del municipio Puerto Libertad le pertenece a una multinacional” <http://canalabierto.com.ar/2017/06/13/el-80-de-la-superficie-del-municipio-puerto-libertad-le-pertenece-a-una-multinacional/>

## The untold suffering of women living in and around Feronia’s industrial oil palm plantations in the DRC



DRC. Ph: Grain

This interview with Solange Bolembé from RIAO-RDC, an information and support network for community organisations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), highlights many challenges that women face who live in communities affected by vast oil palm plantations. The industrial plantations are managed by Feronia-PHC, a company financed by several European development banks. The interview is prefaced by an overview of the company's history in the plantation areas and the role of key investors that have ignored the many conflicts and abuses reported by villagers in the region.

### Feronia and the ‘development’ money

In 2008, the global food corporation Unilever sold “*Plantations et Huileries du Congo*” (PHC), a set of three industrial oil palm plantations covering more than 100,000 hectares of land in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to a little-known company called Feronia Inc. Feronia is listed on the Stock Exchange in Toronto, Canada, and had no experience in agriculture when it took over the oil palm concessions previously held by Unilever for almost 100 years.

The sale raised 14 million US dollars in cash for Unilever; in addition, the company left behind around 10 million US dollars in liabilities to the new owners. (1) Financially, Feronia has posted losses every year since it bought PHC. Yet, Feronia attracted development agencies' interest soon after the company acquired the licenses. Government-backed 'development' banks and investment funds from Britain, France and Spain provided loans that later turned into shares when Feronia could not repay them. This resulted in the UK's development corporation CDC owning more than 60 percent of Feronia in 2016; the percentage dropped to around 30 percent in 2017 when a new investor, registered in Mauritius, injected new cash into the company. The initial development agency funds of about 35 million US dollars rescued Feronia from collapse. By 2018, Feronia-PHC had received at least 118 million US dollars, including 49 million in loans approved by German, Belgian and Dutch development banks in 2015. They approved the loans despite NGO reports and statements from community leaders in all three plantation areas who had drawn their attention to the illegitimate and possibly illegal nature of the concession contracts as well as the appalling working conditions for labourers on the plantations and the many broken promises to communities affected by the plantation concessions.

Community leaders have pointed out on many occasions that the industrial oil palm plantations have resulted in 100 years of exploitation of their communities' ancestral land. All they got in exchange for losing access to their customary land are some bumpy, pothole-ridden roads, poorly maintained hospitals, dilapidated 'schools' and crumbling houses for plantation workers who were paid less than the legally required minimum wage even after the company received financing from European development banks. Today, the lowest wage category for employees is around 33 US dollars / month for those who are employed. Most workers on the plantations, however, are hired on short-term contracts with even lower remuneration. (2)

### **Colonial legacy that has repercussions until today**

In an interview with the WRM Bulletin in 2015, the director of RIAO-RDC, an information and support network for community organisations in the DRC, explains that the predecessor of Unilever, the Lever Company, was attracted to the land along the banks of the Congo river in the early 1900s because the river facilitated transporting palm oil towards the capital Kinshasa. "They began with small areas. They made so many false promises to our parents and grandparents. The villagers feared the whip, so they gave up land for plantations. The company also promised work and wages for the communities. The white people promised, for example, that for every three plantations, one would be given to the community; this promise was never fulfilled, neither in Boteka or Lokutu, nor in Yaligimba." (3)

In addition to broken promises, communities have on several occasions informed the development banks financing Feronia-PHC that in their view, the land title and concession documents held by Feronia are illegitimate, and possibly illegal. They point not only to the violent theft of their land during colonial times but also to a long list of procedural mistakes, omissions and dubious procedures such as the fragmenting of the original concessions into small plots of less than 200 hectares in recent years. Issuing such contracts for small areas of land requires a far less onerous procedure than for the issuance or renewal of the large concession areas that Feronia bought from Unilever. But even these hundreds of concession contracts for less than 200 hectares that date back to 2015 / 2016, seem to contain significant procedural mistakes.

Since November 2017, Feronia-PHC has been exerting pressure on community leaders to sign so-called social agreements (*cahiers des charges*) with the company. While these company-community agreements are not obligatory for agricultural concessions, the DRC government expects companies to negotiate them. Likewise, certification schemes, such as RSPO, – Feronia has been attempting to receive the RSPO certificate – require them as precondition to certification. At Lokutu, over 70 community leaders were called to travel to the provincial capital Kisangani, under police escort, by the Vice-governor of the province in November 2017 and put under pressure for 10 days to sign such social agreements put on the table by Feronia. Communities have long been demanding a fair negotiation of such social agreements, and even signed accords with the company in 2017 to move towards resolving their conflicts. However, Feronia has been ignoring these agreements concluded in August 2017, and is attempting to replace them with new agreements that commit the company to virtually nothing concrete. (4)

### **The silent suffering: women living in and around Feronia-PHC's plantations** **An interview with Solange Bolembé from RIAO-RDC**

**How does the presence of Feronia-PHC affect women living at Lokutu, Boteka and Yalingimba, the three locations where the company's industrial oil palm concession occupy more than 100,000 hectares of land?**

Life for women is very hard. At least, when the plantations were still owned by Unilever, there were schools and hospitals. After Unilever left, the company that took on the plantations did not maintain support for the schools and hospitals, which are accessible for free only for the few employees of the company. That has had a big impact on communities, and women in particular; the new company has brought poverty back to the villages. Most children do no longer go to school; malnutrition is very high; many children die before they reach the age of five because their families no longer have access to health centres; diarrhea is common in the villages because people have lost access to safe drinking water, children die of typhoid.

Women are also left without land to cultivate, and most cannot find work on the plantations. The few women who do work at the company, for example in the nursery, must fulfil extremely high quotas to receive their full pay. At the nurseries, women have to prepare 600 pots (*plantines*) a day; if they prepare less than that, their pay is reduced. 600 pots means putting sand into a small bag 600 times, placing a seed in 600 bags, and aligning 600 bags in neat rows.

And when it comes to being paid for their work, women working in the nurseries still often receive the equivalent of their wage of around 20 US dollars a month in bottles of company palm oil and soap. This system is still in place. (5)

### **How does it affect the daily lives of women in the villages?**

It's like living on alert all the time. The majority of women in rural areas across Africa live from family agriculture, from fishing, from collecting snails, caterpillars and mushrooms from the forests. But inside the concession, women are not allowed to carry out any of these activities anymore; even walking inside the plantations, or the vast areas of forests that the company also claims to be part of its concessions, has become very difficult for women. That makes life very complicated for women living inside the vast concession areas. It also cuts off their

access to medicinal plants, which is particularly serious because most families have no access to health centers or hospitals. Some medicinal plants have also disappeared when the forest was turned into plantations over the decades.

One time, the company handed out some peanut and maize seedlings in some of the villages. Women went to plant the seedlings in the forest that is not so far from some of the villages, but is inside the concession claimed by Feronia. (6) At harvest time, security guards demanded that the women not replant peanuts and maize again because these forests also belonged to the company, and cultivation was not authorized.

Worse for women is that the company prohibits anyone living inside the plantations from picking up even a few palm nuts for their own use. If women collect some of the palm nuts that have been left on the ground after harvesting, and a company security guards find them with these nuts, they risk being beaten and thrown into jail. (7) Even if someone brings in nuts from outside the concession area, the same thing happens: Company guards will claim that the palm nuts were stolen from the company plantations, and people find themselves beaten up and in jail. The only palm oil that villagers inside the plantations are allowed to use is the palm oil produced and sold by Feronia-PHC, even though traditional production of palm oil is what these families have lived off long before oil palm companies came and took their land.

**If women no longer have access to land to cultivate or forests to collect snails, mushrooms, medicinal plants and palm nuts, how do they feed their families?**

That is very difficult! At Lokutu, for example, women have to walk a long distance to find a place where they can fish. From Boteka as well as Lokutu, women travel to Mbandaka [a city along the Congo river, accessible by boat from both locations] to buy various items, from salt to soap, that they then sell for a slightly higher price in their villages or the market towns closer to where they live. From the little money they make that way, they then buy staple foods. Others buy food items at Mbandaka and sell them in the villages, because those living in villages inside the plantations have no access to land to grow their own food. Beans for example. Most of the beans consumed in the villages affected by the plantations come from as far away as Kinshasa! Village women forced to buy beans brought in from the city, imagine! Because local food production has been made impossible by the plantations.

**What would change the situation women live today for the better?**

Women are getting ready to reclaim their land, to cultivate as their grandmothers did before the company arrived and took away their land. They want to grow food again, they want to be able to fish again in the streams and rivers near their villages. They want to go back to producing palm oil themselves, like their grandmothers did. And not just palm oil. Oil palms provide many other products that women used to prepare. Producing palm oil is an ancient tradition for women in this part of the world. They want to be able to make a living where they live, not be forced to leave their villages to buy things outside and resell them in their villages because that is the only meagre income they can generate. They want to work in their villages, cultivate their fields and palm groves, collect their traditional food in the forest.

RIAO's role is to connect communities at the three locations, and also to support women so they are aware of their rights. Today, women in Boteka or Yalingimba have no possibility to find out what is happening at Lokutu and vice-versa. That makes solidarity among the

villages difficult. This must change so women can unite and speak with one voice. Setting up community radio and making women aware of their rights are crucial steps on the way to women reclaiming their communities' ancestral land and starting to cultivate their own food, producing their own palm oil again like their grandmothers did.

(1) RIAO-RDC, GRAIN et al. (2016): [Land conflicts and shady finances plague DR Congo palm oil company backed by development funds](#).

(2) Declarations Community leaders Kampala and Lokutu and Boteka December and January 2017/2018 <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/28045>

(3) The Feronia-PHC concessions are located at three locations, Boteka, Lokutu and Yalingimba. The oldest concession is at Boteka, in Équateur province, the largest at Lokutu, in Tshopo province and the smallest at Yalingimba, in Mongala

WRM Bulletin 218 (2015): ["We need justice to be made"](#)

(4) Statement from RIAO-RDC and community statements December 2017 and January 2018: Feronia et ses soutiens doivent arrêter de faire signer les cahiers de charge par la force et la violence. <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/28045>

(5) The company and the development Banks who finance Feronia-PHC have claimed that this practise going back to colonial times, called 'Marsavco package' [*colis Marsavco*], named after the Unilever company that produced soap and palm oil from the oil produced at the plantations, has been stopped and that villagers are now paid their wages in cash, and only those who choose to receive palm oil and soap instead of money can receive a portion of their wages in goods.

(6) Feronia-PHC uses only ca. 25,000 hectare of the over 100,000 hectares as oil palm plantation; over 70,000 hectares remain forested but villagers are not allowed to enter the forest area either.

(7) In 2015, seven children were left orphaned after police killed both of their parents at the Boteka plantation site for taking some oil palm fruits from the plantations to feed their children. A security guard overheard a conversation between husband and wife, where the husband mentioned that all he could bring home were these few palm nuts he gave her for cooking, as the company had imposed restrictions to workers against taking any palm nut, an essential ingredient in local cuisine. The company security guards strictly supervise these restrictions. When the security guard reported the villager to the police, he was arrested, beaten and tortured and died of the beating a day later in hospital. When his family demanded an investigation, police fired into the crowd, killing his wife and severely wounding several others. To date, no investigation into the killing of the pygmy couple has taken place. This is not an isolated case. People already denounced in 2013 the systematic control and confiscation of palm oil processing equipment by police officers on the road leading to one of the villages. The villagers living around the plantations said that they also own oil palm groves and produce traditional palm oil and products from the palm tree. In 2014, the arrest and torture of four people for allegedly stealing palm nuts triggered three days of clashes between the police and the residents of Lokutu town and the village of Yambi Enene.

<http://www.radiokapi.net/actualite/2014/10/06/reprise-des-activites-apres-des-accrochages-entre-policiers-populations-lokututu>

See also previous WRM Bulletin articles and NGO reports on how Feronia's industrial oil palm plantations cause conflict and are a violent threat to communities:

- WRM Bulletin 208 (2014): [DRC: handing lands for industrial oil palm plantations, REDD and foreign investors](#).

- WRM Bulletin 224 (2016): [Communities mobilise to free themselves from a hundred years of colonial oil palm plantations](#)

- WRM Bulletin 233 (2017): [FERONIA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Harassment, violence and oppression](#) .

- GRAIN and RIAO-RDC (2015): [Agro-colonialism in the Congo – European and US development finance is bankrolling a new round of colonialism in the DRC](#)



## Indonesia: The trail of destruction behind a sheet of paper



Indonesia. Ph: Walhi.

### Background

The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WahanaLingkunganHidup Indonesia, WALHI) has been opposing industrial plantations since the 1980s. One example is the case of the company PT IntiIndorayon in Porsea, Sumatra, which then changed names to PT Toba Pulp Lestari. WALHI criticized the company's development of industrial tree plantations which were well-funded and ostensibly supposed to help curb deforestation, but which actually brought disaster upon Indonesia's forests and their inhabitants—all because of an ambition to dominate the global paper market.

The impacts of monoculture plantations may be obscured by policy that classifies them as 'industrial plantation forests', or by newer terminology such as "Business Permit for the Use of Forest Products in a Plantation Forest" (IUPPHK-HT, acronyms in Bahasa). Such industrial plantations, however, cannot be called 'forests' because they are no different from monoculture plantations. The use of this terminology is meant to create the assumption that an industrial plantation is just like any other forest, but more productive. For WALHI, a plantation is not a forest, because it is created from a monoculture foundation where wood is the only commodity. A true forest, however, is not merely wood; but embraces all the biodiversity and respective roles each organism plays in it. An industrial plantation posing as a forest insults the meaning of a forest itself, which possesses an ecological unity vital for the survival of all living things.

### Destruction upstream, pollution downstream

In 2014, the people of Sungai CiujungSerang, in Banten, western Java, reported the pollution of the Ciujungriver to the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The pollution was created by PT Indah Kiat Pulp and Paper's pulp and paper mill (1) (PT IKPP). The company disposed waste products in the Ciujungriver, poisoning it from Kragilan District, near the provincial capital of Serang, down to the river's mouth on the north coast. 17 villages in five districts were believed to have been affected by the pollution. Local communities were

exposed to the consumption of contaminated water, and they saw fish and shrimp populations drop along hundreds of hectares of fishponds connected to the river. Despite these signs, the Serang Regency Government issued a license to dispose of liquid waste to PT IKPP, with an increasing quota. The initial permission to discharge 40,000m<sup>3</sup> of polluted water rose to 67,213m<sup>3</sup> per month, granted until the 15th of April 2017.

Companies such as PT IKPP highlight the trail of corporate destruction hidden behind a sheet of Indonesian paper—a trail which brings harm both upstream, in the forests, and downstream, in the centers of manufacturing. An investigation by WALHI Jambi, WALHI Riau and WALHI South Sumatra revealed that the wood used by PT IKPP for the production of paper came from their three respective provinces.

All along the supply chain in the creation of PTIKPP's paper products, in each of the aforementioned regions, industrial activity created a number of conflicts: agrarian conflicts, violence, criminalization, deforestation and forest fires, corruption, and pollution of the rivers. These events were caused by malpractice of the supplier of the raw materials, and the paper producer PT. IKPP itself—both of these companies fall under the Asia Pulp & Paper Group operating in Indonesia; APP in turn is part of the Sinar Mas group.

### **Land monopoly**

The exploitation of forests in Indonesia has a history stretching back to the Dutch colonial period. One of the ways that forests have been utilized since Indonesia's independence has been the development of plantations —. This industry aims at improving the quality and quantity of the supply of wood to the timber and pulp and paper industries, the saw mills and trade industries, and now as biomass for energy generation.

Plantations have become one of the main commercial sectors that controls vast tracts of land in Indonesia, making them a force in the monopolization of that land along with the oil palm industry, the logging industry and the mining industry. According to WALHI's research, until 2014 just four commercial sectors monopolized use on 57 million hectares of a total of 132 million hectares of forested land. Logging concessions made up 25 million hectares; oil palm concessions made up 12.35 million hectares; and mining concessions made up 3.2 million hectares of forested areas. Plantations in 2001 controlled 5,04 million hectares of land, before rising to 5,73 million hectares in 2005, and finally to 10,89million hectares in 2017. The largest share of this land was controlled by APP-Sinar Mas Group and Asia Pacific Resources International, APRIL.

The bitter irony is that the increase in corporate control of land covered by these plantations does not correlate with an increase of PerhutananSosial (social forestry) programs or Tanah ObyekReformaAgraria (land for agrarian reform, TORA), which in 2017 covered 1,3 million hectares. Land allocation to these programs fell far short of the policy targets of 12,7 million hectares for PerhutananSosial and 9 million hectares for TORA.

The business monopoly of the plantations industry along the supply chain from the plantations to the product is supported by the global supply chains for pulp and paper and lavish state subsidies. The government even encourages companies to switch to plantation forestry by offering 0% interest on loans. And so the tycoons come in droves to loot natural forests and protected areas.

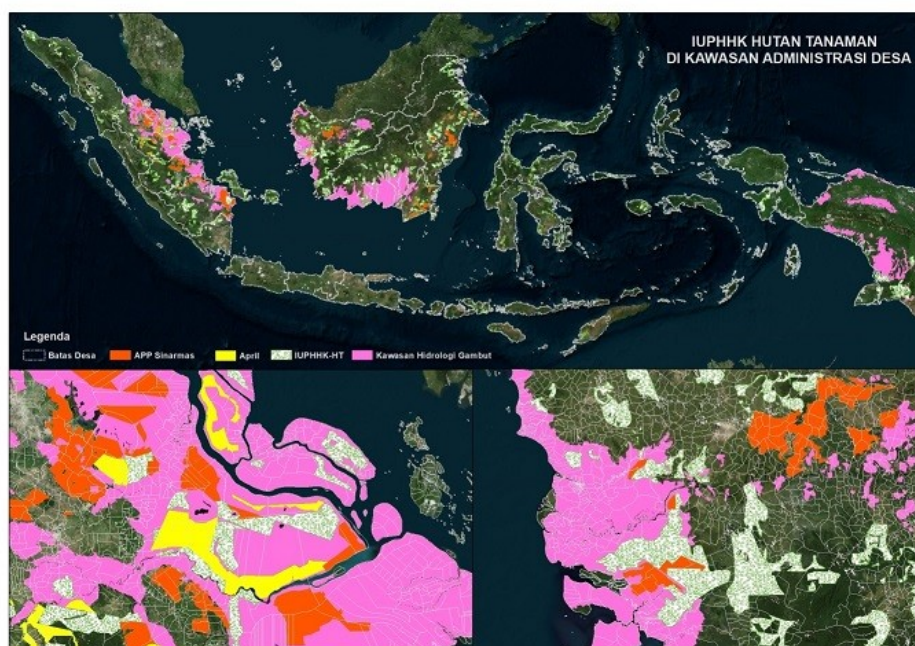
Table: Banks and investors that funded APP-Sinar Mas between 2010 and 2017

China	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia
Bank of China	Bank Bukopin	IDB Group
China Development Bank	Bank Central Asia	South Korea
China Eximbank	Bank DKI	Hana Financial
Industrial and Commercial Bank of China	Bank Ganesha	Switzerland
Finland	Bank Mandiri	ICB Banking Group
JOM Rahastoyhtiö	Bank Negara Indonesia	United Kingdom
Germany	Bank Pan Indonesia	Old Mutual
Allianz	Bank Rakyat Indonesia	United States
Liechtenstein	Ciptadana Capital	Dimensional Fund Advisors
LGT	CT Corpora	Eaton Vance
Malaysia	Government of Indonesia	Fidelity Investments
CIMB Group	Indonesia Eximbank	Lord, Abbett & Co
Malayan Banking	MNC Investama	Thoma Bravo
Netherlands	Victoria Investama	
APG Group		

### Tenure Conflict and Natural Resources

The existence of plantations cannot be separated from conflict. From spacial analyses, research shows that 4,175 villages are in land conflict with companies that received a plantation concession license. Concessions owned by APP–Sinar Mas Group intersect with 668 villages, and concessions owned by APRIL intersect with 114 villages. These facts serve to show that tenure conflict is inevitable, because plantation concessions overlap with settlements and areas in the hand of the public. Conflicts largely flare up because of a lack of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC).

Picture: Plantation concession boundaries overlapping and village boundaries





## Forest Fires and the Ruin of Peat Swamp Forest

The more concessions are granted to set up monoculture tree plantations, the more that peat swamp forests come under threat. Government regulation 52/2016 concerning the protection and management of peatlands forbids activity leading to the destruction of peatland hydrology. Regardless, many plantation corporations are continuing to dry out peat swamps. The destruction of the peat swamp ecosystem eventually causes and increases the risk of forest fires.

Based on reports from the Gerakan Nasional Penyelamatan Sumber Daya Alam (national movement to save natural resources, GNPSDA), the Corruption Eradication Commission and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, in 2015, the 41 plantation forestry companies present in West Kalimantan together controlled an area of 1,9 million hectares, of which more than 300,000 hectares were in peat swamp forest. A similar situation was found in Riau: from a total of 1,147,331 ha of timber plantations concessions in peatland, 803,708 ha owned by companies affiliated with APP were in peat swamp forest. In August 2018, Kalimantan again fell victim to massive forest fires (2,423 hotspots were recorded between the 1st of January and the 25th of August 2018). The city of Pontianak, the provincial capital of West Kalimantan, even had to close schools due to thick smog.

Title: Fire hotspots in Kalimantan

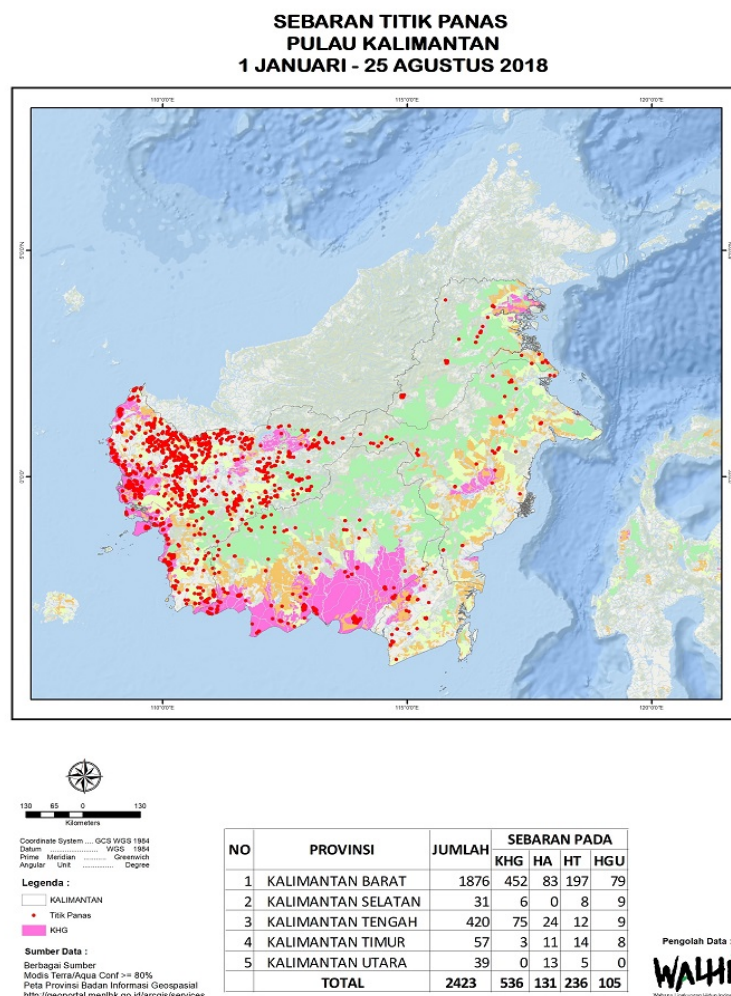


Table: Fire hotspots in plantation concessions

HOTSPOTS IN IUPHHK – HT CONCESSIONS (tree plantation concessions)				
YEAR	Total for hotspot in INDONESIA	Hotspot in tree plantation concessions pulp and paper	Hotspot in APP–SINARMAS concessions	Hotspot in APRIL concessions
2010	4,548	696	179	245
2011	15,905	2,663	825	420
2012	18,443	3,560	1,059	412
2013	15,888	3,211	691	1,101
2014	36,153	8,590	4,578	1,611
2015	57,696	14,704	9,400	1,611
2016	5,103	814	158	206
2017	2206	215	33	9

This map and table show how many fires were in the concessions of these companies. Of all the plantations companies, their plantations had almost half the fires.

After the massive fires of 2015, the government established a number of policies to protect peat swamps; however, these policies were accompanied by contradictory policies (3), which actually facilitated the transfer of land to tree plantation companies as a means of replacing land under their control which had been burned.

The policy to grant replacement areas of land to companies that break the law is a blatant attempt at whitewashing by the government. Rather than offering landswaps to a company, the company should be held responsible for allowing fires to rage in their existing concessions. The policy of landswapping gifts provides impunity to corporate crime.





## The Destruction of Karst land

The destruction of natural areas does not only occur in regions producing wood products, but also happens in other essential ecosystems, such as karst ecosystems. The results of research by WALHI Sumatera Barat in 2017 showed that the lime powder used in the paper industry comes from companies that mine in karst areas. For example: PT. Bakapindo, which operates in Bukit KatuahPutiah, in the Agam Sumatera Barat Regency. Records show that every month, 7,000 tons of lime powder are supplied to PT. IKPP and 8,000 tons are supplied to RAPP, an APRIL subsidiary. This activity destroys the karst ecosystem, which possesses ecological, social, cultural and economic significance for the local population. The mining of karst also contributes to air pollution, and increases the risk of natural disasters.

## Conclusion

The chaotic management of natural resources, especially in the forestry sector, has given birth to issues including but not limited to deforestation, forest fires and tenure conflicts. The need for a moratorium based on measured indicators again becomes hugely important. Such a moratorium should pause the granting of permits for at least 25 years, not least to provide time for licensing reviews to be carried out, punitive measures taken against corporate crime, public land be returned and protected, and ecosystems ruined by land-based industries such as industrial plantation companies may be given time to recover.

This report is based on a WALHI Briefing Paper  
“SelembarkertasdanJejakKejatahanKorporasi” — July 2018.

*Wahyu A. Perdana*  
*Campaigner for Food, Water and Essential Ecosystems*  
*National WALHI office*

- (1) PT. IKPP is a subsidiary of Asian Pulp & Paper Group, or APP, which itself is a subsidiary of Sinar Mas Group
- (2) Information obtained from Basis Data GeospasialKehutanan 2011 - 2016.
- (3) Such as policy No. P. 40/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM. 1/6/2017.

## RECOMMENDED

### **At What Cost? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environmental defenders in 2017**

“The world is deadlier than ever for land and environmental defenders, with agribusiness the industry most linked to killings,” according to the last Global Witness research. The report shows that agribusiness including coffee, palm oil and banana plantations are most associated with these attacks.

Read the complete report at: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en-gb/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost/>

### **The false promise of certification**

This report from Changing Markets Foundation is focused on the environmental impacts of certification schemes and voluntary initiatives in the fisheries, palm oil and the textiles industry. It affirms that “as sustainability goes mainstream, more and more companies are keen to show off their credentials by adopting different types of certification, labels and ethical commitments” and that “in each of the three sectors investigated in this report, there is a clear environmental crisis that cannot be resolved by voluntary initiatives alone – even if these were made to be more robust.”

Read the complete report here: [http://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/False-promise\\_full-report-ENG.pdf](http://changingmarkets.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/False-promise_full-report-ENG.pdf)

### **The Expansion of Tree Plantations on Peasant Territories in the Nacala Corridor: Green Resources in Mozambique**

This web report shows the complex dynamics involved in land use and how a consultation over a plantation company's access to land was interpreted totally differently by the two sides. The web report also documents how local officials and community leaders attempting to promote what they see as “development” but which has negatively affected local people.

Access the web report “Land of plenty, but of only a few” here:

<http://terradealguns.divergente.pt/en/>

Read the full report (in Portuguese) here:

<http://terradealguns.divergente.pt/dist/assets/docs/jogo-de-forcas/relatorioplantacoes.pdf>

### **“Red our land” (Roja tierra nuestra), the story of an agrarian triumph**

The documentary recounts the recovery of land the cooperative of Independent Producers of Piray (PIP) in Misiones, Argentina, reclaimed from the multinational plantation company Arauco. After 14 years of struggle, the cooperative demonstrates that another production model is possible. Organic family farming produces food where some years ago, large-scale pines and eucalyptus plantations degraded land and jeopardized local livelihoods.

Watch the video (only available in Spanish) here:

<http://canalabierto.com.ar/2018/06/22/estreno-online-roja-tierra-nuestra-la-historia-de-un-triunfo-agrario/>

### **Speaking truth to power. The village women taking on the palm oil giant**

The Société Financière des Caoutchouc (Socfin) group is one of the world's biggest plantation companies. In Cameroon, a bitter land rights struggle has unfolded between villagers and Socfin's local subsidiary Socapalm, which owns six palm oil concessions in the country. In this Fern report and photo story women give testimony on the impacts that the

Socapalm plantations have over their territories and lives, how the company has expanded its plantations onto community land, polluted the environment, and prevented villagers from processing their own palm oil.

Access the photo story here: <https://fern.org/takingonthepalmoilgiant>

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Editor-in-Chief: Winfridus Overbeek

Managing Editor: Joanna Cabello

Editorial Assistants: Elizabeth Díaz, Lucía Guadagno, Jutta Kill, Carolina Motoki y Teresa Pérez

**WRM International Secretariat**

Avenida General María Paz 1615 office 3. CP 11400. Montevideo, Uruguay

Phone/Fax: +598 26056943

[wrm@wrm.org.uy](mailto:wrm@wrm.org.uy) | <http://www.wrm.org.uy>