

Forests under threat in carbon offsets scandal

Campaigners fear a new surge of forest destruction as a result of both the reactionary Copenhagen Accord and a new European Union bio-fuels directive.

It seems that EU member states will be forced to accept palm oil grown in plantations planted on cleared forest - whether they like it or not.

The EU is committed to a target of 10% of all road transport fuel being based on renewable energy by 2020, and a new **directive** claims that palm oil plantations can be classified as forest, and meet so-called "sustainable standards".

According to **Rainforest Rescue**, razing rainforest to plant oil palm would not count as a change in land use under the new directive, which also says that "member states may not set additional criteria of their own. They may not exclude biofuels/bioliquids on sustainability grounds where these meet the sustainability criteria laid down in the Directive".

This is entirely in line with the Copenhagen Accord, the wrecking agreement forced through by powerful nations at last year's climate conference.

Without a successor to Kyoto the controls on carbon off-setting (weak as they were) will become non-existent. It will lead to large-scale destruction of eco-systems and unprecedented land grabs, as spurious projects are classified as carbon offsets. There will even be carbon credits for tree and crop monocultures and GM soya, planted on cleared rainforest.

Stella Semino from Grupo de Reflexion Rural (Argentina) states:

If these new proposals are agreed upon we will see a massive boost for crop and tree plantations alike which, in the name of 'climate change mitigation', will speed up the destruction of forests and other vital ecosystems, the spread of industrial agriculture, and land grabbing against small-farmers, indigenous peoples and forest communities. Industrial monocultures are already a major cause of climate change and their expansion will make it worse.

The problem is even bigger than palm oil - the whole concept of bio-fuels replacing oil is flawed because of the nature of the capitalist system and the system of private land ownership. An example is the development of new oil plants that will grow on so-called "marginal land".

The Jatropha plant is being grown by Kijani Energy of Canada in Mozambique on land classified as marginal. This very experimental process, with an incredibly toxic plant which can harm farmers as they harvest and crush it, is already being claimed as a bio-fuel breakthrough.

It is reported that Kijani has now purchased 200,000 acres of land in the Thar province of Pakistan for Jatropha cultivation. Local people say that far from being unused land, this area belongs to them, and their centuries old livestock grazing rights are being violated.

In our **Manifesto** of Revolutionary Solutions we reject the idea of mitigation and adaptation to climate change, within the existing capitalist economic structures. It is damaging the poorest and most powerless in society, not protecting them from the effects of climate change - and it is doing it without making any significant reductions in emissions. An alternative system of energy production and land ownership is urgently needed.

Penny Cole
Environment editor
11 February 2010

Your Say

Ruth says:

Tweets by @aworldtowin

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Your say

Dear Penny, you have inspired the following Eco Pax Mundi Kernel, "Sustainability as (Neo)liberalism's Trojan Horse in Ecocidal Times"

The initial sustainable development was liberalism's response to the ecocidal mode of being which its own practices had put in place. Most of the modern ecological movement was redefined under this as much overarching as imprecise banner. 1 As the initial fervour of Our Common Future is being appeased, 2 we are left with the shambles of this process of co-option. We have been partially mutilated when it comes to guiding visions. In the meantime, the sustainability motto is making inroads into the international political and ecological agendas alike. Sustainability is, to be sure, greenwashing liberalism's classical agenda -viz. private property and free trade. [Keep reading](#)

Many thanks

Comments now closed

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