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متوفر أيضاً بـ English

Campaigners oppose industrial palm oil plantation

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Campaigners opposed to a large

palm oil plantation in a rainforest covering part of the Korup National Park in southwestern Cameroon say up to 45,000 people risk losing their livelihoods if the .project proceeds

الاكثر قراءة



The plantation will economically displace" approximately 25,000 people and put at risk many others who depend on that land for small-scale food production, hunting, and non-timber forest products. Thus, the net impact on employment will actually be negative. This is not a fair deal," Nasako Besingi, one of the campaigners against the plantation, told .IRIN

The project in Mundemba Region is overseen by SG Sustainable Oils Cameroon (SGSOC), a subsidiary of Herakles Farms, a US-based agricultural .company

In 2009 SGSOC signed an agreement with the Cameroonian government to

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The New Humanitarian | Campaigners oppose industrial palm oil plantation and socioeconomic gains from preserving the rainforest outweigh the promised

.benefits from the plantation

Local smallholders grow millet, cocoa, cassava, oil palm, beans, rice and fruit, which they supplement with fishing and hunting. They also collect wild foods, medicinal plants and wood for fuel in the area, which is inhabited by between 14,000 (according to SGSOC) and 45,000 .(people (according to campaigners)

If you look at the working conditions in" other agro-industrial plantations, they are truly deplorable. Most employees make US\$34-70 per month, which is not a living .wage in today's economy," Besingi added

Our people used to live in harmony with"
animals in this forest but recent forest
exploitation, aggravated by SGSOCs
bulldozing of forest areas", has upset the
sensitive human-animal eco-balance,
Besingi said, leading to a number of
recent cases of elephants attacking
.farmers

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It is curious that the company is" continuing its operations even though

there is considerable evidence of illegality and that those who draw attention to the systematic violation of the law are threatened by the authorities," said Samuel Nguiffo, a lawyer and director of Cameroon's Centre for .Environment and Development

The company had been clearing forest and developing oil palm nurseries prior to submitting an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) or obtaining the Certificate of Environmental .Conformity as required by law

Not only do they not want to comply with" existing law, but the company has clearly turned its back on sustainable practices,"

.he added

When an ESIA was eventually carried out in 2012, it was discovered that SGSOC had destroyed 14.5 million trees of various species; the company was asked to pay damages and interest amounting to 24,506,000 CFA francs (US\$48,519),

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bring [together] all the sector ministries -Agriculture, Forest, Land Tenure and

Environment - in order to man out

".protected, farming, and plantation areas

Local opinion divided

اكتشف المزيد

Olenge Patrick, a food trader in Ndian, a village in the area, told IRIN the region needed roads not palm plantations. "No one truly cares about the interest of the villagers. Why can't this company cultivate on other fertile non-forest land in



غرب إفريقيا: مخاوف من الفيضانات بعد الجفاف

.Cameroon," he wondered

Opinion, however, is divided: "I think this might be an opportunity for people of Fabe village. This company is new and unlike PAMOL [Cameroonian state-run palm oil company] they could give better pay packages to workers," farmer Sone Samuel told IRIN, explaining that his .cousin had a job on the project

We are already employing more than" 500 people and we have committed to

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> While we are still in the early stages of" making an impact, we are already seeing villages once skeptical of us beginning to

change their views, particularly after seeing the benefits of our work. However, if a village doesn't want to participate in the project, we will respect their decision," .Wrobel added

Brendan Schwartz, programme coordinator of Réseau de Lutte contre la Faim (RELUFA) in Cameroon, told IRIN: "We are concerned about the new wave of investments in land due to its negative impacts on local food production and rural communities' access to land. Communities and individuals have very precarious land rights which leave them vulnerable to economic displacement when large-scale land investments take ".place

Major protests erupted against Herakles after it withdrew from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), a body that assures formal compliance with a set of .eco-friendly industry guidelines

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?Rights violations

An investigation in June 2012 by environment watchdogs the Oakland

Institute and Greenpeace noted aspects of human rights violations practised by the company, describing the agreement with the Cameroon government as the equivalent of being given "what amounts to police powers". It suggested SGCOC had an intimidating presence among the .local population

Following local protests, SGSOC was" given police protection and they have a threatening influence in this region,"

.Besingi told IRIN

On 14 November Besingi and three other campaigners were arrested and detained .without charge in Ndian

It was only following international and"
local pressure that we were released however, on condition that we present
ourselves before the authorities when
called, and if we can't show up the
community members who negotiated our

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and securing access to other natural resources on which they depend, multinational companies can fly into Yaoundé and sign deals to secure huge

The New Humanitarian | Campaigners oppose industrial palm oil plantation tracts of fatic with fittle regard for the

communities in these areas. This is a fight for the livelihoods of rural peoples in ".Cameroon and across Africa

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