

## Three US Multinationals Ares Eating the Amazon, Says Greenpeace

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Expanding soybean cultivation is one of the main causes of deforestation in the Amazon and poses the most serious threat to the region's future.

This conclusion may be found in the report, "Eating the Amazon," prepared by Greenpeace International, a non-governmental organization headquartered in the Netherlands.

According to the study, approximately 1.1 million hectares of forest were converted into soybean plantations in the agricultural year 2004.

According to the environmental action group, "the villains of the Brazilian soybean industry are three US multinationals that operate in the agribusiness sector: Cargill, Bunge, and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM).

The study associates these companies with deforestation, illegal land occupation, and slave-like labor in the Amazon.

"This expansion involves a price, not only for the forest, but for the indigenous populations and traditional communities that are expelled from their lands to make room for soybeans, as well as for millions of people who are tricked and forced to work in cutting down the forest," the report emphasizes.

According to the document, these companies "act as a magnet attracting new producers to the Amazon." Besides being major buyers, the three companies together are responsible for financing at least 60% of the country's total soybean crop.

The multinationals provide a range of materials, from seeds and fertilizers to the infrastructure needed for the storage and transportation of soybeans.

In the case of Cargill, for example, the report shows that, to facilitate getting the product to market, the company built a port costing US\$ 20 million in the city of Santarém, Pará.

The environmental action group points out that the project was executed without the environment impact studies required by the Brazilian Constitution, and, for this reason, it was questioned in court by the Federal Public Defense Ministry in Santarém.

"The companies do not limit their actions to propelling the expansion of soybean plantations, which makes the soybeans produced in the Amazon extremely cheap for European consumers and expensive for all the rest," the text states.

The study also emphasizes that in recent years the Brazilian government has adopted significant measures to combat deforestation in the Amazon and illegal lumbering. But it warns that, at the same time, the advance of soybeans cropped up as a "powerful forest destruction menace."

The report is the result of an undercover investigation conducted over the course of two years in the regions where soybeans are produced and consumed.

Satellite images were analyzed, field research was done, airplane observation flights were used, interviews were held with the affected communities, industry representatives, and politicians, and ships bound for the international market were monitored.

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