

## Brazil Social Movements Want Planting of Eucalyptus Suspended

Contributed by Newsroom  
Monday, 12 November 2007

Brazilian organizations have requested that the planting of eucalyptus in the south region of the state of Bahia be suspended arguing that the practice is responsible for environmental crimes in that Brazilian northeastern state.

Between November 7 and 8, the Government of the state of Bahia, companies and social movements attended a seminar where the impacts of eucalyptus plantations in the south region and extreme south areas of the state were discussed.

After hearing reports on environmental crimes, the social organizations requested the suspension of the planting of eucalyptus until an economic-environmental zoning of the region is completed.

Held in Porto Seguro, the event was organized by the state government. The seminar is a result of claims made by movements that for many years have been reporting abuses of companies that produce cellulose in the region (the Aracruz, Suzano and Veracel companies).

About 300 people attended it - most of them representatives from unions, rural settlements and camps, indigenous peoples, descendants of runaway slaves, and members of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the Landless Movement, Cepedes (Research and Development Center of the Extreme South of the state of Bahia), Cimi (Indianist Missionary Council) and other organizations.

In the beginning of the event, technical experts from the Environment Secretariat presented data confirming that the companies had been committing irregularities. For example, the companies mention environmental reserves in their documents that do not exist in fact.

The representative of the Federal Prosecutor's Office, Sérgio Mendes, confirmed the reports and said that the MPF (Federal Prosecutor's Office) is already taking measures to prevent these environmental crimes.

The eucalyptus plantations were also criticized by the representative of the region's municipalities. The environment secretary of the municipality of Itapebi stressed that the Veracel company built a factory where there was a village. "The companies arrive there making job promises but never make them good," he recalled.

Father José Koopmans, who has been researching problems caused by eucalyptus plantation in the region for 20 years, stressed other impacts caused by this monoculture, such as the displacement of traditional communities (indigenous, descendants of runaway slaves, etc.), disappearance of street fairs, drying up of rivers, and diseases caused by pesticides.

In an emotional tone, he demanded a position from the government, which should take the claims of indigenous peoples seriously.

In addition to requesting the suspension of eucalyptus planting activities, the 35 social organizations which attended the seminar submitted several claims to the government, such as claims for the demarcation of indigenous lands and of lands of descendants of runaway slaves in the region, land reform, and support to family agriculture.

Cimi