

What was not made public in the Aracruz case

March 8, 2006

Near dawn on March 8, 2006, more than 1500 women farmers enter the tree nursery of the Aracruz Cellulose Company in Barra do Ribeiro, near Porto Alegre.

The news spreads throughout the world. The women – young people, mothers, and

grandmothers – were painted as destructive rioters, vandals...many people criminalized the act of courage and failed to ask “But after all, what would cause the women to leave their houses before dawn on International Women’s Day and perform such a courageous act?”

The women farmers and the media...

For many years now, the women farmers have been working to call attention to the lack of respect for nature in the name of money and profit. They have been working for a long time in defense of life, nature, and the survival of the planet.

But the TV, radio, and newspapers never publish the accusations made by these women about the true environmental, social, and economic massacres carried out by the large corporations such as Aracruz; about the billions that go out of the public coffers directly to these large corporations, while small farmers receive nothing; about the existence of slave labor, invasions of the land of indigenous people, of Afro-descendants and of small producers at the cost of much violence and deaths.

This is not news because Aracruz, like many others who are responsible for all this violence, finances the media, thus guaranteeing that the interests of the corporations and the elite will be defended.

Which future do you prefer?

Small farming
5 jobs for every 1 hectare
2810 properties with 20 hectares
100% of production destined for the tables of Brazilian workers

Biodiversity

Green Desert

Aracruz Cellulose
One job for every 185 hectares
One company with 56,200 hectares
97% of production in 2004 going to export

“On International Women’s Day, the women farmers clothed themselves in this same prophetic spirit and used symbolic force against the structural violence of a corporation that thinks it can, with impunity, buy the lives of people and transform the land into a commodity”.

Marcelo Barros, benedictine monk

Why the women were so courageous

These women performed this courageous act because something is wrong. The act was a protest, an outcry so that society could comprehend something that it is not seeing, but which is destroying our rivers and our animals, the diversity of nature, and even our lives.

So on March 8, when more than 1500 women entered the tree nursery in Barra do Ribeiro, they were thinking of the future of the planet and they were denouncing the true criminals of monoculture and of the agribusiness of reforestation so that they could be punished. It was an appeal in defense of life.

The public money that did not go to the public

To build its factory in Espirito Santo, Aracruz received \$337 million from the National Bank of Economic Development (BNDES), which is also a shareholder in the corporation. It was the largest investment that a private corporation had ever received in Brazil. Aracruz is going to receive \$297 million from the BNDES for investment in 2006, including for the modernization of its industrial unit located in Guaíba in Rio Grande do Sul.

In the last three years, Aracruz Cellulose received almost \$2 billion from the Brazilian government. The length of the loan of these credits from BNDES is for 21 months; only at that point will the amortization of the loan begin, with a term of 84 months. All this at 2% per year, while the interest rates used in the National Program for Family Farming (PRONAF) go up to 8.75% per year!

Besides this, the federal, state and municipal governments guarantee the necessary infrastructure for the construction of the factories and of the plantations, such as roads, sewers, energy, exemption from taxes, etc. – all this with public funds.

Comparison between small farms and cellulose companies

	Cellulose companies	Small farms
Jobs per hectare	1 for every 185 hectares	5 for every 1 hectare
Public investment	337 million for one company	9 billion for 2 million contracts (2005)
Production destination	97% of 2004 production for export to Europe and China	100% of production for the tables of Brazilian workers, meaning 75% of the food for Brazilians
Land concentration in Rio Grande do Sul	1 company with 56.2 million hectares	2,810 properties with 20 hectares

Aracruz Cellulose and other companies of the green desert...

Aracruz Cellulose S/A is a multinational controlled by four majority shareholders with the right to vote: the Lorentzen Group from Norway (28%), Safra International Bank (28%), Votorantim (28%) and BNDES (12.5%).

Together with Stora Enso, a Swedish-Finnish corporation that produces paper and cellulose, they are owners of Veracel Cellulose, a large corporation in the South of Bahia.

Aracruz owns 252 thousand hectares of eucalyptus plantations in the states of Minas Gerais, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, and Espirito Santo, in

addition to 71 thousand hectares of eucalyptus trees planted and managed by farmers.

According to the data from December 30, 2004, Aracruz owns 56.2 thousand hectares of land, of which 42 thousand are planted with eucalyptus and another 400 hectares in partnership with farmers.



The biggest corporations of the green desert in Rio Grande do Sul are: **Voroantim Cellulose and Paper and Stora Enso** (which are actually just one corporation).

• “No one dared question the responsibility of Aracruz for those seedlings and the legality of their planting. Did the women farmers prevent, as formerly in other parts of the world, the unmitigated and environmental crime?”

• Sebastião Pinheiro

The destruction of nature...

The chain of production for cellulose is perhaps the most environmentally destructive; from the growing of eucalyptus to the production of paper, the extermination of nature can be easily seen. These are facts that are not published in the press but which are alarming.

Water

In the Valley of Jequitinhonha, in Minas Gerais, it is estimated that more than 270 streams have dried up in the last few decades after the construction of the Aracruz factory and the planting of eucalyptus.

It is said that the planting of eucalyptus causes artesian wells up to 30 meters deep to dry up. Three hundred and fifty liters of water are needed to produce a kilo of wood. This means that a large eucalyptus plantation needs a quantity of water that is greater than what exists under the soil, and the rain precipitation of one year is 20% less than the water consumed by a large-scale plantation.

When its production was 450,000 tons, Aracruz dumped six tons of a highly polluting chemical additive on a daily basis into the largest fishing basin of the Atlantic Ocean in the South of Bahia. Today its production is almost three million tons, almost six times greater.

Besides this, the company is buying up lands on which the Guarani Aquifer is located in the south of Brazil, the largest sweet water reserve in the world. In the future, when the problem of water is greater, it will also dominate this natural resource which belongs to the people.

In the great expanses of eucalyptus production, artesian wells are dug for irrigation, which uses up the underground water table and makes the situation of drought and desertification even more dramatic.

Soil, plants, and animals

Eucalyptus causes degradation of the soil, and in addition plants cannot grow in the areas where eucalyptus is planted, so some plant varieties become extinct. Many animals cannot find food or a place to live and end up dying without being able to reproduce.

A lot of land for very few jobs

In Brazil, Aracruz created one direct job for every 185 hectares of land. Just in the cutting of eucalyptus, a cutting machine does the work of 14 electric saws.

This means that the cellulose industry requires mechanized technology and not manual labor, so few jobs are created.

The violent actions of Aracruz

The report about how Aracruz acted to occupy an indigenous area of 18 thousand hectares in Espiritu Santo is shocking. The case went to the Permanent Court of the Peoples, in Vienna, but was not covered in the Brazilian press. With the help of the Federal Police, they violently invaded indigenous lands of the Tupi-Guaranis, burning homes and spreading terror in the village.

In 1994, a technical group from FUNAI identified 13,579 hectares of land as being indigenous lands that ARCEL,



the same as Aracruz, bought from claim-jumpers and registered. In the municipality of Conceição da Barra, 68% of the area of the municipality belongs to ARCEL.

Aracruz Cellulose occupies the largest part of the Afro-descendants' territory of Linarinho, in Conceição da Barra. Forty one families remain from the original quilombo settlement and they continue to resist the occupation of their lands by Aracruz and others.

Who are the criminals?

The women farmers, who in one courageous act, wanted to bring to light a crime, or the cellulose companies that pollute, kill off nature, make use of slave labor and use public money?

• **“It was a response to what the company did in January in Espirito Santo. To enlarge its plantation, it invaded indigenous lands, arrested the people and drove tractors over their houses.”**

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• Leonardo Boff - theologian

The project that we want

By their action on March 8, the women farmers went right to the heart of capitalism, which exploits workers and transforms the countryside into a place for intensive production and exterminating the culture of communities.

The same women who throughout the history of humankind have preserved seeds and



biodiversity did not accept oppression and acted against those who are killing our planet. They reaffirmed the

struggle of workers against capitalism, represented by the big corporations such as Aracruz.

These women also reaffirmed a project for agriculture and for society that is different than the current one.

Some principles for a Project of Family Farming:

- 1 Respect and care for nature.
- 2 Workers' and peasants' control of the means of production.
- 3 Agrarian reform, an end to the latifúndio and production that guarantees the principles of agro-ecology.
- 4 Valuing and recognizing women and their work and the human being as an integral being.
- 5 Food sovereignty with autonomy for deciding on production.
- 6 Recovery, preservation, and multiplication of native or traditional seeds.
- 7 For water, land, and seeds to be the patrimony of the people, in service to humanity.
- 8 Effective participation of women in all the spaces for decision making about production, patrimony, political and community relations.
- 9 Public policies focused on the countryside.
- 10 Creation and valuing of the income that is generated by small farms.
- 11 Public investment in science, technology, and research for small farms.
- 12 Valuing and defense of the traditional populations and their styles of life and production (Afro-descendants, indigenous people, people who live along rivers, etc).
- 13 Recovery of solidarity relationships.

“Sovereignty yes, green desert no”