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Forest Cover

a Global Forest Coalition newsletter on international forest policy

In this issue:

Wood-Based Bioenergy Special Edition

Sustainability Standards for Biomass?

Bukaleba Forest Reserve: Bioenergy Impacts

Pillaging Paraguay: Photo Essay

Contents

About Global Forest Coalition

The Global Forest Coalition (GFC) is an international coalition of 67 NGOs and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations from 47 countries defending social justice and the rights of forest peoples in forest policies. GFC organizes joint advocacy campaigns on the need to respect the rights, role and needs of Indigenous Peoples, women and local communities in forest conservation and the need to address the underlying causes of forest loss. It's staff and collaborators work from, amongst others, Paraguay, the Netherlands, Colombia, Thailand and the UK. ***www.globalforestcoalition.org, @gfc123***

About Biofuelwatch

Biofuelwatch is a not-for-profit grassroots organisation that raises awareness of the negative impacts of industrial-scale bioenergy. Amongst other areas, Biofuelwatch currently campaigns on the climate, environmental, human rights and public health impacts on large, industrial-scale biomass electricity, and has a small team of staff and volunteers based in the UK and US.
www.biofuelwatch.org.uk, @biofuelwatch

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About Forest Cover

Welcome to the forty-seventh issue of Forest Cover, newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC). This is a special issue on Bioenergy co-published with Biofuelwatch. Forest Cover is published four times a year. It features reports on important inter-governmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its donors or the editors. For free subscriptions, please contact: *gfc@globalforestcoalition.org*

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3 **Foreword**

4 **Editorial - Ex silvis: Bioenergy and Forests**

7 **Could genuinely meaningful EU biomass sustainability standards be introduced and enforced in the face of EU support for trade liberalisation?**

10 **New Photoessay and Analysis: The Pillaging of Paraguay**

14 **Wood-based bioenergy in Uganda: the Bukaleba forest reserve**

16 **Summary report of the International Strategy Meeting on Wood-based Bioenergy**

18 **Upcoming Events**

19 **Recent Publications**

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Dear Forest Cover readers:

Welcome to a brand new edition of Forest Cover, the Global Forest Coalition newsletter that provides a space for Southern and Northern environmental justice activists to present their views on international forest-related policies.

The new face of Forest Cover is symbolic of the changes GFC is undergoing at the moment. Last November we organised a series of inspiring strategy meetings and trainings in my hometown, Asunción, on key drivers of forest loss like bioenergy and unsustainable livestock production, and the resilience of community conservation initiatives in the face of these drivers.

We also welcomed three new Board members, Hindou Oumarou from Chad, Alejandro Diego Cardona from Colombia, and Rachel Smolker from the US. In addition we are joined by several new staff members. Mrinalini Rai has joined us as our Indigenous and gender advisor, Astrid Kleefstra as our administrative assistant, Janet Bastian as our new accounting officer, and Mary Lou Malig as our new campaigns communications coordinator and research associate. Mary Lou has been responsible for the coordination of the production of this new issue of Forest Cover and as such she has helped us making an old dream come true: to publish an online version of Forest Cover that is easy to download article by article.

We were happy to co-produce this special edition, which focuses on the impacts of wood-based bioenergy on forests and forest peoples, with our active member group Biofuelwatch. Despite the fact that an increasing number of policy makers and well-known scientific institutions have started to realise that burning trees is not exactly the best response to global warming, wood-based bioenergy is still classified as 'renewable energy' and, as a result, many countries continue to hand out massive amounts of subsidies to degrade or even destroy forests for energy production.

Last month the European Parliament finally took a modest step towards reducing some of the negative impacts of wood-based bioenergy by proposing a cap on so-called land based bioenergy crops. However, this proposal still has to be accepted by European Ministers, and even then the EU will continue to subsidise extensive forest degradation as long as bioenergy continues to fall under the definition of 'renewable energy' … and as long as plantations continue to fall under the definition of 'forests'!

This year provides several important opportunities to raise awareness of and challenge these and other drivers of forest loss: at the upcoming World Social Forum in Tunis; at the UN Forum on Forests; at the negotiations on the post-2015 Development Agenda; at the many negotiations and mobilisations that will precede UNFCCC COP 21 in December in Paris; and at the World Forestry Congress, which will take place 7-11 September in Durban, South Africa. At these and other events, we will continue to highlight the need to support systemic alternatives like community conservation, and the need to address other drivers such as unsustainable livestock farming—the impacts of which are shown in this issue as a photo essay produced by well-known photojournalist Orin Langelle.

We hope to collaborate closely with our members and allies in our campaigns and projects over the coming years. We also hope to see many of you at the first ever Global Forest Coalition General Assembly, which is planned from 31 August to 5 September in Durban. One of the many issues we hope to discuss at our General Assembly is our future communication strategy. In this light we very much welcome your feedback on this 'new style' Forest Cover: Are you happy with the contents? Do you like the new set-up? Are there things you would like more information on? Do you like the lay out?

Please send your feedback to **gfc@globalforestcoalition.org** so that we can take it into account in future issues!

We look forward to hearing from you.

Simone
Global Forest Coalition

Ex silvis: Bioenergy and Forests

By ***Rachel Smolker***, Biofuelwatch, USA
Board member of the Global Forest Coalition

Forests continue to be caught in the climate crosshairs. On the one hand, REDD and forest offsets are promoted as 'protecting carbon sinks', with the potential to create profits for carbon market players. On the other hand, subsidies and targets for renewable energy continue to promote the cutting, burning, refining, converting to plantations, and genetic engineering of forests, under the false pretense of providing 'solutions' to climate change.

Many large 'green' organisations and others continue to call for '100% renewable energy' as the primary centerpiece of their demands of policymakers. Yet in both Europe and the United States about 50% of this much-touted renewable energy production is from bioenergy. That includes burning trees (and increasingly, municipal waste) for electricity, and growing and refining industrial crops for liquid biofuels. The remaining 50% of renewable energy production is primarily from large hydroelectric dams. The contribution from wind and solar, while it is inevitably featured in imagery and hyped as 'rapidly expanding', is still minimal.

Burning wood for electricity, especially co-firing in coal plants, is one of the fastest growing forms of bioenergy. The UK is a case in point, importing more wood pellets than any other country. Last year 4.6 million metric tonnes of pellets were imported, which would have required 9.2 million metric tonnes of harvested wood to produce. To put this in perspective, the UK's total annual domestic production of wood is 11 million metric tonnes, but little of that is used for bioenergy. Rather, the UK is almost entirely dependent on imports for this purpose. [1]

These imported pellets are burned in just a small number of facilities, like Drax. These companies receive subsidies for adding wood to their mix, based on the assumption that it 'reduces emissions'. Conveniently for them, adding wood into the mix also enables some coal plants to continue operating, when they would otherwise have had to shut down. This is because burning wood releases less sulphur emissions than coal, enabling the plants to meet new EU emissions regulations. With several other large coal plant conversions proposed in the UK, pellet imports are expected to rise to 12-13 million metric tonnes.

The US lags behind Europe, the US's draft 'Clean Power Plan', which is due to be finalised by 1 June 2015, gives states a mandate to reduce emissions using a variety of 'building blocks', which include renewable energy resources. The plan is poised to incorporate the assumption that burning biomass reduces emissions, which would inevitably lead to a wave of new coal plant and biomass facilities. The southern US is already the leading

Drax power station in Yorkshire, England. Now the world's largest biomass power station. Credit: Steve Morgan/Greenpeace UK

supplier of pellets to Europe, with new pellet manufacturing facilities springing up across the region, and port terminal facilities expanding to handle the bulk.

In the western US, policymakers have been pushing for supports to 'manage' and 'thin' publicly owned forestlands, under the guise of 'wildfire management'. The biomass industry is starry-eyed over potential renewable energy subsidies, but securing adequate and consistent supplies of biomass has proven challenging. For many, the opportunity to burn municipal waste—garbage—is viewed as salvation. There is plenty of it, and landfill disposal is increasingly problematic. Burning it and using the air as a dumping ground is also subsidised as renewable energy.

The impacts of bioenergy on forests and lands extend far and wide. While the impacts of using food crops for fuel have now been demonstrated, we continue to hear that 'advanced fuels' from non-food biomass sources, including wood, crop residues, and various 'high energy crops' (many genetically engineered), will not interfere with food production and thus will be 'good'. Yet land, and land use decisions, are not that simple. When food production and other land uses are competing with energy markets, land use decision-making is inevitably influenced. Farmers may decide it is more profitable to grow non-food energy crops than food. Investors, watching market trends and engaging in speculative investments, may opt to purchase land in the hopes of turning a profit from biomass production, often at the expense of people who live on or near those lands.

In sum, reliance on biomass for fuel exacerbates demands on land, whether for food or non-food uses, and creates a 'domino effect' that ripples throughout the global economy. For indigenous peoples and peasant farmers, largely at the margins of that global economy, the impacts can include displacement and in some cases, violence.

Furthermore, if proposals for an entire 'bioeconomy' come to fruition (an economy in which living plant biomass is used as an alternative for

Crunch time for GE Trees

The biotech industry has been working to develop genetically engineered (GE) trees for many years, to create trees that grow faster, tolerate cold or drought, produce certain chemicals, or have lower levels of lignin (so that they can be turned into biofuels more easily). Civil society has been opposing GE trees for just as long, because of dire consequences for natural forests.

Field trials are already underway in the USA and Brazil. But until recently no GE tree was commercially available. However, in 2014 the US Department of Agriculture—in a quiet memo to tree biotech company Arborgen—granted permission for an engineered loblolly pine, completely bypassing any regulatory review.

Shortly thereafter, the Brazilian biosafety commission, CTNBio was due to announce their decision regarding an application for commercial release of a GE Eucalyptus developed by Futuragene. But around 1,000 women from the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) stormed the Futuragene facility, laid waste to the GE tree nursery, and interrupted the meeting with CTNBio, which was cancelled.

Our resounding message, echoed in the recently released 'Asuncion Declaration' (http://stopgetrees.org/asuncion-declaration-rejects-ge-trees/) on GE trees, is: A resounding NO to GE trees!

Credit: Stop GE Trees Campaign

virtually everything currently derived from fossil fuels), then we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. Researchers are working to engineer trees and microbes amenable to producing not only more biomass and more fuel, but also plastics and a vast array of industrial chemicals (see text box). Various new initiatives have received vast sums of funding. For example, the US Department of Energy's PETRO programme focuses on "plants engineered to replace oil". [2] With the military and aviation industries especially eager to find alternative fuels, government funds are fast-flowing.

A bit further afield, climate geoengineering schemes proposing a vast scaling up of 'bioenergy with carbon capture' (BECCS) are gaining followers (see text box).

As Global Forest Coalition's 2014 'Global Overview of Wood-based Energy' [3] highlighted, the traditional uses of biomass include cooking fuel, charcoal production and home heating. Different technologies are used, the scale is different, and in the end, how energy is used and by whom differs too. A further key distinction between traditional and industrial-scale bioenergy is that the latter is driven by the provision of subsidies and policy drivers like government mandates. Production is thus driven by market forces that are largely blind to environmental concerns and human rights. Ultimately, ensuring community control over how land is used, and over food, energy and technology, is key to ensuring that the bioenergy juggernaut does not escalate further.

[1]http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/UK%20Wood%20Pellet%20Market_London_United%20Kingdom_1-16-2015.pdf
[2]http://arpa-e.energy.gov/?q=arpa-e-programs/petro
[3]http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/REPORT-WOOD-BASED-BIOENERGY-FINAL.pdf

Warning: BECCS is not a benign climate solution!

There is a growing chorus calling for some sort of climate geo-engineering 'technofix', and Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) has been at the forefront of suggetions.

This concept assumes that growing plants, which absorb CO_2, can make up for emissions generated when plants are converted into bioenergy. Combine this with technology to capture, compress and bury CO_2 and the process is considered 'net negative' ie it removes additional CO_2 from the atmosphere.

Switchgrass: not a benign climate solution.

However, the sums do not add up. There is no certainty that the new plants will grow; and if fertilizers, chemicals and machinery are involved they will add to the CO_2 emitted. Furthermore, technologies to capture CO_2 require the use of even more energy. On top of all this, storing CO_2 underground is risky and unproven.

Nonetheless, BECCS has gained popularity as a relatively 'benign' option compared to other geoengineering proposals, such as spewing sulphate particles into the stratosphere to block sunlight.

One study reported that sequestering 1 billion tonnes of CO_2 using a switchgrass-based BECCS system would require 14-65 times as much land as the US uses to grow corn for ethanol, and the equivalent of 75% of all the nitrogen fertiliser used globally (http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10584-012-0682-3#page-1).

Could genuinely meaningful EU biomass sustainability standards be introduced and enforced in the face of EU support for trade liberalisation?

by ***Almuth Ernsting***, Biofuelwatch UK

Many European NGOs believe that the European Commission (EC) is finally prepared to introduce mandatory sustainability and greenhouse gas standards for biomass. However, existing international trade rules under the World Trade Organization (WTO), and new bilateral trade agreements currently being negotiated between the EU and the US, and the EU and Canada, could prevent the implementation of such sustainability standards.

In January 2014, the EC proposed, as part of its Policy Framework on Energy and Climate Change from 2020-2030, [1] "an improved biomass policy" which would "deliver robust and verifiable greenhouse gas savings" and "encompass the sustainable use of land, the sustainable management of forests...and address indirect land use effects as with biofuels".

Most Brussels-based NGOs believe that biomass has a role to play in providing renewable energy in Europe—but only if it is subject to strict sustainability and greenhouse gas standards, based on comprehensive and science-based accounting of all greenhouse gas emissions, and capped at a level which the EU can supply sustainably. [2]

Such a framework—if accompanied by strict enforcement measures and independent verification of all company claims—would be very different to the current situation.

Growing quantities of wood pellets are being imported to meet EU demand for bioenergy markets, and this is having severe impacts on forests, climate and communities. EU wood pellet imports more than doubled between 2011 and 2014, to around 7.5 million tonnes [3] and industry analysts expect them to keep growing rapidly. Over 80% of the EU's wood pellet imports come from the southern US and Canada. Conservation NGOs [4] have shown that in the southern US hardwood forests are being clearcut for pellet production. The Wood Pellet Association of Canada has warned: "Blanket prohibition on biomass from primary forests as defined by FAO would be catastrophic for Canada". [5]

If properly implemented the EU NGOs' proposal on sustainability standards, comprehensive accounting and caps should stop EU subsidies for burning pellets made from Canadian oldgrowth forests or from clearcut southern US wetland forests. This would be a major step for protecting forest ecosystems in both regions.

However, an important question is whether there is any prospect of such a measure being implemented—particularly in the context of the trade liberalising agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO) [6] and a European Commission that is intent on negotiating even harsher bilateral free trade agreements, including with the USA (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership or TTIP) and with Canada (The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement or CETA). [7]

Enviva's Ahoskie pellet plant sources wood from clearcut hardwood wetland forests. Credit: Dogwood Alliance

Imposing a cap on the

contribution of biomass to the EU's post-2020 emission reductions targets would be possible, but there may be a hitch here too. The EU could set a cap based on a calculation of how much wood could be obtained within the EU without harming forests and other ecosystems. But under WTO rules, the EU would be open to legal challenge if it was seen to favour domestic biomass over wood imported from thousands of miles away in order to meet this cap. [8]

In addition, trade law experts disagree on whether the EU's current weak biofuel sustainability standards are compatible with the WTO's restrictions on discrimination against 'like products' on the basis of their 'Process and Production Methods' (PPMs). So far, only one case has been raised against them: Argentina complained about the EU setting a default value for greenhouse gas emissions savings from soya-based biodiesel which they felt discriminated against Argentinian soya exports. [9] This case hasn't gone beyond the consultation stage in over two years, suggesting that an informal settlement may have been reached. Soya continues to account for a significant share of EU imports for biofuel production. [10]

A lack of enforcement of EU biofuel standards may explain the lack of serious challenge through the WTO. When a Member of the European Parliament asked the EC whether any biofuel consignments had ever been found to breach the standards, [11] they did not know the answer. Yet fear of such a challenge was still a major reason why the European Commission rejected any social standards for biofuels. [12] Lobby groups have also used the spectre of such challenges to try to dissuade the EU (so far successfully) from insisting that greenhouse gas emissions from Indirect Land Use Change should be accounted for. [13]

The planned bilateral trade agreements between the EU and the US, and the EU and Canada, pose additional threats. As things stand, under these agreements any aggrieved company in North America may in future be able to sue the EU or member states, with decisions

Axe the world's biggest biomass power station, not forests

Drax is the largest coal-fired power station and single biggest carbon emitter in the UK, and it is also the biggest biomass power station in the world now. It was on course to close down because of EU emissions directives, but instead, it's been given a new lease of life. Under the guise of renewable, low-carbon energy, Drax is converting to run 50% on biomass. The new demand for wood that Drax alone is creating is staggering—each year, it will burn 1.5 times the amount produced in the whole of the UK, meaning that the vast majority of it is already imported from North America, as well as from Latvia, Portugal and Estonia. The impacts of Drax's wood sourcing are already clear—in the southeastern US, home to the world's most biodiverse temperate ecosystems, wetland forests are being clearfelled and turned into pellets. In return for trashing forests, continuing to dig up coal and pumping vast quantities of carbon into the atmosphere, Drax will get millions a year in subsidies, designed specifically to keep it open and running. These subsidies, paid for from the pockets of bill-payers, will amount to some £630m a year for burning trees instead of coal in one half of the power station, and an extra £26m a year to keep burning coal in the other. Biofuelwatch have announced plans to **#axedrax**, with a protest coinciding with Drax Plc's AGM in April, in London. Biofuelwatch is asking supporters to join what will be a lively protest against biomass and coal, or to stage solidarity protests in other parts of the world. See ***axedrax.org.uk*** for more details.

Credit: London Biomassive

being made by a tribunal in private, i.e. without any public scrutiny. Governments subject to such 'Investor State Dispute Settlement' (ISDS) mechanisms under existing regional trade agreement (such as the North American Free trade Agreement (NAFTA)) have repeatedly responded by overturning environmental regulations rather than risking large fines. In addition, both CETA and TTIP aim to create new spaces for permanent dialogue about trade-restricting measures.

For example, the Canadian Government has made it clear that they expect CETA to benefit wood pellet exporters and that "measures that may affect bilateral trade in forest goods" will be raised via "bilateral dialogue". [14] Canadian logging companies, including those with a stake in pellet markets have highlighted that—again under CETA—they have a particular interest in "non-tariff barriers such as standards certification, conformity assessments". [15] Any attempt by the EU to 'discriminate' against pellets from oldgrowth forests would almost certainly be challenged under CETA—raising the risk of a multi-billion Euro fine. Similarly, if TTIP was agreed as it stands, a company like Enviva, that is sourcing wood for pellets from clearcut wetland forests, could sue the EU for any standards that harm their interests.

According to some authors, biofuel and biomass standards could be designed so that they are at minimum risk of a WTO challenge—though those would probably have to be very weak. [16] For example, WTO rules favour international standards drawn up with the consensus of member states and as a minimum require standards to be based on 'meaningful negotiations' between relevant member states. [17] This favours standards being based on the lowest common denominator, i.e. very weak ones. Similarly, TTIP and CETA, by introducing fora for 'permanent dialogue' with investors and governments concerning both existing and proposed new regulations, would make the introduction of effectively enforced standards that impact the biggest players in North America's pellet industry even less likely.

The EU's commitment to free trade agreements and the EC's and many member states' support for sweeping new bilateral trade agreements thus make the 'sustainability framework' envisioned by many NGOs most unlikely to succeed. This leaves just one 'safe' option for preventing renewable energy subsidies for wood pellets from, say, clearcut oldgrowth or wetland forests: that option would be for the EU to remove all wood-based bioenergy and biofuels from its definition of renewable energy and thus from renewable energy subsidies regimes.

[1]http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0015&from=EN

[2]http://www.eeb.org/?LinkServID=98C448C8-5056-B741-DB58D87D863B6B9C&showMeta=0&aa

[3]http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Biofuels%20Annual_The%20Hague_EU-28_7-3-2014.pdf

[4]E.g:http://www.nrdc.org/energy/forestnotfuel/files/enviva-wood-pellets-FS.pdf

[5]http://www.pellet.org/wpac-news/protecting-markets-for-canadian-pellets http://www.pellet.org/wpac-news/protecting-markets-for-canadian-pellets

[6]On the one hand the WTO prohibits 'discrimination' against imports over domestic production or between imports from different member states. On the other hand, it requires 'like products' to be treated the same, regardless of their 'Process and Production Methods'. It strictly limits the scope for 'discriminating' against products on the basis of environmental or social harm caused during their production.

[7]CETA's final text has been published but it still needs to be formally approved within the EU.

[8]A WTO tribunal has for example, ruled against renewable energy legislation in Ontario because it required a percentage of components for wind and solar energy systems to be produced domestically http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-loses-wto-appeal-over-ontario-s-green-energy-program-1.1333131

[9]https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds459_e.htm

[10]http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Biofuels%20Annual_The%20Hague_EU-28_7-3-2014.pdf

[11]http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2014-001774+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en

[12]https://business-school.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/businessschool/documents/events/contributedpapers/Ackrill_P.pdf, p. 18

[13]http://www.ecipe.org/app/uploads/2014/12/OCC32013.pdf

[14]http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/ceta-aecg/benefits-avantages/bc-cb.aspx?lang=eng

[15]http://openparliament.ca/committees/international-trade/41-2/15/rick-jeffery-1/only/

[16]https://business-school.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/businessschool/documents/events/contributedpapers/Ackrill_P.pdf

[17]https://business-school.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/businessschool/documents/events/contributedpapers/Ackrill_P.pdf

New Photoessay and Analysis: *The Pillaging of Paraguay*

by ***Orin Langelle***, Global Justice Ecology Project, USA

The major injustices toward the land and the people in Paraguay are large-scale genetically modified (GM) soy production by multinational corporations and deforestation due to unsustainable livestock production.

The expansion of soybeans and cattle in Paraguay is based on the theft of peasant and aboriginal communities' land holdings and ancestral lands. The key common characteristic underlying all large-scale rural production in Paraguay is that it is based on massive illegal land grabbing.

Soybeans are produced on the fertile soils of eastern Paraguay, the best soils in the country. Most of the soy grown in Paraguay is Monsanto's RoundUp Ready transgenic variety. Other U.S. transnational corporations involved in the soy business are Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM).

Small-scale farmers have been displaced (or worse) due to soy production and forced off the land to live in slums. Some 50% of the deforestation in eastern Paraguay is due to the conversion of forests to soy monocultures. The technological approaches driven by the Green Revolution, now including genetically modified seeds and pesticides, have also caused degradation of the fertile lands and loss of biodiversity across the country and the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals.

The main environmental implication of the growth of extensive cattle ranching is deforestation as well.

The Chaco region is where most of the deforestation is being undertaken today to create pasture and establish cattle ranches. In 2013, 268,000 ha of forest were destroyed in the Chaco. Deforestation rates in this region were the highest in the world in 2013, reaching up to 2,000 ha/day.

The production of beef for export markets by very large-scale, predominantly Brazilian (70% of the meat export facilities are in Brazilian hands) cattle ranchers is by far the main cause of deforestation and indigenous land grabbing in the Chaco.

The Ayoreo Indigenous People of the Chaco have been in the way of development and many have been captured and confined to “concentration camp” settlements. However there are still uncontacted Ayoreo that live in voluntary isolation in the Chaco forest that remains.

Many parts of the Chaco (and other areas South of the Amazon) are far too remote and isolated to explore in detail so the possibility is high that there are additional communities living in voluntary isolation.

The technological approaches driven by the Green Revolution, now including genetically modified seeds and pesticides, have caused degradation of the fertile lands and loss of biodiversity across the country and the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals.

"An island surrounded by land" is how Paraguay is sometimes described partly because it is one of the two land-locked countries in the Western hemisphere (the other is Bolivia), but also because of its distinctive history and politics. Paraguay's economic activity centers on agriculture and livestock, and in terms of land tenure presents the most unequal and unfair case of distribution worldwide.

Livestock and soy production (almost wholly of Monsanto's Round Up Ready transgenic variety) are the most important primary production sectors. Most of the land in the country is privately controlled and devoted to these two commodities. Hence, most of the negative environmental and social impacts derive from these two activities. A vast proportion, about 96%, of the soybeans cultivated in Paraguay are destined for export as livestock feed. A majority of the cattle slaughtered each year in the country are also exported, with most of this trade controlled by a handful of multinational companies that form an oligopoly not only in Paraguay, but around the world."

From '*The Environmental and Social Impacts of Unsustainable Livestock Farming and Soybean Production in Paraguay*', by Dr. Miguel Lovera for the Centro de Estudios e Investigacion de Derecho Rural y Reforma Agrara de la Universidad Catolica de Asuncion, Paraguay and the Global Forest Coalition.

See the full photo essay here:
http://photolangelle.org/2014/12/18/the-pillaging-of-paraguay-photo-essay-with-analysis/

Wood-based bioenergy in Uganda: *the Bukaleba forest reserve*

By ***David Kureeba***, National Association of Professional Environmentalists, Uganda

Uganda, like many African countries, is thirsty for foreign investment in a number of sectors regardless of any impacts on the environment and people's livelihoods. The government assumes that foreign investment is the best way to create jobs for Uganda's unemployed people, especially youths.

Thus, in this era of climate change, investment in bioenergy projects is increasingly being sought. It is expected that this will also address energy-related concerns, including with respect to climate change impacts and reducing pressure on natural forests.

However, in practice bioenergy projects are actually replacing natural forests, which are meant to be protected. This is exemplified by the government's decision to lease over 347ha of the south Busoga forest reserve in Bukaleba, to Norwegian company Green Resources, for commercial tree planting. This project is located in eastern central Uganda along the fringes of Lake Victoria.

Looking at Uganda's energy sources and usage, about 91% of Ugandans use wood-based energy for cooking, lighting and baking, and it is used as fuel in institutions such as schools, hospitals and households. Solar use is about 1%, hydro and thermal electricity about 4%, and biogas and geothermal about 0.5%. This is a clear threat to tree and shrub species in forests and woodlots. Furthermore, in spite of Uganda's annual deforestation rate of 2%, the Ugandan government has continued to lease more land for bioenergy, carbon trading, agrofuels production, soft wood plantations and other forms of agribusiness.

Uganda developed a climate change policy in 2013. However this policy also emphasises commercial tree planting as a means of mitigating and adapting to some of the effects of climate change. The social and environmental consequences of using wood-based energy are not considered. Uganda's national REDD strategy is expected to take this dilemma a step further. This would chime with Uganda's general energy policies. These focus primarily on hydropower generation and rural electrification, but they also include policies concerning the production of crops such as jatropha, oil palm and other crops as potential biofuel feedstocks.

To make matters worse, Uganda's renewable energy policy includes a target to blend biofuels with fossils fuels (with biofuels constituting 4% of the mix). In addition, there is a high

Green Resources plantation, Bukaleba. Credit: CarbonViolence.org

level of biomass resource wastage in Uganda due to the fact that an estimated 72.7% of the population use traditional cooking stoves with efficiency estimated to be less than 10%. Inefficient cooking stoves are also blamed for indoor air pollution and respiratory illness.

In general, biomass is treated as a desirable renewable energy resource. However, its extensive exploitation in Uganda raises serious concerns about its negative impacts on the environment and about the social consequences of using increasing amounts of land to grow feedstocks instead of food. This is even more pressing in this era of climate change when less developed countries, Uganda included, are already struggling to adapt. The loss of forests and land to grow food can only make matters worse.

These problems are escalating across the African continent, particularly in countries like Uganda, where explosive population growth rates mean that the country's population is predicted to grow fivefold by 2050 (from 27.7 million to 130 million people). If all these people continue to rely on wood as a fuel, the consequences for Uganda's remaining natural forests and small-scale farmers are stark.

Even now, for example, the destruction of Bukaleba forest has resulted in too much runoff into the low lands, meaning that soil fertility has been lost. This affects communities, as the soils can no longer support food crop plants (annual or perennial).

Wood-based bioenergy can also lead to the destruction of sacred and medicinal trees. In Bukaleba the communities say their treasured medicinal trees such as Prunus africana, were cut down, and other medicinal plants including lianas, epiphytic plants, strangler figs and other parasitic plants have all been lost because of the pine plantations and eucalyptus planted by Green Resources. Fruit trees were also cut down even though these trees formed part of local food sovereignty. Their treasured tourist attraction, where the communities used to take their guests—Walumbe tree—was also destroyed. This was a spot the communities used to go to for cleansing and praying for blessings.

The communities now have very limited land for agriculture because of the extensive amount of land under pine and eucalyptus. The communities are not allowed to continue their 'taungya' system of farming in the forest.

Unfortunately, the charcoal produced from Bukaleba does not benefit the local communities either. They continue to look for firewood, while the charcoal is taken to towns in Kampala, Jinja, Entebbe and even to neighboring countries like Sudan.

In general, the extensive loss of trees across Uganda is impacting the communities who depend on them. In addition to social impacts, the excessive use of wood-based energy is leading to the destruction of the environment including the fragile ecosystems and biodiversity that would otherwise support the local climate and provide other environmental functions, such as pollination, soil aeration and enhancement, and decomposition. The use of traditional and inefficient bioenergy technologies and appliances certainly exacerbates this problem, but Uganda needs to move away from wood-based fuel sources entirely.

Summary report of the International Strategy Meeting on Wood-based Bioenergy

By ***Swati Shresth***, Centre for Grassroots Development, India

A diverse group of 22 representatives of Indigenous Peoples and NGOs from 14 different countries in seven different continents met in Asunción, Paraguay, on 20-21 November 2014, to discuss the implications of wood-based biomass on forest communities and biodiversity. The workshop included the presentation of 12 case studies contributed by GFC members and allies from Chile, Paraguay, Uganda, Tanzania, Russia, Finland, the UK, South Africa, Sweden and the US.

Wood-based bioenergy is promoted as a supposedly inexhaustible energy resource, and is often legitimised with examples of small-scale, community-driven projects. But the case studies reveal that this is actually an industrial-scale, export-driven sector, with a range of negative impacts:

· Native forest is being replaced with plantations, often of invasive species or GMO pine.
· Additional wood is sometimes supplied directly from native forests. [1]
· Communities are being criminalised as plantations are established on commonland.
· Large-scale bioenergy is a significant public health risk at every stage, from pesticide use in plantations to burning in power stations. [2]
· Plantations often have precarious working conditions.
· The loss of commons makes life harder and more dangerous for women, who have to travel further for fuelwood.
· Land grabbing is often legitimised by certification processes that ignore indirect impacts and social and cultural consequences. [3]
· The growth of the sector has been accompanied by the creation of financial bubbles and speculative investments in plantations. [4]

On top of all this (and even though it is heavily subsidised) [5] industrial bioenergy fails to address the key issue of climate change. The assumption of carbon neutrality is misplaced, mainly because it fails to recognise the long delay between carbon emissions and sequesteration by new trees.

Furthermore, the emerging debate about bioeconomies—in which fossil fuels will be entirely replaced with biomass [6]—means that demand for wood-based energy could escalate dramatically in the future.

The meeting called for campaign agendas to be developed around five issues:

(1) Critiquing sustainability standards, which are used to endow the sector with a sense of legitimacy, but generally do not account for

Plantations on common land: Eucalyptus for biomass electricity has surrounded the village of Mundé in Maranhão, Brazil. Credit: Ivonete Gonçalves de Souza

impacts such as loss of culture and livelihoods

(2) Challenging the definition of renewable energy (so that large-scale bioenergy is excluded), and definitions of forests (so that plantations are excluded), to prevent industry claiming claim carbon credits for false solutions to climate change.

(3) Exploding the myth that communities in the South are responsible for deforestation because of their traditional use of wood fuel, but industrial bioenergy is a 'solution'.

(4) Identifying what kinds of energy needs to be prioritized and at what scale to ensure energy justice and energy sovereignty, at the same time as reducing over-consumption by elites.

(5) Recognising the importance of scale, and investigating the links between the small-scale use of wood for energy, poverty alleviation and access to energy.

[1]Workshop presentations from the Dogwood Alliance, USA and Miguel Lovera, Paraguay

[2]http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/REPORT-WOOD-BASED-BIOENERGY-FINAL.pdf. See the case study on Russia.

[3]For instance plantations on community lands in Uganda were certified by the FSC in 2013. Workshop discussions.

[4]http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/REPORT-WOOD-BASED-BIOENERGY-FINAL.pdf. See the discussion on Suzano in Brazil and the case study on the United Kingdom.

[5]http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/REPORT-WOOD-BASED-BIOENERGY-FINAL.pdf. Refer to the case studies from Paraguay and Chile. Two companies dominate energy generation from woody biomass, they are owners of the plantations, timber and paper industry and power plants in Chile.

[6]http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/bioeconomy-flyer-ENG.pdf

21 March	International Day of Forests Read more: http://forests-l.iisd.org/events/international-day-of-forests-2/
23 - 27 March	New York City, US. Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda - Third Session. The session will address the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. For more information: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/sdgsandtargets
24 - 28 March	Tunis, Tunisia. World Social Forum. For more information: https://fsm2015.org/en See activities of Global Forest Coalition and the Climate Space at the World Social Forum here: https://peopleforestsrights.wordpress.com or http://climatespace.net
22 April	London, UK. Biofuelwatch protest at Drax Plc AGM, owners of wold's largest biomass power station. For more information, see: http://axedrax.org.uk/
20 - 24 April	New York City, US. Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda – Fourth Session. This session will discuss the Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. For more information: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/moiandglobalpartnership
20 April - 1 May	New York City, US. 14th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII 14). The meeting will discuss, amongst others, the outcome of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), the post-2015 development agenda, and the possibility of an optional protocol to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). For more information: http://undesadspd.org/IndigenousPeoples/UNPFIISessions/Fourteenth.aspx
4 - 15 May	New York City, US. UN Forum on Forests Eleventh Session (UNFF11) (international arrangement on forests). For more information: http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html
18 - 22 May	New York City, US. Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda – Fifth Session. This session will focus on follow up and review of the Post-2015 development agenda. For more information: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/followupandreview
2 - 4 June	Washington DC, US. Global Environment Facility Council meeting. For more information: http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10108
1 - 11 June	Bonn, Germany. 40st session of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. For more information: http://www.unfccc.int
22 - 25 June	New York City, US. Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda – Sixth Session. This session will continue intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document. For more information: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/negotiationsoutcome1

New Report: What can Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women expect from Global Climate and Forests Funds in terms of their rights? An introduction and comparison of Safeguards and Participation Mechanisms

As a result of the REDD+ regime adopted by the UNFCCC, several relatively new global funds of financial windows have been established to finance forest-related initiatives from a climate perspective. The purpose of the briefing paper is to make a comparative analysis of the strengths and weakness of these fund´s rules and safeguards, specifically with respects to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, women and local communities, including their participation rights. Although a number of global funds are explored, more emphasis is placed on the Green Climate Fund since it has recently emerged as the main multilateral finance mechanism within the international arena, with separate windows for forest-related adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

This comparative analysis of current and potential funds aims to provide representatives of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and their support groups with information on the different safeguards and participation mechanisms in forests and climate change related funds. It also aims to enable both these groups and policy-makers to prioritize financial and political support to those global funds that have most robust rights-related safeguards and participation procedures, especially given the often-voiced concern that REDD+ and other forest and climate related funding might actually violate the right of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

After the analysis, the main conclusion is that although numerous global climate and forests funds have been in the international arena for many years, overall they still fail to address the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women. Even when they include specific text on safeguards and participation mechanisms relating to these groups, the language used is rather weak, and often ambiguous, meaning that it is open to interpretation.

The report can be downloaded here: ***http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GFC-climate-and-forest-funds-briefing-FINAL-1.pdf***

New Report: A Global Overview of Wood-based Bioenergy: Production, Consumption, Trends and Impacts

In the context of the different international negotiations, including the current UNFCCC's COP20, bioenergy and an entire bioeconomy are promoted as solutions to climate and economic crisis. Underlying this is the premise that endless economic growth can and must be sustained, and that we can resolve these crises by simply substituting fossil for biological energy sources. This misguided approach distracts attention from real solutions, which must address the grossly unsustainable over consumption of energy and resources by industrialized countries. These same unsustainable models must not be

imposed on countries in the global South. Social movements are challenging consumeroriented growth economics. They offer instead the alternative concept of "buen vivir" that rejects overconsumption, aims to meet basic needs for all, and supports people's autonomy as well as local production and control.

The Global Forest Coalition launched this new report sharing the findings of different case studies from across the world and the conclusions drawn from this review.

"The issue of wood-based bioenergy is a complex one that very much deals with local, regional and national contexts, however, the increasing scale of demand for wood for energy production in countries like the UK, is sponsored with subsidies and policy targets that are already affecting forests in the rest of the world. In the meantime, firewood and overall conventional use for local consumption by rural communities tend to disappear", said Isis Alvarez one of the authors of the report.

The report can be downloaded here: ***http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/REPORT-WOOD-BASED-BIOENERGY-FINAL.pdf***

New Report: Meat from a Landscape Under Threat: Testimonies of the Impacts of Unsustainable Livestock and Soybean Production in Paraguay

Global Forest Coalition and Brighter Green have just released a new Report, "Meat from a Landscape Under Threat: Testimonies of the Impacts of Unsustainable Livestock and Soybean Production in Paraguay."

Written by Dr. Miguel Lovera, this updated report on the social and environmental impacts of unsustainable livestock production focus on those testimonies presented at the workshop. The seminar, organized on November 28 and 29 of 2014 by the Global Forest Coalition together with national organizations in Paraguay, was entitled "Threats to Community Conservation in Paraguay and International Strategy Meeting on the Impacts of Unsustainable Livestock and Feed Production." Attended by at least 60 representatives from affected communities, social movements, and organizations from 20 countries, it also brought together peasants, indigenous peoples, farmworkers, campaigners and academics from different areas of Paraguay. The seminar featured several presentations by community and NGO representatives from Paraguay, which demonstrated the extent of the impacts of the fast-expanding cattle ranching and soybean export business in the country. These are more than just their stories, these are vivid examples of the impacts directly lived by communities.

The report can be downloaded here: ***http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/GFC-BG-Livestock-Landscape-Threat-web.pdf***

"Uncle Sam" at a demonstration in Asunción, Paraguay. Credit: PhotoLangelle.org