

Declaration: The Development Model for Soy in Paraguay: Irresponsible, Unsustainable
The Development Model for Soy in Paraguay- Irresponsible, Unsustainable and Anti-Democratic.

The role of large scale soy production in the destruction of land, water, communities and ecosystems in Paraguay.

Indigenous Peoples' and peasant Farmers' organisations, community associations and other civil society groups in Paraguay who are signatories to this Declaration categorically reject the raw material export development model which has been condemned worldwide because of the environmental devastation it causes.

In particular, we reject large scale soy production which uses massive amounts of agro-chemicals, pesticides and genetically modified organisms, plunders our natural and cultural heritage, excludes and evicts communities from their land, concentrates power and decision-making about our national economy into the hands of a few, and thus undermines the sovereignty of our nation and its peoples and communities.

Large scale soy production is intrinsically unsustainable and is part of the oppressive, elitist, irresponsible, self-serving and socially exclusive agro-industrial model. The President of the Republic of Paraguay, despite the fact he has done nothing to challenge this situation, recently acknowledged that “Latin America does not need this kind of economic model..”

The expansion of monocultural “green deserts”, such as large scale soy production, non-native grasses and exotic trees, promotes and increases a mechanized agriculture without small farmers; without people. All monocultures are damaging to the ecosystems they supplant; they cause poverty, unemployment and the eviction and exodus of communities in rural areas. They destroy biological and agricultural diversity, poison water sources and the soil and undermine the food security and sovereignty of the people and their countries.

The so-called “responsible” soy production being promoted by the Round Table on Responsible Soy is a fallacy; a smoke screen used to try to hide the alliance of business interests between transnational corporations from a public which is increasingly aware of national and regional economic alternatives based on democracy, participation, inclusion and social, political, economic and environmental sustainability.

Who will take responsibility for the environmental pollution caused by approximately 20 million litres of chemicals dumped on Paraguay this year?, The destruction of streams, rivers, springs and wetlands? The eviction of almost a hundred thousand small farmers from their homes and fields? The assassination of more than one hundred peasant leaders? The forced relocation and ethnocide of Indigenous Peoples and communities? The charges pressed against more than 2,000 small farmers for their legitimate resistance to this predatory system? Large scale soy monocultures are NOT possible without this litany of adverse impacts.

The concept of “sustainability” applied to soy monocultures tricks us into believing a conservationist and conservative “greenwash” spun by some sectors in Europe and Latin America in anticipation of the increase in the worldwide demand for soy to provide fodder in Europe and China. (It is estimated that there will be a 60% increase in soy production that will translate into 300 millions tonnes grown a year by 2020, 1.5 million square kilometres of cultivated land devoted to soy - about half the area of the Plata River Basin, and an additional 220,000 square kilometers of forests and savannah destroyed to grow soy.)

The Round Table on Responsible soy does not question the agro-export model of large scale production systems dependent on chemical pesticides, nor of the role of transnational GMO seed and agro-chemical companies such as Monsanto, Pioneer, Syngenta, Dupont, Cargill and Bunge. Neither is the role of international financial institutions and development banks called into question, even though it is they who promote and bankroll economic models based on monocultures, agro-exports and unsustainability. To ensure its own survival and proliferation, the agro-export model has contributed to the criminalisation not only of social struggles, but of poverty itself.

The mega-soy model systematically violates labour, civil and environmental legislation. It is in direct opposition to the basic principles of human rights, especially economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. It is incompatible with the rule of law. For the good of all nations and peoples, we defend the rights of communities to healthy and sovereign lives, with guaranteed recognition and protection of our fundamental human rights, and the full exercise of sovereignty over our territories, food, culture and economy.

We reject the second Round Table Meeting on “Responsible soy” being held in Paraguay which we consider an affront to the misery caused to its people.

NOTES:

1. The establishment of a market of “obligations towards conservation” is based on the so-called “Basel Principles” on responsible soy production, that permits soy cultivation on lands deforested after 1994, if and when the deforestation has been offset with 'pro-biodiversity compensation' (which is often in the form of financial contributions to the same organizations that promote the adoption of these principles). The social movements fear that, on the contrary, these will result in a greater concentration of land tenure and will distract attention from the other environmental and social problems created by the expansion of large scale monocultures like soy.

2. More than 24,000,000 litres of toxic agro-chemicals are used in soy cultivation in Paraguay each year. These chemicals pollute the water, air and soil and destroy the biological diversity. The herbicides used in soy production include those in the red category, that is to say that are “extremely dangerous” or “very dangerous” according to the classification contained in Resolution 295/03 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. These include Paraquat, which has no antidote if ingested, Gramoxone,

Metamidofos which reduces the number and health of sperm in exposed males, and Endosulfan, a teratogenic (a substance that causes birth defects in the infants of mothers who have been repeatedly exposed) according to the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States –EPA.

3. With regard to GMO soy, it is worth noting that 'RoundupReady' soy is used with a potent herbicide and the necessary precautions are not taken. Furthermore, while all the effects of genetic engineering seeds are yet not known, GMO seeds do pose threats to germplasm and human health. Approximately 95% of soy production in Paraguay is genetically modified. However, because of GMO contamination and illegal ownership it is not possible to guarantee non-GMO soy in Paraguay.

4. The area of large scale grain and hay cultivation (not just in Paraguay but in all of the Southern Cone of South America) coincides almost entirely with the Guaraní aquifer. This means the little forest cover that remains is rapidly being destroyed, even in key zones like the recharge areas, resulting in the pollution of the subterranean waters by the toxic agro-chemicals used to grow soy.

5. We propose the creation of a new development model for the country, that promotes community sustainability and sovereignty, based on the specific characteristics of each territory. Such a model would produce healthy and competitive crops, while simultaneously promoting the decentralization of power and democratic decision making about land use and production. Furthermore, it would be based on equitable land distribution and would halt social exclusion, eviction and forced displacement by reviewing legal land tenure and titles to ensure that they regulate and limit extensive large scale agricultural production.

6. We demand recognition and protection of fundamental human rights, as well as the right to a diversity of modes of production and sustainable rural livelihoods. Natural, ecological and organic production is possible and its viability and its profit potential should not be discredited. The profits of organic agriculture are obtainable for small farmers in contrast to monocultures whose profits are concentrated in the hands of a few growers.

So far (august 31, 2006) this statement has been signed by the following organisations and individuals:

Paraguay

Central Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Populares (CNOICIP),
Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Rurales Trabajadoras e Indígenas
(CONAMURI), Coordinadora de Productores Agroecológico de Paraguari,
Cooperativa de Productores Agroecológico, Regina Marecos Escuela Agroecológico
San Juan, Regina Marecos Federación Nacional Campesina (FNC), Grupo de jóvenes
Trabajadores Tetâ Pyahura, Mesa Coordinadora de Organizaciones Campesinas

(MCNOC), Movimiento Agrario Popular (MAP), Movimiento Foro Social Universitario (MOFSU), Movimiento Nacional por el Derecho a la Salud, Organización Nacional Campesina (ONAC), Paraguay Sin Excusas, Paraguay, Sindicato de Periodistas del Paraguay (SPP), Unión Nacional de Pescadores Comercialización y Afines (UNA – PESCA – CNT), Via Campesina Paraguay, Alter Vida, Base. Investigaciones Sociales, Base ECTA, Centro de Capacitación de Desarrollo Agrícola CCDA, Centro de Servicios y Estudios Rurales (CSER), Colectivo 25 de Noviembre, Colectivo Ybytyrusu, Coalición Mundial por los Bosques, Paraguay, Red Rural de Organizaciones Privadas de Desarrollo, Servicio Ecuménico de Promoción Alternativa (SEPA), SOBREVIVENCIA Amigos de la Tierra Paraguay, TESAI REKA PARAGUAY (TRP), Tierra Nueva, Agustín Barúa. Docente Universitario, Elizabeth Duré, Ing. Ignacio Morales, Prof. Investigador

rest of the world

Acción Ecológica, A SEED Europe, GRAIN, Centro de Políticas Públicas para el Socialismo CEPPAS, Argentina, Global Forest Coalition, Vida, Sí! de Alberdi-Tucumán, Argentina, Red de Salud y Ambiente ALAMES, Información Alternativa en Ecología Social, Federación Amigos de la Tierra América Latina y Caribe (ATALC), Friends of the Siberial Forests, Rusia, Grupo Reflexión Rural (GRR), Argentina, ICTI, Indonesia, Instituto de Estudios Ecologistas del Tercer Mundo, La Red por la Defensa de la Vida y La Naturaleza, La Red por una América Latina Libre de transgénicos (RALLT), l'Assemblea Pagesa de Catalunya, España, Organización Mapuche Meli Wixan Mapu Argentina, Chile, PIPEC – New Seeland (org. de pueblos indígenas del Pacifico), SEEDS (UK), Veterinarios sin Fronteras, España, Observatorio de la Deuda en la Globalización, Ecologistas en Acción y Red de Consumo Solidario, España, Terra de Direitos, Brasil, Instituto de Ecología Política, Santiago, Chile, Fundación para las Amas de Casa (FAC), Apodera, Argentina, Coordinador Nacional Frente Nacional por la Defensa de la Vida de los Pueblos Productivos y Montuvios, Ecuador, RAP-AL Uruguay

(full list on:

http://www.aseed.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=285&Itemid=107)