

*Open Letter to the
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) from the
Campaign to STOP Genetically Engineered Trees (CSGET)*

7 September 2014

CSGET Urges FSC to Disassociate from Suzano/FuturaGene

In the next few days, Brazil's biosafety commission will be considering petitions from forestry company Suzano, owner of biotechnology corporation FuturaGene, developers of genetically engineered (GE) eucalyptus trees, to allow widespread commercialization of GE (a.k.a. genetically modified organism/GMO) tree plantations, throughout the country. In light of the serious consequences, if this request is granted, the members of the international Campaign to STOP GE Trees (CSGET), are formally requesting, with this open letter, that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) disassociate from their member, Suzano, based on FSC Principles and Criteria.

Clearly, if the Brazilian National Technical Biosafety Commission (CTNBio) approves the pending request for commercialization of GE eucalyptus trees, Suzano will be in violation of FSC's requirements for certification.

The FSC Principles & Criteria includes references to GMOs:

C6.8 Use of biological control agents shall be documented, minimized, monitored and strictly controlled in accordance with national laws and internationally accepted scientific protocols. Use of genetically modified organisms shall be prohibited.

Intent: FSC-POL-30-602 Genetically Modified Organisms provides a definition and guidance on the interpretation of Criterion 6.8. Genetically improved organisms (e.g., Mendelian crossed) are not considered to be genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (i.e., results of genetic engineering), and may be used. The prohibition of genetically modified organisms applies to all organisms including trees. [1]

CSGET's request coincides with letters [2, 3] signed by hundreds of organizations, from a multitude of countries, and delivered to the CTNBio calling on them to deny a pending request by Suzano/FuturaGene to commercially plant GE eucalyptus trees in Brazil.

FSC's rules and the interpretation of such allows for the research of GE trees, as long as that member company doesn't incorporate GE trees into its commercial forestry operations; however Suzano, as owner of FuturaGene, is now poised and waiting approval to do so. Therefore, the request for widespread commercialization of GE eucalyptus trees in Brazil from FuturaGene will clearly violate their FSC certification.

The CSGET further points out that independent risk assessment for the measurement and reporting of current and future disruption of environmental and human health, climate justice, social equality, and economic risks associated with the widespread proliferation of GE eucalyptus tree plantations has been virtually nonexistent. Moreover, initial first person accounts from frontline communities have reported land grabs and clashes between local communities and timber corporations including those with Suzano [4].

Therefore, CSGET along with other groups from around the world have joined the effort to stop commercialization of GE trees due to the potential serious and negative long-term effects on human rights and biodiversity.

The CSGET respectfully reminds FSC that any corporation that relies on reputation greenwashing by using the Forest Stewardship Council's certification should have their membership and certification denied by FSC to ensure continued credibility. The future of viable and sustainable commercial forest operations depends on many factors but one very important element is the adherence to a clear commitment to the future health of our planet and people.

The Campaign to STOP GE Trees is an international alliance of organizations [5], that includes Indigenous Peoples, scientists, anti-GM food activists, forest protection advocates and social justice organizers from across North and South America, Europe and Australasia—all of which are home to companies and universities developing GE trees.

Contact:

Anne Petermann, Campaign Coordinator, The Campaign to STOP GE Trees
266 Elmwood Avenue, Suite 307, Buffalo, NY 14222 USA
phone: +1.716.931.5833 mobile: +1.716.364.1188
globalecology@gmavt.net stopgetrees.org

References:

1. FSC-POL-30-602 (2000) FSC INTERPRETATION ON GMOS (GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS): [https://ic.fsc.org/policies.338.htm?lightbox\[width\]=720#file-details-499](https://ic.fsc.org/policies.338.htm?lightbox[width]=720#file-details-499)
2. Campaign to STOP GE Trees – Sign on to Support the call by Brazilian and Latin American groups to reject GE eucalyptus trees: http://wrm.org.uy/highlighted_post/campaign-to-stop-ge-trees-sign-on-to-support-the-call-by-brazilian-and-latin-american-groups-to-reject-g-e-eucalyptus-trees/
3. Open letter to CTNBio to reject GE trees in Brazil: <http://stopgetrees.org/open-letter-ctnbio-reject-ge-trees-brazil/>
4. Press release by World Rainforest Movement and Biofuelwatch—Maranhão Brazil: *Traditional communities' livelihoods and Cerrado biodiversity under threat in from Europe's bioenergy boom*: <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Suzano-report-joint-PR.pdf>
5. Organizations involved in the Campaign to STOP GE Trees include:
Biofuelwatch (US-UK): <http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk>
Canadian Biotechnology Action Network: <http://www.cban.ca/>
EcoNexus (EUR): <http://www.econexus.info>
Global Justice Ecology Project (North America) : <http://globaljusticeecology.org/>
Friends of the Earth Melbourne (AUS)
Indigenous Environmental Network (North America): <http://www.ienearth.org/>
World Rainforest Movement (Uruguay): <http://wrm.org.uy>