



Flightless Travel

*Carbon Emissions – Flying, Hitch-Hiking
and Cargo Ships, the Facts*



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MarineTraffic.com

You may have been following the journey of ENCA member James Watson on our website as he worked his way across Europe and North Africa before heading on to Central America, and all without the aid of a single flight. Now settled in Nicaragua and working with a number of ENCA's partners he has written an account of his trip and explores the numbers to see whether the time and effort has made a difference in terms of his carbon

footprint – really the most important point of hitch-hiking and travelling by cargo ship. With this article he hopes to make clear the justification for this travel, and also analyse whether there really are alternatives that could replace mass international flying.

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Carbon Footprints – Vehicles vs Passengers, and High Altitude Emissions

Every mode of travel has its carbon impact, whether flying, hitch-hiking or using ships – even walking requires our bodies to use more energy and release more carbon than just staying put! However, the carbon released by a mode of travel is not the same as the carbon we are responsible for – this depends on whether we contribute to the reason the mode of travel exists in the first place, or not.

Taking any mode of transport arranged for our use, we become part of the reason why the journey takes place – avoiding flying on passenger airplanes both directly reduces our carbon footprint and removes ourselves from the market that justifies the flight existing at all. Your share of the carbon footprint of a passenger airplane is therefore the total carbon it emits divided by the number of passengers on it. Conversely, travelling on a journey that would happen with or without passengers – taking a cargo ship across the ocean or hitching a lift in the free space in someone's car – we are responsible only for the extra weight we add to the journey. Our proportion of the total carbon emitted is equal to our proportion of the total weight of the vehicle we are on, likely to be a much smaller value.

On top of these considerations is the fact that airplane emissions, especially for long distance journeys, have a much greater climate impact than other forms of emissions, because of how high in the atmosphere they are released. NO₂ and water vapour released by airplanes at this altitude are also greenhouse gases and mean the total warming effect is roughly 3 times the effect of the CO₂ released.

Bearing this in mind, we can look at exactly the difference made on my journeys from London to Cairo, and from Europe to Latin America, by using the means of transport I selected, instead of flying on passenger jets.



Back on the Nissos Rodos from Turkey to Egypt

London to Egypt – the Numbers

First, the journey to Egypt. Taking a plane direct from London Heathrow to Cairo is a journey of about 3517 km, which according to the carbon calculator at chooseclimate.org would use 40,835 kgs fuel in total and release 429 kg of CO₂ per passenger (if the plane is 80% occupied). With the other greenhouse gases, released at high altitude, this is the equivalent of 1287 kgs of CO₂ released at ground-level.

The journey I made involved train travel for roughly 212 miles from London to Brussels, hitch-hiking a total of 2000 miles between Brussels and Sofia, and Istanbul and Iskenderun, coaches 496 miles between Sofia and Istanbul, and Port Said and Cairo, and the ferry roughly 431 miles from Iskenderun to Port Said – a total of 3139 miles, or 5022 kms.

Of these journeys, according to the well respected carbon calculator at resurgence.org, couch travel is by far the least polluting, releasing 0.048 kg CO₂ per person per mile, and the ferry by far the worst, releasing 0.192 kg CO₂ per mile. Using Resurgence's calculators, with the public transport I used, I had a carbon footprint of 127 kg.

Resurgence also gives the CO₂ output per mile of different sorts of cars – as I used a variety of cars, I'm using an average value for petrol and diesel upper and lower medium cars, which from Resurgence is 0.315 kg per mile – 630 kg total on my journey. However, this figure doesn't take into account the fact that I was a passenger in journeys that were *already taking place*, meaning most of the carbon released would have been released regardless of my journey. I weigh about 65kg, and a rough estimate for an average European car is 1500 kg, so in fact I was responsible for about 4.3% of the car emissions – 27.3kg in total.

So in total, on the journey to Egypt, I was responsible for 154.3 kg of CO₂, 36% of the CO₂ that would have been emitted by plane. When the increased impact of airplane emissions is taken into account, I'm pleased to be able to say that I succeeded in reducing my total warming effect to only 12% of what it would have been had I flown.

Across the Ocean

What about the cargo ship journey? By plane, a journey from London to Managua, Nicaragua, would normally involve changing a couple of times, such as in Boston and Miami, making for a total distance of 9272 kms. Another passenger on the ship, who travels by sea regularly told me that normally the trips he takes are much shorter – a week round trip in the North Sea for example – and that on those journeys the ships are normally full to capacity with passengers. Each day of the short trip is charged at the same rate as the journey across the ocean, so with this fixed rate the shipping companies are able to get a full complement of passengers for most of their journeys, even though the long distance ones are much less affordable. The three

flights would use a total of 109,592 kg of fuel. Per passenger this would release 1150 kg of CO₂ per passenger, with a total warming effect equivalent to 3450 kg.

Unfortunately, finding quantities for the amount of carbon a cargo ship releases is next to impossible, so I can't make a direct comparison here. However, I tried to get what info I could from the crew of the BF Ipanema while on it. The chief engineer told me that the fuel consumption of the ship is calculated as it goes along from various measuring instruments throughout the engine. On average, however, he was able to tell me that it uses about 50 tonnes of fuel per day. In 18 days travelling that is 900 tonnes of fuel – 8.2 times that required to fly!

The hardest thing to determine however, is just how much pollution is produced by this fuel. As well as the huge amounts of fuel ships use running their engines non-stop for days, carbon ships are notorious for using very poor quality fuel, in order to save money. The chief engineer told me that the ship uses 3 types of fuel – normal fuel oil when in port and low sulfur fuel when in European seas, in order to comply with regulations. However, on the open seas it uses the cheapest oil it can, with a sulfur content of 10%, and correspondingly bad effects on the environment. Although sulfur dioxide does not contribute to global warming, there is no doubt that the pollution from ship engines is particularly bad for the atmosphere as a whole. Just as airplanes' emissions are 3 times more damaging than those of normal ground-level travel, it may well be that emissions from ship fuel have a greater impact than normal land travel emissions. Regardless, with the large amount of fuel used it's clear that the ship has at least an equivalent warming effect as the flights, if not greater.

However, as with hitch-hiking, as a passenger on the BF Ipanema I was tagging along on a journey that would have happened whether I and the other passengers were there or not. A cargo ship is of course a massive vehicle, and the extra fuel required to carry my 65 kg body is therefore negligible. According to [marine tracker](#), the ship weighs 21,018 tonnes. (The chief mate told me that on our journey, this included 15,000 tonnes of cargo). In total then, I was responsible for 0.0003 % of the power required to push the ship – a tiny 2.78 kgs of fuel.



Last view of France from the BF Ipanema

But... Some Obvious Problems with Cargo Ships

Of course, the time spent getting across the ocean means that cargo ships can't allow a trip in the time most people have for a holiday. According to the website of the company I got my ticket from, most passengers on these ships tend to be retired, which allows them the time for the trip.

In addition however, as I mentioned on my blog before I left the UK, cargo ship travel is also not a cheap option – in fact my one-way trip cost **twice** the price of a **return** plane ticket, at £1500. This is clearly a prohibitive price for a casual trip. Talking to the crew, it was evident that there was little cost to carrying passengers on the ship – a few dollars a day extra in food and very little staff time, so the high price seems to be an unnecessary barrier to allowing more people to travel on cargo ships, and I tried hard to discover why the companies charged it.

One of the 2 passengers, Friedel, had worked as a chief engineer on cargo ships for years before he retired, and Ipanema was only carrying 3 out of a possible 7 passengers, so why the companies don't reduce their rates for longer trips, making this alternative to flying more accessible, I do not know!

Conclusion

But even if more people had the time and money for these journeys, could cargo ships ever really offer an alternative to mass international air travel? As we've seen, cargo ships themselves are no less polluting than airplanes, in fact using about 8 times the fuel of an airplane for the same journey. They therefore only count as an environmentally friendly option as long as the passenger does not contribute significantly to the reason the ship travels.

Friedel also told me that cargo companies first started to take passengers when the international financial crisis of the 80s pushed them to look for other sources of funds. However, while the extra funds from passengers are of course valuable to the companies, at the moment it is certainly not their reason for operating. Nevertheless, if ships were used to replace and significantly reduce the

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amount of flights we take as tourists, the shipping itself would have to become a passenger industry, and the carbon they emit would no longer be for the sake of cargo, but a part of the footprint of the passengers themselves.

So what does this mean in the long run? The simple, unavoidable fact is that mass international travel powered by fossil fuels inevitably involves pumping out huge amounts of carbon. There is simply no way with our current technology to get the energy required for such long journeys without it being a significant part of our society's carbon footprint. The conclusion then is that, if we are to take seriously our responsibility for climate change in the West, we will have to reduce the flights we make, and search for alternative technologies to replace them. Needless to say, as the impacts of climate change are felt more and more consciously by us, these changes will start to seem more urgent. Unfortunately, by then it will be much too late to do anything about it, or prevent catastrophes in tropical countries such as Nicaragua, where the effects of climate change are already evident.



Bayram - another of the friendly Turks who gave James a lift

What alternatives are there? The most obvious is not to fly – a huge amount of business travel could be avoided by communicating over the internet for example. But shorter flights are also much better than long ones, as they emit their pollution at lower altitudes. As far as holidays are concerned, this means more holidays in the UK, and more in easier reach by train in Europe. With the Eurostar, all of Europe, including the sunny Mediterranean, is available to us without flying. Although you won't be able to get there and back in a weekend, by land you get to see all the places you pass through on the way. And of course, if you were feeling really adventurous and wanted to meet some people on the way, you could always try hitch-hiking too, and have almost no carbon footprint at all!

<http://www.enca.org.uk/flightlesstravel.htm>

References: My information regarding flights' emissions, their quantities and additional impacts, is from chooseclimate.org. My information regarding carbon emitted from surface travel is from resurgence.org. 1500 kg for the weight of a car is a figure I found on a few websites, including [this one](#), [the specs for a BMW](#)

Dole begins payments to Central American banana workers

Our regular readers will be aware that for many years and in many previous newsletter editions ENCA has followed and reported on the struggle of Central American banana workers whose health was affected by the banana companies' use of the chemical pesticide nemagon. Now at last the companies are finally having to face justice and are beginning to make some compensatory payments to workers who have survived the struggle.

24. 9. 2012

U.S. fruit giant Dole Food Company, Inc. this week began paying a settlement to some 5,000 former Central American banana workers who sued the company for exposing them to the harmful pesticides Nemagon and Fumazone while they worked for the company. The agreement terminates 38 lawsuits filed in the United States and Nicaragua alleging pesticide-related injuries, the company said.

The complaints concerned pesticides sprayed on crops to control worms for over two decades, before they were banned in 1977 following reports of infertility among male workers exposed to them.

The terminated lawsuits included two Nicaraguan judgements totalling \$907.5 million. The agreement was reached with Provost Umphrey law firm, which had represented the foreign plaintiffs, Dole said, without providing further information about the possible value of the settlement.

"The termination of these 38 lawsuits takes Dole completely out of all Provost Umphrey DBCP litigation ... and moves Dole closer to the eventual elimination of all DBCP lawsuits," Dole's Executive Vice President C. Michael Carter said in a statement last week. "Though



Nicaraguan banana workers in their makeshift encampments protesting outside the National Assembly building (2007).

there is no reliable scientific basis for alleged injuries from the agricultural field application of DBCP, Dole has been willing to consider possible agreements which recognize that there is no causal connection between DBCP and plaintiffs' allegations."

The company had refused to pay until lawsuits against it had been dismissed and each of the plaintiffs had signed a release agreeing not to sue Dole again for injuries linked to the chemicals.

The settlement covers 3,157 Nicaraguans, 780 Costa Ricans and 1,000 Hondurans who worked for Dole during the period from 1973 to 1980 when the company used the pesticides. Many of the workers spent 16 years struggling to win a settlement.

Reproduced from the Make Fruit Fair website (www.makefruitfair.org.uk) which cited the source as the Tico Times.

Chemicals used on banana plantations harm health of indigenous children

From Banana Link, 13.07.12



Scientists in Costa Rica have published the report of a study undertaken to evaluate children's exposure to chlorpyrifos in villages situated nearby banana plantations and plantain farms in Costa Rica. 140 , mainly indigenous Ngäbe and Bribri, were included in the study which revealed that 'children living nearby plantations with chlorpyrifos-treated bags are exposed to levels of the chemical which may harm their health'. Throughout Latin American and West Africa, chlorpyrifos-treated bags are widely used to protect banana plants from insects and to fulfill product standards, even in populated areas. One of the villages featured in the study, Daytonia, situated outside the Bribri Indigenous Territory, is inhabited almost exclusively by indigenous Ngäbe migrants from Panama. Daytonia is surrounded by two large-scale banana

plantations with intensive chemical pesticide use. The study revealed that the distance between houses and the banana plantations ranged from 15 to 80 metres and that the school and soccer-field, where local children usually play, are in close proximity to the plantations, without any physical barrier. The bananas produced here are exported to the US and Europe. Health impacts of exposure to this organophosphate include suicidal thoughts, respiratory problems and birth defects. The report concluded that interventions to reduce chlorpyrifos exposure are therefore 'likely to improve children's health and environment in banana and plantain growing regions'. Some plantations in Central America do use bags without chlorpyrifos and organic certification prohibits the use of bags lined with chlorpyrifos. Watch a Banana Link short film shot recently in Cameroon that details the use of chlorpyrifos-treated bags - Labouring in the field. Banana Link also have a wide range of films that detail the environmental and health impacts of tropical fruit production.

<http://www.bananalink.org.uk/films-online>

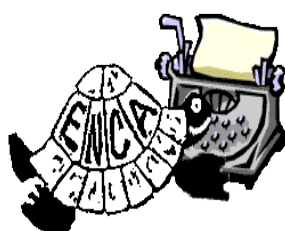
Yet more banana news

COSIBAH (the Honduran Agroindustrial Workers' Union Coordinating Body), have announced the creation of a new trade union at three plantations, Finca Las Tres Hermanas. The plantation is owned by Honduran capital and sells all its fruit from 425 hectares to Chiquita, employing 400 workers.

What makes the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria del Banano (Sitrainba) unusual is that, as an industrial union, it can recruit members from any other plantations in the country. It is also not restricted to workers with permanent contracts, as any worker hired to work under any type of contract in the industry can join.

As well as being GlobalGAP and Rainforest Alliance certified, Las Tres Hermanas has an active social responsibility policy and is actively engaged in a workers' empowerment programme. The company's website states that 'all these efforts aim to make the worker, as the basic resource for decision-making in the company, feel that s/he has the capacity to influence important tasks together with the organisation.'

COSIBAH, which has actively supported workers in the creation of their new union, believes that this is a major breakthrough for workers in nationally owned banana companies.



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enca.info@gmail.com

Impunity leads to more killings

By Jorge Varela Márquez¹ (1999 Goldman Prize winner)

Honduras, 09/10/12 (Translated by James Harrison)

The prawn and king prawn aqua-farms in tropical wetland areas have caused blood, destruction and pollution. Laws, decrees and national agreements have all been violated, along with International Conventions such as the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's Committee on Fisheries Report, amongst others. These violations also occur despite the Codes of Conduct of the industry's businesses and associations. Certification or Green Awards are generally used to greenwash the image of the supermarket chains and of the products that they sell to consumers in Europe, Japan and the USA.

Destruction of the mangrove ecosystems and everything connected to them has been evident across the world, to the extent that 50% of these wetlands have been destroyed, primarily as a result of prawn aquaculture. In Honduras, more than 20,000 hectares of wetlands have been converted into prawn ponds. These in turn have polluted adjacent waters upon which the oxidation lakes for the treatment of sewage waters rely. The stench of solid waste acts against the wellbeing and health of the communities.

Meanwhile, as many as 13 local fishermen have been assassinated and several seriously wounded. All of these crimes are connected to the prawn industry and its impunity.

A few months ago the destruction of mangrove swamps by the company 'Granjas Marinas San Bernardo' (GMSB) was proven². The aqua-farmers have since signed a 'Cooperation Agreement' with the institution responsible for protecting the mangroves – that is the ICF, the Institute of Forest Conservation. On 1st September, GMSB guards were accused of killing Yelson Gabino García Mendoza (17 years old), who according to the report of a witness who is now under protection, was found fishing in the Tionostal estuary at 2am on 31 August when the guards captured him. They took him away and later presented his lifeless body. The corpse showed signs of torture, blows to the body and a face riddled with shotgun pellets, apparently fired from short range.

GMSB now stands connected to one more of the 13 unpunished murders.³ The majority of these have been resolved with small sums of financial compensation or temporary work for the victims' relatives.

But the same occurs across the world, whilst people in the North sample crustaceans arriving from the South unperturbed - 'bon appetit'. This only confirms what we have been saying for many years: 'Impunity leads to more killings'.

[1] Jorge Varela is a Honduran conservationist who is recognised internationally - The Committee for the Defence and Development of the Flora and Fauna of the Gulf of Fonseca (CODDEFFAGOLF) for more information see www.coddeffagolf.org

[2] ENCA believes that the GMSB company is the major supplier of king prawns to Marks & Spencers in the UK. These are advertised as 'sustainably farmed prawns from Honduras'.

[3] This is a straight translation of Jorge Varela's article, the wording of which is ambiguous at this point. To clarify, it is believed that, of the 13 murders of fisherman in this area, only

five of them are potentially linked to GMSB.

Accompaniment in Honduras

At ENCA's last meeting on 21st October 2012, ENCA members were fortunate that Jill Powis came to talk to us about her year's work in Honduras. Jill had served as an accompanier with the Honduran organisation COFADEH (Committee of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras), amongst others, and had only returned to the UK a few days before the ENCA meeting. For this newsletter, Jill has written a report about her work in Honduras.

As ENCA members will be all too aware, the statistics on political violence in Honduras since the June 2009 coup are chilling – over 80 campesinos in the Bajo Aguán and their supporters have been assassinated for defending their land and livelihoods against rapacious landowners; more members of the LGBTI community were killed in the first 6 months after the coup than in the whole of the previous decade, and the country now has the highest murder rate for journalists in the Americas. It was against this background that the Honduras Accompaniment Project (normally known as PROAH - its initials in Spanish) was set up, to provide physical accompaniment to human rights defenders to deter attacks upon them, as well as to document and disseminate information on the situation, and engage in advocacy. I volunteered with PROAH from October 2011.

Most organisations that PROAH accompanies are ones readers will be familiar with. For example, we made regular visits to the Caribbean coast to the Garífuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz, and to Zacate Grande, on the Pacific Coast (ENCA 56) – both stunningly beautiful – where radio stations have been set up to mobilise their communities against the powerful economic interests which, through bribery, intimidation, and persecution, are trying to take over their lands for tourist schemes (ENCA 55). Inland, the Siria Valley Environmental Committee has for years been fighting for reparations for the damage to the environment and health of communities caused by Goldcorp's mining operations (July 2011, ENCA 53). Much of PROAH's accompaniment of the Committee members has centred on the court proceedings they have faced, on trumped-up charges of 'obstructing a forestry management plan', through their efforts to protect a watershed from logging.

The Committee receives legal support from COFADEH (the Committee for the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras) (ENCA 54 and 56), which is the organisation that we accompanied the most, not only because, like PROAH, it is based in the capital, Tegucigalpa, but also due to the sheer range of its mandate and activities, which have expanded dramatically since it was set up in the 1980s to achieve justice for the victims of the Dirty War. It is now the most prominent human rights organisation in the country.

I accompanied COFADEH staff both in the capital and on their journeys into the regions. One of the most memorable trips was to the Moskitia in the east of the country, whose remoteness makes it the perfect site for landing drugs planes. In May 2012, a passenger boat had been fired upon by helicopters under the command of the US Drugs Enforcement Administration, while intercepting a drugs consignment at Ahuas, a village on the Patuca River. Four people were killed, including two pregnant women and a 14-year-old boy, and four people wounded. COFADEH organised a mission there, as there was an urgent need to clarify the facts, not only because of the seriousness of the incident, but because the US and Honduran authorities had responded to the tragedy by smearing the victims, implying that they were involved in the drugs trade. To get there, we travelled in a small plane (about 20 seats) over the jungle of the western Mosquitia, and then in an even smaller plane (a 4-seater) flying low over the pine savanna, in the east of the region, and landing in a cow field. Through exhaustive interviews with the families of the victims, survivors, and other witnesses, COFADEH was able to build a chilling picture of the chain of events – the lack of a warning before the bullets rained down from the helicopters onto the boat, the failure to help the survivors after they had jumped into the river to escape, helicopters landing in Ahuas and its crew terrorising the villagers by raiding their houses at gunpoint. As well as lodging an official complaint with the Prosecution Service, and publishing an authoritative report which clarified the facts and has been used as an important tool in lobbying the US over the incident, COFADEH has also supported the victims by, for example, ensuring that they received medical treatment, in the absence of any help from the authorities.

This trip was one of many which brought home to me the importance of COFADEH, as well as the dedication of its staff and the intensity of their concern for the victims. Along with my accompaniment of other Honduran organisations which continue their fantastic work despite persecution, it is what made my year in Honduras such an inspiring experience.

Useful websites

PROAH blog:

<http://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com>
which contains articles on the activities of the organisations it accompanies.

Friendship Office of the Americas: PROAH's parent organisation <http://www.friendshipamericas.org>

Triunfo de la Cruz: OFRANEH (national Garifuna organisation) <http://ofraneh.org>

Zacate Grande: <http://zacategrande.blogspot.co.uk/>
APUVIMEH: <http://apuvimeh.org> (accompanied by PROAH)

COFADEH: <http://www.cofadeh.org> and
<http://www.defensoresenlinea.com>

PROAH is seeking volunteers to work as international human rights accompaniers in Honduras as from January 2013. The minimum period for volunteers is 3 months (preferably 6), and the basic requirements include a high level of Spanish and a knowledge of and interest in Central America. Accommodation is provided, but volunteers will normally be expected to cover other costs themselves, or with the support of another organisation. If you're interested, please contact office@friendshipamericas.org. Training in Europe for PROAH candidates with no accompaniment experience or training is provided by Peace Watch Switzerland: <http://www.peacewatch.ch>

More killings of campesinos in the Aguán Valley

November 9-10: José Cecilio Pérez, member of the campesino movement MARCA and president of the campesino enterprise, El Despertar, in the Aguán Valley was kidnapped on Friday afternoon, November 9, 2012. His body was found, Saturday, November 10th.

According to the Permanent Human Rights Observatory of Aguán, Pérez had been granted protective measures by the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights (ICDH). He was kidnapped at 4pm; he was driving a vehicle belonging to the cooperative in the company of the coop's treasurer who herself was recently beaten by heavily armed individuals in another incident. They were conducting cooperative business when heavily armed men driving a beige truck kidnapped Pérez.

MARCA leaders state that the body was found on a riverbank close to a plantation and the vehicle was found abandoned near a gas station in the area. This occurs just two weeks after the murder of three campesinos from the same area and the murder in September of Antonio Trejo, the lawyer for MARCA.

November 5-6: the three campesinos from the Aguán who were assassinated were members of the cooperative in San Estebán (Panama plantation). They were José Omar Paz (25), Reinaldo Rivera Paz (26) and Orlando Campos (41). They were gunned down as they waited at a bus stop on November 5. On November 6th, Marvin Noé García Santos, a policeman, was arrested, accused of being the leader of a gang committing violence against the campesinos. Two others with García escaped and are currently free. They belonged to a group of hitmen called 'Los Cuyos'.

November 8, 2012: 300 army soldiers entered the Paso Aguán plantation in the community called Panama on the left bank of the Aguán at 6am and held the community for 5 hours, detaining a campesino and searching at least 3 homes with no court orders.

Solidarity with Honduras hondsol.mcr@googlemail.com

Pineapple companies building a wall of fire and clear-felling to destroy the Caño Negro Wetlands

By Carlos Salazar Fernández

Transnational fruit companies which produce pineapples are destroying land surrounding and within the Caño Negro Wetlands area, a Ramsar site, according to a denouncement made by Claudio Monge Pereira, a legislator of the Citizen's Action Party (PAC).

Right from the beginning of this century, Caño Negro has been under pressure from orange producers and cattle ranchers, and now it is the turn of the pineapple companies. In recent years on Costa Rican territory, the companies have managed to sow more than 80,000 hectares of the fruit which is sold in Europe and the United States as "environmentally friendly" fruit.



Forest clearance for pineapples

According to deputy Monge, Caño Negro has had to withstand negative impacts such as fires set deliberately, indiscriminate felling and the construction of drainage ditches to dry out the area. Denouncements have been made by biologists, lawyers, environmentalists and scientists from the country's public universities.

In July [2012], various areas adjoining the wetlands were set alight by owners of neighbouring lands, for which there is photographic evidence from the site. Environmentalists are not ruling out the possibility that these actions may be the response of local people from Caño Negro de Los Chiles, mostly farmers who in April stated their opposition to a ten-year management plan for the Caño Negro Mixto National Wildlife Refuge. This group were objecting to the widening of the buffer zone by up to 1,500 meters. They maintain that this would not allow them to carry on with their farming and cattle ranching.

The formulation of the management plan from 2010 involved the participation of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, the National Biodiversity Institute (Inbio), the Ministry of the Environment (Minaet),

the Río Frio Project, neighbours of Caño Negro and the Union of Los Chiles, San Rafael and Santa Fe de Guatuso. The plan was developed because the Refuge was under threat from illegal and indiscriminate fishing, changes in the habitats caused by sedimentation and agrochemical contamination from the vast expanses of pineapple and orange fields and from pasture, amongst others.

Legislator Monge Pereira made an appeal to the Minaet authorities that they should put an end to the destruction and advance the investigation previously made by the Legislative Commission for the Environment seeking a national moratorium on the sowing of pineapple. Monge presided over that Commission, since when he has promoted the moratorium on the sowing of pineapple in Pococi, Limón, because of the environmental contamination, mainly of water sources, which has caused such serious health problems for the population.

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Nicaragua's Grand Canal

Over the years of its existence, ENCA has followed the Nicaraguan government's plans for the construction of a canal linking the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. These have included blueprints for a dry canal (rail and road) as well as a standard water canal. On 6th November this year, Nicaragua News included the following report using information from Radio La Primerisima (1.11.12), Informe Pastran (30.10.12 and 1.11.12) and El Nuevo Diario (30.10.12).



Nicaragua's Grand Canal continues to move forward President Daniel Ortega met on Oct. 31 with Wen Li, president of HK Nicaraguan Canal Investment Co., the Hong Kong company that was awarded the contract last month to construct the US\$30 billion Nicaraguan Grand Canal. The canal will connect the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean, realizing a dream that has failed to materialise for nearly 500 years since King Philip II of Spain first supported it. Coordinator of the Council of Communication and Citizenship Rosario Murillo spoke of the canal in glowing terms as the realisation of Sandino's dream. She emphasised that the wealth it creates will lift Nicaragua out of a condition of dependency and will economically benefit all Nicaraguans, particularly the poor. Revenue from the canal would raise Nicaragua from the second poorest country in the hemisphere to the richest in Central America, she said. She emphasised that the canal would not only benefit Nicaragua but the Central American region and the world through increased trade. Murillo called construction of the canal a "certainty." HK's contract also includes construction of a railroad, a deep water port at Monkey Point, south of Bluefields on the Caribbean, and modernisation of the Port of Corinto on the Pacific. The canal's route has not yet been finalised but the most likely will be a route from San Juan de Nicaragua on the Caribbean, along the San Juan River to Lake Cocibolca

(Lake Nicaragua), south of Ometepe Island and through an overland cut to Brito on the Pacific. Construction of the canal will start on the Pacific side. When the National Assembly approved construction of the canal last summer it was envisioned as a 10 year project. The Ortega administration now says it might be completed much sooner. The President said that rather than presenting a threat to the Panama Canal, there is a need for another canal to carry the traffic of cargo ships between the Atlantic and Pacific. Costa Rica opposes the canal along its northern border and has appealed to the World Court which is already dealing with a Costa Rican complaint that Nicaragua violated its territory by dredging the Caribbean mouth of the San Juan to restore the main channel to its original navigable route. According to long-standing treaty, the entire San Juan River, to its southern shore, is Nicaraguan sovereign territory. The US government has made no statement to date about the canal and its Chinese contractor, but the whole history of US-Nicaraguan relations has been distorted by the US desire to have control over a canal through Nicaragua. Political analyst Jorge Capelan wrote, "The imperialist pretensions of the US in the region will confront many more problems because they are [now] going to be dealing with the entire international community in a context of declining global power." Chinese companies are investing in infrastructure projects not only in Nicaragua but throughout the region.

Little Concern for the Environment in EU-Central America Agreement

In early December 2012, the European Parliament gave its support to the EU – Central America Association Agreement. This is essentially a free trade agreement but it differs from the regular US-negotiated free trade treaties in that it includes three focuses rather than simply being dedicated to the economic trading relationship. The other two pillars of the agreement are political dialogue and cooperation. Through political dialogue, the EU hopes to assist the process of regional integration within Central America and to help resolve potential conflicts within the region. The cooperation aspect includes assistance with the fights against climate change, drug trafficking and other global problems which beset the region. Despite these extra areas of support, the major thrust of the agreement is through its trade and commerce pillar, and even the other two aspects are really designed to improve the security of investment for European transnational corporations.

Despite its different label, then, like a free trade treaty it is designed to maintain European dominance in trade relationships. We include on the next page one view of the agreement from Central America.

"We can expect an increase in the activities of extractive industries," which bring about "negative environmental and social repercussions," said Juventino Gálvez, the director of the Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment at Rafael Landívar University, a Jesuit university.

This is a delicate issue in several countries of the region. In Guatemala, for example, Montana Exploradora, a subsidiary of the Canadian mining company Goldcorp, has been accused of contaminating rivers and affecting the water supply of 18 indigenous communities in the western department of San Marcos, through its activities at the Marlin gold mine. In May 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights called on the Guatemalan government to suspend the operation of the mine, but it continues to operate.

The entry into force of the Association Agreement, signed on Jun. 29 by the EU, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, depends on its ratification in the European Parliament and the legislatures of the six Central American countries. The agreement establishes mutual commitments in three areas: political dialogue, cooperation and trade.

With regard to trade, it will eliminate tariffs on agricultural products (such as coffee, fruit, vegetables and meat), textiles and manufactured goods, while opening up markets to financial, telecommunication, transportation and other services, as well as government procurement.

As for cooperation, the agreement aims to promote technical assistance and exchange in the use of clean energies, mining, tourism, fishing, transportation, sustainable development and the environment. The most significant section of the agreement with regard to the environment is found in this chapter, under Title V, which also addresses natural disasters and climate change - two key issues for the region.

In the area of political dialogue, one of the aims is to establish common ground in areas such as the rule of law, good governance, democracy, human rights, gender equality, the rights of indigenous peoples, poverty reduction and migration, among others.

For Gálvez, when the 'potential' expansion of monoculture plantations is added to the equation, the result will be greater conflict "due to competition between agroindustrial operations and rural communities for access to strategic resources." Oil palm plantations, which tripled in size between 2003 and 2010, have given rise to violent land disputes, especially in northern Guatemala, where hundreds of peasant farmers have

been displaced and a number have been killed in clashes with the police.

Miguel Mira of the non-governmental Centre for Investment and Trade Research of El Salvador believes that "the only interest behind these agreements is to open up more markets to trade and investment for big transnational corporations, while labour and environmental issues are considered irrelevant."

Although the agreement addresses sustainable development and the environment, there is no guarantee of protection for Central America, one of the regions with the greatest biodiversity in the world. Article 284 on trade and sustainable development "stipulates that these matters are excluded from the procedures established for the settlement of eventual conflicts," Van Mele stressed. Moreover, there are various interpretations of sustainable development, he said. For example, the promotion of agrifuels as "green energy" to replace fossil fuels "could give rise to deforestation to allow for the planting of monocultures, or to hunger caused by an increase in the price of corn, a staple food in the region, due to its high demand for conversion into ethanol," he warned.

An evaluation of the agreement requested by the European Commission in 2009 concluded that, in addition to its economic and trade benefits, it would generate greater pressure on land, coastal and maritime resources, with a specific warning on the potential increase in monocultures.

Gustavo Hernández, the coordinator in Brussels of the non-governmental Latin American Association of Development Promotion Organisations, told Tierramérica that the sanctioning mechanisms for non-compliance stipulated "are not binding" and that there is "little participation by civil society, particularly the majority sectors of the population who will be the most affected" by the agreement.

Muñoz recognises that all industries generate impacts, but believes that it is necessary to "seek a balance." "Without the profits from coffee, for example, how many people would be left without an income? And I'm not talking about the plantation owners," he said.

Source: <http://tierramerica.info> Tierramerica

Visit
enca.org.uk/mining
For more on the extractive industries
in Central America

Firewood, tortillas and floods

It may sometimes be difficult to see the link between the tortillas served with your meals in Managua and the floods that frequently occur in the city, but it exists.

Tortillas in Managua are cooked over firewood from the higher zones of the city and neighbouring municipalities such as Tipitapa which is one of the most deforested in the country. Jaime Incer Barquero, president of Fundenec SOS and a former Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources, never tires of pointing out the contradiction to the people in the higher zones of Managua: "In the mornings they go down to the city with their carts full of firewood, and later they return with water."¹ Incer points out that these people do not have any water because they are felling their trees for firewood which they sell in order to buy water. If they didn't fell their trees, their water sources would still be viable and they could save themselves the journey.

According to an article in La Prensa, more than one of the wells of the Nicaraguan Company of Water and Sewage Systems (ENACAL) in the south of the city has dried up. Floods, droughts, a lack of water and even landslides are only some of the most dangerous collateral damage caused, at least in part, by the irrational use of firewood in Nicaragua. "Urbanisation has only increased the use of firewood for cooking. The Young Environmentalists Club believes that the firewood problem is a reflection of two things: the underdevelopment of the country and the difficulty in accessing alternative technologies."²

¹ Jaime Incer Barquero cited in 'La leña causa serios daños colaterales', in La Prensa, Managua, 6 March 2011.

² Nicaragua News (8 March 2011) 'Firewood cooking has many consequences', Nicaragua News Service, Managua.

US threat to El Salvador

Laura Jean of CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) recently wrote to CISPES supporters with the following observations on the US Ambassador's threats to the Salvadoran government about public-private partnerships and development aid.

Honestly, it didn't surprise me when I heard the US Ambassador's new threat: that the US would withhold development aid to El Salvador unless the government agreed to open up the rest of their state industries – the ports, the airports, electricity, possibly even water – to foreign corporations.

It didn't surprise our allies in El Salvador, either. When I talked to Wilfredo Berrios from the Telecommunications Workers Union, he said, "*Compañera*, this is nothing new. The US government and the IMF have been twisting our arm to turn our industries over to foreign corporations for 20 years. But every time the private companies come in, we've seen our wages plummet, prices skyrocket and too many people laid off. We've had enough."

That's why CISPES is standing with the Salvadoran labour movement as they fight to stop the so-called "public-private partnerships" that the US government is pushing.

Our compañero reminded me: "We've won big battles against privatization before. We can win this fight too."

Websites: CISPES - www.cispes.org

Doha Climate Summit Ends With No New CO2 Cuts or Funding

By [Stephen Leahy](#)

International environmental journalist

The United Nations climate talks in Doha went a full extra 24 hours and ended without increased cuts in fossil fuel emissions and without financial commitments between 2013 and 2015. "This is an incredibly weak deal," said Samantha Smith representing the Climate Action Network, a coalition of more than 700 civil society organisations. "Governments came here with no mandate for action," Smith said in a press scrum moments after the meeting known as COP 18 ended and the 195 parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) approved a complex package called "The Doha Climate Gateway".

The Doha Gateway creates a second phase of the Kyoto Protocol to cut fossil fuel emissions by industrialised nations from 2013 to 2020 but does not set new targets. There is also no financial support to help poor countries adapt to impacts of climate change – only agreement for more meetings in 2013. Talks will also begin next year to create a 'mechanism' to assess damages and costs for countries suffering losses from climate change.

Finally, the Doha Climate Gateway has an agreed outline for two years of negotiations on a new global climate treaty that would go into legal force in 2020.

"It is impossible to get everyone here to smile I too am disappointed," said Qatar's Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, the COP18 president. Al-Attiyah told Tierramérica he was surprised countries wanted to make so many changes throughout the two weeks and right up to the final hours. However, this is a "historic" agreement, Al-Attiyah insisted.

Doha will do nothing to cut emissions that are taking the world to four degrees and more of warming. It offers little in terms of finance to help poor countries cope with climate change, Smith said. Smith singled out the US and Canada for blocking progress on key issues. Canada was one of the worst, she said. While profiting from its massive oil sands operations, it was "super-obstructive on finance".

ENCA on Anti-Austerity March

On Saturday 20th March 2012, ENCA joined forces with the Climate Bloc of Friends of the Earth, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC), the Central America Womens' Network (CAWN) and many, many other trade union groups, environmental groups and activists to demonstrate our solidarity with groups opposing the general thrust of the currently prevailing neoliberal policies. The massive demonstration marched through London to Hyde Park.



All those present oppose the austerity policies being implemented by the UK government and others in response to the global financial recession. These policies impose cuts on those groups of society which can least afford them, whilst those who were responsible for the crisis - especially the bankers of the world - receive huge pay-offs and bonuses.

The photos show ENCA members and the new ENCA banner on the march.

ENCA meeting dates 2013



ENCA meetings are held at the NSC's office at the Durham Road Centre – see address on page 12. The nearest tube station is Finsbury Park on the Victoria and Piccadilly lines. Meetings are held on Sundays from 12:30 pm to 5 pm and we start with lunch which is made up of whatever people attending choose to bring with them to share.

If you are reading the printed version of this newsletter then you have probably noticed this issue is in full colour! We just wanted to show how good it looks. If you like it then consider swapping to an electronic version of the newsletter, same informative content, but it saves us money, saves trees and is always in full colour!

To change the way you receive your newsletter contact enca.info@gmail.com

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