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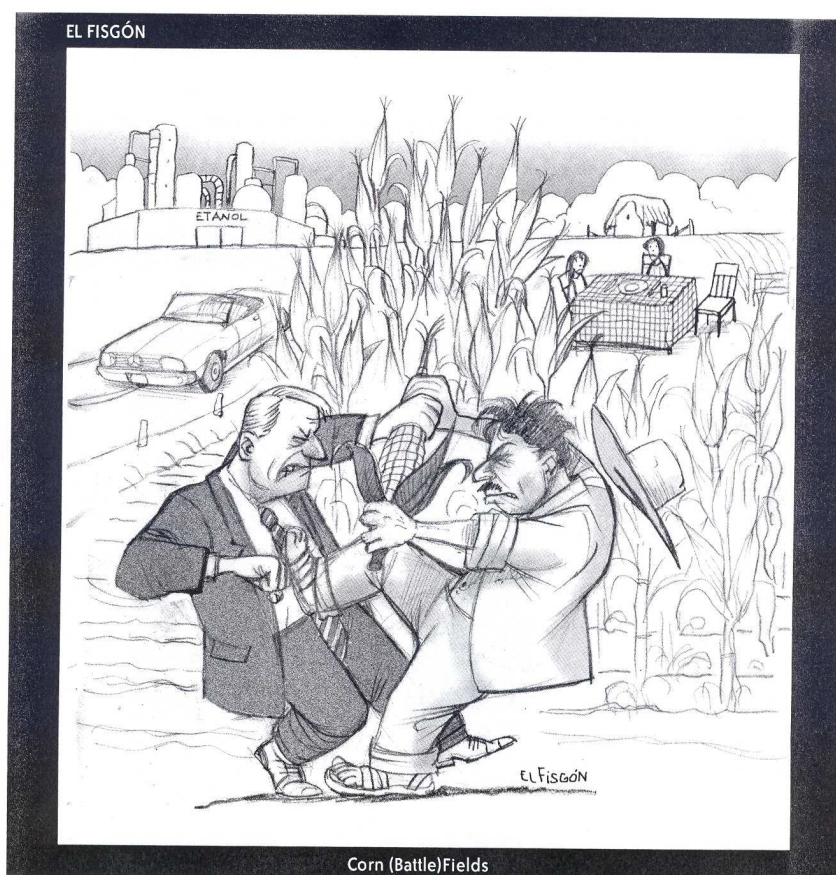
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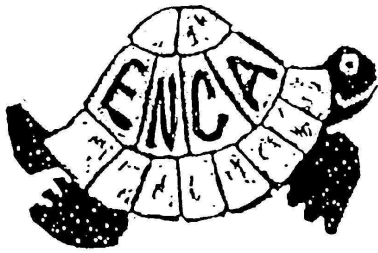
June 2008

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Central American Famine Looms?



Corn (Battle)Fields



Editorial

We hope that our readers can always see the links between the articles that we include in ENCA Newsletters, but in this issue those links are clearer than ever. We begin with the food crisis affecting Central America as well as the rest of the world, a crisis due in part to the developed world's demand for energy from agrifuels which is the subject of our second article. The production of plantation agrifuels depends heavily on the use of toxic pesticides, which are the subject of the following article. One of the alternatives to such a poisonous system of production is found in permaculture, which is

the subject of the next article. In a community in El Salvador permaculture is being used to overcome the problems caused by transnational companies that pursued profit regardless of the harmful effects on the environment. In Honduras other companies pursuing profits are wreaking havoc in the pine forests of Olancho department, where local people have just finished their Third March For Life from Olancho to Tegucigalpa in protest at the greed which ruins their environment – and this is the subject of the next article. This is followed by an examination of the deforestation rates in Central America. And finally, to round off this catalogue of injustices created by the rich world, we see how Central American populations are paying for the climate change caused primarily by the inordinate consumption rates of the so-called developed world.

Leaders Debate Common Food Strategy, as Famine Looms over Central America

In April details emerged about the desperate food crisis in Central America, where famine is about to become a reality as Ibero-American Presidents met on an emergency basis to forge a common strategy to address the region's urgent need for greater quantities of cheap food.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez met in Caracas with leaders from Cuba, Bolivia, and Nicaragua - all members of the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America (ALBA) - to set up a \$100 million program to combat rising food prices, as well as create agro-industrial programs to produce basic grains, beef, and milk within the region. Two days later agriculture ministers of Central America, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Venezuela also met to agree an ambitious \$660 million plan to increase the region's food security in the face of what the United Nations recently classified as a "global food crisis".

The crisis in Central America is dire with famine looming over several nations whose ability to produce food has been destroyed by years of globalisation and free trade. There was considerable agreement at both meetings that neoliberal economic policies in force across the region and the agricultural subsidies of the US, Europe and Japan have together resulted in the virtual collapse of agricultural sectors in the region and a dependence on the import of basic foods.

The case of Guatemala, a country targeted for big biofuels production, is an example of what is happening in the region. Ten years ago, it was self-sufficient in food production. But over time, this was replaced by huge projects to produce sugar cane and African palm oil for export. These had no need for the rural labour force, which subsequently migrated to the cities to live in slums. Sugar cane production increased by 99% from 1990 to 2005, while production of beans, corn, and wheat - basic staples in Guatemala's diet - declined dramatically during the same timeframe: beans by 26%, corn by 22%, and wheat by 99%.

Today, one-half of all malnourished people in Central America are Guatemalan - 3 million people, the majority of whom are children under the age of five. This pattern is repeated throughout the region – particularly in Nicaragua and Honduras, where leaders fear that growing social protest over food prices will affect their ability to govern. Even in Panama, which prides itself in having one of the fastest growing

economies in Latin America, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that 25% of the Panamanian population is undernourished and 40% is classified as poor.

According to the Director of the Environmental Policy Initiative Centre in Managua, Cirilo Otero, Nicaragua, more than any other country in the region, will be crucial in the struggle to ensure regional food security. Otero also pointed out, however, that Nicaragua has the fewest financial and technological resources in the region and so must forge alliances with other countries in order to boost significantly its agricultural production in the short term. Nicaragua was once considered to be the 'bread basket' of Central America, but years of armed conflict followed by 16 years of IMF structural adjustment prescriptions ransacked the productive capacity of the country's small and medium farming sector, the sector most able to produce basic foods.

The agenda for both meetings was focussed on increasing production of basic grains, and creating "new financial instruments" to pay for this. According to Nicaragua's Agriculture Minister, all are agreed that increased food production must be marketed, at fair prices, first to the countries in the region.

In El Salvador the Citizen's Network Against Transgenics and the Platform for El Salvador's Sustainable Agriculture have listed a six point strategy for achieving food security in their country.

1. The Salvadoran agricultural sector will not develop without the full willingness of the government to reactivate agriculture by removing the measures taken over the last 18 years which have brought us to dependence on the global powers and large transnational companies.
2. Following the practice of the developed countries, the government should establish a programme of agricultural subsidies which benefit local producers and in this way cover the current deficit of 45% in cereals and 65% in vegetables.
3. Instead of promoting transgenic seeds, the Salvadoran government should develop a technical agricultural plan to stimulate the use of native seeds and organic fertilisers which does not make the sector dependent on transnationals.
4. Above all, the policies of agricultural production should be geared to restoring Salvadoran food sovereignty and not to industrial production to meet international demand.
5. The government should establish, as do the governments of France and Germany amongst others, a system of state purchase of agricultural products in order to protect its farmers from unfair competition and to guarantee the stability of the local economy.
6. The Legislative Assembly should approve a national moratorium on the use of transgenic seeds and the marketing of any transgenic products, similar to that adopted by the European Union.

The reference above to "industrial production to meet international demand" has recently become ever more critical because of the huge amount of productive land that has been taken over for the growth of agrifuels, such as sugar cane and African palm, to produce an alternative to oil for the motorised transport of the wealthy countries of the world. The global peasant movement, La Via Campesina, has blamed the record highs for grain prices on the shift to biofuel (agrifuel) production, the deregulation of food markets and the fact that more food production is in the hands of transnational corporations. So this is not just an issue about food security; it is also of vital importance to the health of the population and the environment, as our next article demonstrates.

Sources:

EIR News Service 24.04.08 'Ibero-American Leaders Debate Common Food Strategy as Famine Looms over Central America'

Nicaragua News Service 15.04.08, 22.04.08, 29.04.08 and 13.05.08.

Global Justice Ecology Project 13.05.08 'Civil Society at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity', Press release.

UNES April 2008 'Rechazan la introducción de transgénicos como una solución a la crisis alimentaria en El Salvador', *Revista Ecotopia* 203, San Salvador.

World Development Movement Spring 2008 'Poor will go hungry, UN warns', *Action*.

Victims of Biofuel:

Nicaraguan Communities Affected by IFC-Funded Ethanol Plant File Complaint

April 1, 2008, Washington, D.C.

Over 700 community members and ex-sugarcane workers from the Pacific coast of Nicaragua filed a complaint yesterday with the International Finance Corporation for injuries to their health and environment caused by the operations of Nicaragua Sugar Estates Limited (NSEL). NSEL received a \$55 million loan from the IFC in 2006 to increase its sugarcane production and to fund the construction of an ethanol plant. The complaint to the Office of the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman, the mechanism established to hold the IFC accountable to communities for violations of environmental and social standards, gave evidence that NSEL activities violated these standards.

Much of the sugarcane produced by this project, like an increasing percentage of the 145 million tons of sugar produced each year worldwide, will be used for biofuels. Although the benefits of using biofuels as an alternative to fossil fuels are touted, the costs of its use are often significant and overlooked. Sugarcane production for biofuel use, for example, can exact a high toll on the environment and the people who work to produce it.

The towns of Chichigalpa, Goyena, and Abangasca, in Nicaragua, are surrounded by thousands of hectares of sugarcane. Members of the communities are experiencing respiratory problems caused by the clouds of smoke and ash created when the sugarcane fields are burned prior to harvest. Moreover, many community members believe that the chemicals applied by the company to the sugarcane are the cause of the epidemic of chronic renal insufficiency in the region, prevalent among those who work in NSEL's fields. The communities also worry that use of significant volumes of water to process the sugarcane will dry up their rivers, threatening their water supply.

"The IFC must ensure that it does not trade one environmental problem for another," commented Kris Genovese, Staff Attorney for the Center for International Environmental Law, who assisted the communities in the preparation of their complaint. "These communities represent the thousands of unseen victims of biofuel projects that fail to account for their impact on human health and natural resources."

The complaint outlines how these impacts result from violations of IFC standards, including violation of a requirement to ensure that the project has broad community support.

The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) is a nonprofit organisation working to use international law and institutions to protect the environment, promote human health, and ensure a just and sustainable society. They provide a wide range of services including legal counsel, policy research, analysis, advocacy, education, training, and capacity building. For more information, please contact Kristen Genovese at www.ciel.org



Palm oil plantations like this one have taken much of the best land for the production of basic crops

Note: Following the practice of the Global Justice Ecology Project, ENCA would normally use the term 'agrifuel' rather than 'biofuel', but on this occasion felt it inappropriate to alter the wording used in this report by CIEL.

El Salvador ratifies the Stockholm Convention

Eliminate and reduce production, use and discarding of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

Several months after UNES (the Salvadoran Ecological Unit) demanded that the Salvadoran government ratify the Stockholm Convention (POPs), the Legislative Assembly agreed unanimously to ratify last week. The POPs Convention provides a framework under the precautionary principle aimed at guaranteeing the safe elimination of and reduction in the manufacture and use of these substances which are noxious for human health and the environment.

The Convention also aims to limit contamination by POPs, defining the substances involved and allowing the option to add further substances in the future. It also covers rules for production, import and export of POPs chemicals. POPs are chemicals which possess specific toxic properties, and unlike other contaminants, resist degradation, which makes them particularly harmful for human health and the environment. POPs can bioaccumulate in living tissues, they are transported by air, water and in the tissues of migratory species, and build up in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. For this reason, given the cross-border problems they pose, it has been necessary to take control measures at international level.

The POPs Convention covers 12 priority POPs, manufactured deliberately or liberated unintentionally. Unintentional generation includes various sources, such as domestic combustion or the use of waste incinerators. These priority POPs are aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex, toxaphene, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), hexachlorobenzene, dioxins and furans. Two years ago, the Convention added another 12 contaminant chemicals to this list.

Source: UNES 'El Salvador ratifica el Convenio de Estocolmo', *Revista Ecotopia* 200, Feb. 2008. (Translated by Stephanie Williamson.)

With respect to the Stockholm Convention, the status of other Central American countries is as follows:

Belize signed to support in 2002, but not yet ratified.
Costa Rica signed in 2002 and ratified in 2007.
El Salvador signed in 2001 but not yet ratified.
Guatemala signed in 2002 but not yet ratified.
Honduras signed in 2002 and ratified in 2005.
Nicaragua signed in 2001 and ratified in 2005.
Panama signed in 2001 and ratified in 2003.

Source: POPs Convention website www.pops.int/reports/StatusOfRatifications.aspx
Accessed 16.04.08.

The urgency of the need for action on this issue is emphasised by the following two articles which we have summarised from the original sources.



Nicaragua:

1,308 pesticide poisonings and 196 fatalities registered officially in 2007. Ministry of Health prepares resolution to ban those pesticides responsible for major poisonings

Press release from Ministry of Health, 9th Feb.2008

According to a report from the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health's Centre for Toxicological Information, Surveillance, Support and Advice, in the first three weeks of 2008, 39 cases of pesticide poisoning were

registered in the country. Figures for the two previous years are given in the table. To address this dramatic situation, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health, along with the Ministries of Agriculture and Forestry and Environment, are preparing a resolution to prohibit the pesticides which trigger most poisonings and completely restrict the sale of products which can cause fatal poisoning.

	Cases of pesticide poisoning	Deaths from pesticide poisoning
2006	1,167	148
2007	1,308	196

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health will carry out activities to reduce poisoning and fatalities linked to pesticides, including training for 320 medics on appropriate treatment for people admitted to emergency hospital departments and training for 22,000 end users in use and handling of pesticides, symptoms of poisoning and safety measures. According to the report, suicide attempts were the most common poisoning route in 2007, with 683 cases, representing 52.2% of total cases. The second most frequent route was occupational exposure, with 343 cases, 26.2% of cases. Actual suicide represented 15% (196 cases) of the total. Dr Jesús Marín from the Toxicology Centre explained that the Ministry is checking pesticide controls at departmental level with the local intersector pesticide commissions, "which will enable us to improve safety, distribution and confiscation".

He also referred to the latest poisonings in Jinotega, due to food contamination, "finding street vendors who sold pesticide products without any form of licence, which then contaminated food. These are being confiscated from all itinerant vendors which use the most pesticides". He commented that poisoning symptoms will depend on the type of pesticide and can be found in the skin, vision, digestive system, may provoke respiratory failure, diarrhoea, convulsions, vomiting and arrhythmic heartbeat, amongst others. Amongst many other recommendations, the Ministry recommended all possible sufferers to go to the nearest health centre when the first symptoms are noticed.

Costa Rica:

Pesticide poisonings cause more than 100 fatalities each year

Krissia Morris Gray, Prensa Libre, 12th March 2008, Costa Rica

According to Fernando Ramírez Muñoz, an agronomist at the Costa Rican National Agricultural University, each year more than 100 poisonings occur because of inappropriate handling of pesticides. There has been a serious deficiency in implementing the national legislation restricting pesticide use. Even though Costa Rica has a series of decrees aimed at restricting and decreasing the use of highly toxic pesticides, what is clear is that these laws have failed to deliver their objectives. Ramírez stated that it is export agriculture which uses most pesticides, such as pineapple and melon, and vegetables for national consumption.

To try and reduce poisonings linked with the use of highly toxic pesticides, Costa Rica is holding an international forum to create awareness, share experiences and propose evidence-based actions to reduce use and therefore poisonings due to the use of these pesticides.

Ramírez asserted that "there is no control by the Ministry of Agriculture over which pesticides should be used and where. In this country, paraquat is the herbicide which causes most fatalities and it is the most commonly used; there are people who even use it to kill grass, while in pineapple cultivation high doses are used, between 10 and 15 litres per hectare, when the standard dose is one or two litres."

Besides the fatal cases, acute poisonings are also extremely worrying. Despite the decrees which aim to restrict or eliminate the use of highly toxic pesticides and the calls to action from public agents including NGOs and international fora, other factors relating to the control failures, are heavy pressure from the agrochemical multinationals to sell their products, over and above health and environmental concerns in many cases. "It is not possible that we're using pesticides which do not contaminate water, such as bromacil used in pineapple plantations, but which filters through the soil and then passes into groundwater, used for drinking water. There is a fundamental right to have access to clean water" concluded Ramírez. He added that in the next few days a new decree would be published to avoid the use of endosulfan, currently used on rice.

Diego Arias, from the Department of Typology at the Medicatura Forense, stated that every year they receive over 200 cases to investigate for acute poisoning. In 2006, over half of these proved to be positive. "During 2004 and 2005, poisoning cases remained static but increased in 2006; but now we have to wait and see what effect the new decrees will have."

Source: Prensa Libre, www.prensalibre.co.cr/2008/marzo/12/nacionales12.php

The Permaculture Institute of El Salvador and the Tres de Marzo community

By Kerstin Hansen and Dominic McCann

Following ENCA's study tour of Honduras in August 2007, two ENCA members (the authors of this article) accepted an invitation from Karen Inwood of the Permaculture Institute of El Salvador (IPES). After visiting the IPES base outside San Salvador and learning about how they apply permaculture techniques in a tropical climate we had the privilege to be taken along by two IPES facilitators to one of the communities they are supporting. Permaculture is a holistic approach to the design of gardens and organic agriculture around human habitation. It is generally the policy of IPES to teach farmers how to make the best of the little resources they have got. The purpose of the day trip was for the facilitators to teach members of a community about seed selection.

The community we visited is called Tres de Marzo and is situated close to the sea south-east of Zacatecoluca. It is sandy, hot and dry even during the rainy season. Tres de Marzo is probably the poorest community we had visited during our Central America trip. This realisation came to us as a shock because we had had the impression that El Salvador was generally more prosperous than Honduras or Nicaragua. Tres de Marzo was established about 4 years ago. Before this the inhabitants of the community had squatted on railway land. They originate from various parts of El Salvador, some from towns and cities, other from the countryside. Some had been *campesinos*, others had never worked as farmers. Tres de Marzo is located on land that was used for intensive cotton farming

in the past and as a result the soil is now completely depleted of nutrients. “We analysed soil samples taken from Tres de Marzo and found that there was no fertility left”, IPES told us. In addition, the heavy use of pesticides means that the soil is contaminated. The combination of poor soil fertility and contamination results in very poor yields.

During the seed selection session people were shown how to identify and pick out the biggest seeds from various tomato varieties. They also learned how to choose and mark the strongest maize plants for keeping back some of the grains in order to dry and use them as seeds for the next season.

Until quite recently, Tres de Marzo did not have any latrines and had to use the surrounding abandoned cotton fields as toilets. IPES helped them by providing building materials and expertise to build their own latrines. One of the community’s biggest problems is the lack of clean drinking water. The water in the well one of the inhabitants showed us was very dirty and full of sediments. Water caught in plastic barrels was full of mosquito larvae. Another problem for the community is the lack of trees as building materials for their dwellings. The area is heavily deforested and people have to resort to using sticks, cardboard, plastic sheets and pieces of tin to construct their “houses”. This means that firewood is also very scarce. The communities used to cook their food on open fires. As a result, significant quantities of wood were needed and the women were inhaling smoke while doing the cooking. IPES helped them with materials and advice on how to build proper stoves with flues that duct the smoke outside the house.



One of the stoves in Tres de Marzo constructed with the help of IPES

IPES suggest helping the community to build raised beds and to bring in healthy top soil so people can grow their vegetables in uncontaminated soil. ENCA members have decided that they would be pleased to provide funding for bringing in top soil and are currently considering the amount of the donation that we should make towards this work.

More details of IPES can be found on www.permacultura.org/elsalvador.html

The problems faced by many people in the communities of Olancho are not exactly the same as those of the people of Tres de Marzo in El Salvador, but the nature of their problems is very similar. Instead of coping with soil contaminated by cotton companies which sought to maximise profits regardless of the environmental damages caused in the process, they have to cope with logging companies which seek to maximise profits regardless of the environmental damages caused in the process.

The Environmental Movement of Olancho and the Third March For Life

Regular readers of the ENCA Newsletter will be aware that over the last few years we have given small amounts of support to the MAO (Environmental Movement of Olancho) in Honduras. Our intrepid band of carbon emitters who travelled to Honduras last year also met up with René Gradis and Padre Andrés Tamayo of the MAO to experience some of Olancho’s problems of deforestation at first hand.

Background information on the MAO can be found in the last few ENCA Newsletters and on the MAO's website www.maoambiente.org. What you will not find on their website, nor on ENCA's, is the fact that in January this year a number of ENCA members, along with Jonathon Porritt, nominated the MAO for the 2008 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, awarded to give protection to human rights defenders worldwide. As this newsletter went to the printers we heard that the award this year was made to Mrs Mutabar Tadjibaeva from Uzbekistan who is currently imprisoned in that country. We urge our supporters to consult the website of the awards at www.martinennalsaward.org to find out more about her situation.

The fact that our nominee, Padre Andrés Tamayo and the MAO, did not receive the award this year does not reflect the security of their situation. Members of the MAO remain under threat of death and in need of all the support they can get in terms of international solidarity and pressure. Our previous articles on the MAO and illegal deforestation in Olancho (which can also be found on our website www.enca.org.uk) give all the necessary addresses of those in power who might have a degree of control over the security of the MAO.

In the meantime and also as our newsletter goes to the printers, the MAO is currently undertaking its Third March For Life. Again, the purpose and other details of the MAO's previous marches from the department of Olancho to the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, have been given in previous ENCA Newsletters. All we have space for in this issue is a short extract from the MAO's first report from this, their Third March.

14th May in the town of Catacamas saw the start of the Third March For Life headed by Padre Andrés Tamayo and called by the Environmental Movement of Olancho. Thousands of Olanchans responded to the call and participated in the march from very early in the morning. ...

The activity was inaugurated in the Agricultural University and left very slowly for Catacamas where many organisations joined the March. The speeches demanded a commission of transition to oversee the transfer from COHDEFOR [the corrupt governmental forestry development agency] to the new National Institute for Forestry Conservation and Development (ICF). Forestry policy should be designed to strengthen community organisations and to seek a balance in the management of natural resources. Our people should not have to live in poverty when we have the resources for all of us to live in dignity. Another demand was that the President should ensure that in pursuit of transparency different organisations should be permitted to participate in the monitoring and management of the law and that all employees of the new institution should be publicly selected.



Padre Andrés Tamayo at the start of the Third March For Life

'Honduras is among the leaders in destruction of forests' was one of the rubrics in the following article and perhaps illustrates why the people of Olancho have to go to such lengths in order to have their say.

DEFORESTATION STILL 'WINNING' IN LATIN AMERICA

By Diego Cevallos*

MEXICO CITY, Feb 16 (Tierramérica) - Never before have Latin America and the Caribbean fought so hard against deforestation, say experts and government officials, but logging in the region has increased to the point that it has the highest rate in the world. Of every 100 hectares of forest lost worldwide between the years 2000 and 2005, nearly 65 were in Latin America and the Caribbean. In that period, the average annual rate was 4.7 million hectares lost — 249,000 hectares more than the entire decade of the 1990s.

Deforestation remains difficult to deal with because there are many economic interests in play, according to Ricardo Sánchez, director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations

ENCA Newsletter No. 45, June 2008, p.9

Environment Programme (UNEP). At their latest forum, held Jan. 30-Feb. 1 in Santo Domingo, the region's environment ministers received a limited-circulation report that reveals, among other matters, the failure of strategies against forest destruction. The document, 'Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development - 5 Years After Its Adoption' (ILAC), evaluates the official commitments made by governments in 2002.

"There is action by governments against deforestation like never before, but we are seeing that it is not an easy task, because there is strong pressure from economic groups," Sánchez told Tierramérica.

Logging results in the loss of biodiversity and degradation of soils, as well as contributing to extreme climate phenomena, added the UNEP official.

Between 2000 and 2005, the proportion of total land surface covered by forests fell in the Mesoamerica region (southern Mexico and Central America) from 36.9% to 35.8%, and in South America from 48.4% to 47.2%. However, in the Caribbean it increased from 31.0% to 31.4%.

According to Mexican expert Enrique Provencio, author of the ILAC report, the principal cause of the increased pace of deforestation is the advance of the monoculture farming frontier. "There was a rise in international prices of products like soybeans, which drove the occupation and clear-cutting of forested areas, especially in Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay," Provencio told Tierramérica.



Deforestation in Olancho

The ILAC report indicates that although forestry activity has maintained a positive performance in terms of improving productivity and advances in sustainable management and other practices, such as certification of sustainably harvested lumber, it has not prevented the loss of forests. According to the study, in some countries the shrinking of forested areas continues to be associated with an increase in livestock-raising and the classic model of expanding pasture area by cutting down forests.

To combat deforestation, in recent years most governments have designed new monitoring and control mechanisms, with some even using the army to go after illegal loggers. Many countries have also passed laws that crack down hard on those who destroy forests. But the problem persists. "This shows that we continue to be economies dependent on the intensive use of natural resources and that the growing demand for food and other products has fuelled an advance of the agricultural frontier," said Sánchez.

Another positive sign is the increase in the total area designated as nature reserves. In the 2000-2005 period, it grew from 19.2 to 20.6 percent of the territory in Latin America and the Caribbean, representing 320,400 square kilometres. Although the increase in protected areas cannot compensate for the loss of forest, "the process gives us some hope," said Provencio.

*(*Diego Cevallos is an IPS correspondent. Originally published by Latin American newspapers that are part of the Tierramérica network. Tierramérica is a specialised news service produced by IPS with the backing of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.)*

Paying for the Sins of Others

By Xiomara Gonzalez (San Salvador)

El Salvador, along with other Latin America nations, is paying for a crime it hasn't committed: Climate Change.

All the countries of Latin American are responsible for a mere 4.3% of the greenhouse gases warming our planet, while rich nations are emitting billions of tons a year. Yet Latin America is one of the regions worst affected by extreme weather events caused by global warming, including flooding of croplands, drought in zones that have been historically humid, and disruptions to hydroelectric power generation.

El Salvador emits 9 million tons of CO₂ p.a., representing only 0.003% of global emissions, and dwarfed by the United States' 15%. "We know that climate change is caused by the human race, driven by the lifestyles of rich nations over the last 150 years, and especially the last 50 which have seen atmospheric CO₂ concentrations rise by more than 35%. The problem was created in the North, but the suffering is borne by the countries of South America" says Angel Ibarra, President of the Salvadoran NGO UNES.

While rich nations such as the US are the major culprits, they still fail to ratify the Kyoto Protocol for fear of the economic consequences of reducing industrial emissions. However, in a UN climate change congress in September 2007, El Salvador's President Antonio Saca committed his country to a near term reduction in CO₂ emissions of 17%.

According to Ibarra, this is a huge mistake – El Salvador bears no responsibility for causing the problem but is feeling the consequences, and should be demanding aid for adaptation to climate change. "If rich nations such as the US are failing to act, I don't see why this country is paying for a sin we didn't commit."

In El Salvador the impacts of climate change are severe. During the last 45 years the country has seen a temperature rise of 1.8°C, compared to a global average rise of 0.8° over the last century. "Not every country is suffering the same magnitude of change" warns Ibarra. "Climate change is happening more rapidly and with greater intensity than the global average because we're in the tropics, while local environmental problems, particularly deforestation, worsen the problem."

Another impact is sea level rise, which has risen 13cm in 100 years. Experts predict that there could be a further 70cm increase over the next century which would mean this tiny Latin American nation losing between 600 and 700 square kilometres of its territory.

At the Environment and Natural Resources Ministry (MARN), Cecilia Carranza, the official charged with climate monitoring, points out that continued sea level rise spells disaster for the mangroves and the species which inhabit them, just as it will for human populations who live and work in coastal areas. Environment Minister, Carlos Guerrero, has made repeated warnings of the vulnerability of El Salvador to climate impacts such as rising temperatures, droughts, and more frequent and intense storms and hurricanes.

The phenomena of El Niño and La Niña are natural processes but are now being affected by climate change. "According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change there's a link between hurricanes, El Niño, La Niña, and climate change which affects the severity and frequency of these events" affirms Ibarra. "In El Salvador we had rains three times in February this year. This is quite unusual, and these early rains bring on premature plant growth causing loss of harvest, which has been the case with coffee" explains Ibarra.

Adapting to Climate Change

Despite the high cost of reducing emissions, Carranza confirms that the Salvadoran Environment Ministry have approved a project to capture methane for energy generation, and another to produce electricity from 'bagazo' – woody residues from the sugarcane industry – both of which are under the auspices of the Clean Development Mechanism.

Ibarra maintains that these projects are unnecessary measures, as the country's emissions are so low in comparison to industrialised nations, and that in any case, the Salvadoran government should look for projects which better contribute to adaptation. "If the president wants to reduce Salvadoran emissions, the first step should be to tackle the transport issue. We need more public transport to get the majority of people on buses and reduce the number of private vehicles on our roads. We need to reforest, to improve the local environment. And we need to improve the lifestyle of Salvadoran society. This is the only way we can enter the politics of climate mitigation" declared Ibarra. Likewise, Ibarra called for new laws to limit industrial emissions, a new approach to transport, and greater efficiency in industry's use of energy.

Source: Revista Ecotopia 200, UNES. (Translated by Nick Rau.)

It isn't often that ENCA includes advertisements in its newsletter, but then it's not often that somebody makes a series of short films and donates half of the profits from sales to ENCA. So we are pleased to include here notice of Doug Specht's DVD entitled 'Una Ventana en la América Central'.

Doug spent two months in Nicaragua and Honduras last summer, a part of which was spent as a member of the ENCA tour group visiting a range of organisations in Honduras. During his time there he put his experiences on film which on his return he edited, creating an impressive record of some of the problems encountered by those organisations.

The five short films include:

- 'Nicaragua, Una Ventana' – largely but not exclusively covering the problems and successes of education in Nicaragua. Along with other volunteers, Doug spent one month teaching computing skills at a school in Managua.
- The ENCA tour of Honduras, 2007.
- 'Nicaragua en Números'
- A full interview (with dubbed simultaneous translation) of Victorino Espinales, leader of the bananeros protesting outside the National Assembly building in Managua – see earlier ENCA newsletters.
- A photo slide show from his two months in the region.



The DVDs cost £5 each and can be ordered from www.ca-dvd.co.uk or from ENCA. Money from the sales will be shared between ENCA and the Santa Rosa Fund which supports educational initiatives in Nicaragua.

ENCA Meetings

For a variety of reasons the 8th June ENCA meeting has been cancelled, and for future meetings we have to find a new meeting place – our old one has turned into a billiards and gambling den. The problem should be resolved by our 12th October meeting, and all our members will be informed as soon as our new meeting place is fixed.

ENCA Contacts:

<i>Chair:</i>	Nick Rau	0208 809 4451	hnhrau@yahoo.co.uk
<i>Secretary:</i>	Sheila Amoo-Gottfried	0208 769 0492	sheila.amoo-gottfried@virgin.net
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Janet Bye	01473 254695	janet.bye@btopenworld.com

Postal address: Currently uncertain because of NSC's change of address. We will inform our members of our certain new postal address in the next newsletter. In the meantime, please feel free to contact any of the above.