



## Campaign to STOP GE Trees International (June 1, 2023)

Messages and Testimonies from Quilombola Communities and MST Representatives in Northern Espírito Santo and Southern Bahia about Eucalyptus Plantation Impacts and Potential Impacts of GMO Eucalyptus Trees

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### Summary of Key Points and Demands

- The eucalyptus plantation companies have stolen much land from communities, and the communities that were once united are now physically divided by the plantations. **The communities demand to have their land returned and demarcated.**
- **The communities demand the eucalyptus plantations be removed.**
- The aerial spraying of agrottoxins using drones and planes is not only spraying the eucalyptus plantations but also the communities, soil, crops, livestock, and water. This and the run off are killing and poisoning people, pollinators, fish, birds, wildlife and more. **The communities demand an end to the aerial spraying of agrottoxins.**
- The eucalyptus plantations have made it impossible for communities to grow their own food and many people have had to leave their land to go to the cities where they suffer greatly. **The communities demand support to grow and have access to healthy food and to develop agroecological and organic practices.**
- The eucalyptus plantations have dried up the water, rivers, lakes. **The communities demand access to water.**
- Suzano is stealing land and breaking the law, but is never prosecuted. **The communities demand the laws be enforced to stop Suzano's illegal activities.**
- **Traditional communities say no to transgenics.**

### Testimonies and Statements from Quilombola and MST Representatives

Regina/ Quilombola

- My own experience living in a Quilombola community is no different from what we have heard from our colleagues.
- When the eucalyptus company first arrived in the 60s, they would try to buy people's land and they would be really tricky/dishonest.
- Our grandfather resisted this - he is now 90 - he did not sell the land because he loves their land and was aware of the damage that would be caused by monocrops. "As long as I'm alive, there will not be one eucalyptus planted on my land".
- He saw many of his friends who sold their land, and they miss it so much, they left their communities behind.
- I can no longer hear the drums that my neighbor plays from Rio do Sul because of the eucalyptus plantations. They block the sound. This is severe because it's our culture - it leaves a human being in a very sad state.



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### Testimonies and Statements from Quilombola and MST Representatives (continued)

- There is a Gameleia tree - African people would use the wood to do rituals - today it is surrounded by eucalyptus - I have memories from childhood of people using these trees, but now there is no respect for the territory.

#### Quilombola woman

- One person suffering is everyone suffering.
- Even homes that are close to one another are cut off from each other. Eucalyptus forms a wall around our houses. Dries up the creeks.
- In the Juasero community, we feared getting imprisoned in our area. We get isolated. It gets harder to resist the more distant we get. Our goal is to have more people close so we can fight the eucalyptus.
- We didn't know at first what the damage would be but then learned that our rivers were drying up. A river in our community is no longer there. People do have memories of this.
- Talking about cycles, eucalyptus is a new cycle - each one is worse than the other. Capital is putting an end to everything.
- I grew up seeing so many butterflies around and they're not there anymore. My daughter has not seen these things.
- The modified eucalyptus will affect the pollen - will we no longer have the passion fruit pollen; will the bees no longer be able to pollinate that?
- This struggle takes a long time and in the meantime communities are falling apart. But we have to hold one another's hands and ask for help, so I hope that someone will come to our aid.

#### Regina/ Quilombola

- In my community there is a heritage market building. In the past, most survived through family farming, people would sell their products in that market. Traditional communities' agricultural methods are still what we want - agriculture that creates employment and puts food on peoples' tables.
- In Helvecia we are starting to get some things to help production - a flour mill, some tractors - but we need more investment in traditional communities. For us to take these issues to Brasilia - for people to be able to eat things that won't be harmful to their health - we need support for that.



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#### Quilombola Person

- Before the pandemic, I was a guide for a Swiss press person. We went to the field, to visit communities along the River. We heard from people living along the river about how many fish were floating dead because of the spraying.
- It's killing the insects, but also killing the fish. When they would travel up river they could not withstand the poison runoff.
- We denounced this and talked to environmental authorities. But people are even afraid to eat the fish from the river. Big cause of disease, health problems. These things are being caused by pesticides. So what do you do? How do you solve that?

#### Joao / Quilombola

- We have 36 communities seeking certification in areas where there is eucalyptus.
- The impact that started 60 years ago is still present, occupying our ancestral lands. Companies, with financial support from the military government at the time, control the means of production.
- Significant impacts in the biome there. There is a lot of rainfall in our region, and the companies realized they could have non irrigated eucalyptus crops because of the quantity of rainfall.
- So, there were 2 centuries of producing food in that region - mostly run by slave labour. Once it was taken over by our communities, those labourers were not respected.
- 1850 a law was passed that prohibited black people from being able to own and work the land. We realized it could only be taken in 2 ways - inherit or purchase. But how can black people inherit land from barons?
- That's where the resistance started - people couldn't access land, everyone was illiterate and any papers that came in, people would unknowingly give up their lands. Convinced to leave under pressure by companies. So, it wasn't sold but was taken.
- It was a planned removal of Quilombola communities from the north - they took them into the cities, said there would be electric power, etc. In 1970, they promised you could watch the world cup on tv! But their land was being taken while they watched soccer on TV.
- When eucalyptus started coming to ES and Bahia, the soil was impoverished for years. They removed the native plant cover and removed all the nutrients from the soil.
- People used to do agroforestry, would use cover crops, let the land rest, take care of the soil - but now with the eucalyptus its continuous use of the soil. So Quilombolas want deeds to the land because their methods of production are different.
- Weak trees = a weak biome, more possibility to bring disease.



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- My proposal for you would be to take to Brasilia the question of who from the state of Bahia and ES, from all states where Suzano is active - what makes them able to authorize so many environmental crimes by this company?
- Our communities are fenced in with no public policies to support.
- Public defenders can't solve everything in the short term, but in the meantime, our young people are leaving the community and going to the city because the communities cannot offer conditions for young people to stay.
- Old people are sick - with what kinds of illnesses? We have a great handicap with anemia for instance, as well as other illnesses.
- We need help, from Brasilia, from state governments. The state has been negligent, we are anguished about this.
- Our lives are at stake. In Brasilia we don't have access to be able to expose our anguish.
- Volta Muda community - this is a problem for all our communities. 2 communities were certified but abandoned in the midst of this - they don't even exist anymore because they were expelled by Suzano.
- To all the people who have come here, we are tired but we don't give up. We want to give dignified living conditions to our communities who are resisting. This is more serious than you even imagine.
- Acacia is also suffocating our Atlantic Forest. We don't know much about GE trees but know they are dangerous. We have 2 problems, the eucalyptus, the acacia, and now here comes one more pest.

#### Selio/ Quilombola

- Whether transgenic or not, we already have this experience. We don't have our traditional crops anymore. 200m near the eucalyptus crop, you can't produce anything. Always dried out. So, if there is a new kind of eucalyptus, we think it will be even more difficult to produce anything.

#### Quilombola woman

- Traditional Quilombola communities are very alike, though not the same. Each one has its own trait. But like Helvecia and Volta Muda - other communities are sometimes not as productive as we are because their houses are so close to the eucalyptus crops.
- There are communities that are more impacted than others. But the struggles and demands are the same.



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- Some Quilombola people are frightened - how can they find the courage to face these giant companies? They are afraid to ask for help. But we feel stronger for having your support.
- In my family we used to survive on farming - my father would go to the land and hunt. But now we have hardly any wild animals. I used to fish when I was a child. I know what monocropping can do to a community.
- We have a cemetery where our ancestors are buried - they always talked about how everything is interconnected. With eucalyptus crops - it hurts so much - they were in our cemeteries - we are so tired from the struggle.
- We are against the monocropping but next to my community we have seedlings - we feel like we had to accept it because our community needed jobs, opportunities for work. It is a difficult situation - we also have to work to eat, pay taxes, etc. No options. Unless we leave the community and go to other states.
- Some of our young people work with the machines - but my son said he didn't want to stay long because of the oppressive working conditions. You're not for the company but you don't have many options.
- Need for political reparations for some of these damages - some of the things cannot be fixed/replaced. But some public policies we would like to see but they haven't materialized.
- The state doesn't support us - for instance Indigenous peoples. The president talks like us but he can't do everything alone, he needs support. I believe in this president and that he will fix some things and make better days.

Josinea / Quilombola

- Our animals are experiencing abortions due to the plantations - or young with brain deficiencies. Macro encephaly (born dead with abnormally large brains).

FASE-ES

- We have been monitoring the eucalyptus in ES and other parts of Brazil for 20 years.
- Landholding discrepancies, access to water, pollution, gravity of monocrop situation. GE trees is one more fallacy of this model.
- Saying transgenics will improve yields so they won't need to occupy as much land to have the same output. But we know the project is always to expand - they'll never be satisfied. They will find ways like using this gel to try to adapt to climate constraints and to adapt to the damage that they themselves have caused.



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- This GM tree - when she talked about the Gamela tree, with so much meaning for the community, that specific tree in Juomano - the trees had names, they were baptized. So when Jao asked what tree is that - these things come out of chemical formulas.
- What we have been seeing here is a political situation with the expansion the current governor is a forest engineer with ties to business. So, when he says they will reforest the Atlantic forest with native species, they give a lot of numbers - 1500 hectares of native plants - but then on the other hand we have another 1000 hectares of eucalyptus monocultures.
- 3 plants now in Aracruz for toilet paper in the southern part of the state, moving into more of the Atlantic forest. Our biome in the southeast of Brazil is being threatened even more recently.
- National congress in Brazil is trying to dismantle legislation - trying to weaken even more the legal protection for the Atlantic forest biome. So your mission in Brasilia won't be easy - it's great that Lula is back, no doubt, after years of plague, but the situation is still unfavourable for Indigenous people, Quilombolas and land reform. We don't see much different really happening.

Fabio/MST

- I have been seeing destruction in our communities my whole life. I am 35.
- There are no more animals. For instance, we saw 2 kinds of monkeys disappear from the territory.
- I have heard of these trees and other transgenic crops - like sugar cane in the extreme south of Bahia - they say it has no flavour.
- So many people have died of cancer in our community, but the health minister has no answer for me. Why is there no inquiry into this? Doctors can't say why so many people in communities are dying, or have heart diseases.
- We are shouting for help. I asked a legislative representative a while back why the companies released these things so easily, with no consultation, with no solid research. They don't have an answer for our communities.
- Our children still living there are still being impacted by the issues, the pesticide rate is so huge.
- We had a great loss of chickens, other animals, pigs, cattle - they have been suffering from diseases.
- It's very worrying because the quantity of pesticides is so huge. 40% is spread on eucalyptus - the other 60% is over communities and in the wild.



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Preto/MST

- There are communities being overrun that cannot speak out. This week in a Quilombola community that we visited - Angelin - it was heartbreaking - brutal - what they are experiencing.
- So this moment - we have to denounce now and more into the future, network our struggles together. We have to give our hands to each other and work in spaces like this to tell the world what we're experiencing here.
- We have two settlements where we're also suffering with the aerial spraying, as well as the horrible smell from the factory.
- These companies fund political campaigns so they can get whatever they want quickly. So we must understand that our recovery of land, struggles in the countryside, is what keeps us alive - but we must be aware of who we can elect, and how to use the law to our advantage. We will confront the police forces, private security hired by companies.
- 513 members of congress - how many of those deputies are there to defend us? Municipal counselors? So the MST is working to recover and occupy land, but we are also struggling within the institutions of Brazil. We have only 3 members of congress - very few but they are speaking for the quilombolas, indigenous, landless, rural communities in general - we need more representatives who can speak for us there and go on organizing our denunciations together.
- It would be good to organize a visit to the supreme court to denounce these companies, how they use public funding to finance governor, mayor, councilor campaigns. How can we stop that?

Fabio/MST

- We have been working with bees in our community for a long time, but the bees have mostly disappeared because of the new tree clones.
- Only bees eat eucalyptus - they are the only thing that eats its flowers.
- So many people used to do beekeeping. When they started spraying, many people started denouncing the bee extinction. Many people lost their beekeeping cultures. Thousands were killed. Now our honey cannot be produced anymore.
- If we lose our bees, we have no way to survive - it's the most important part of the food chain, pollination of flowers. No bees, no food.
- So many fruits can no longer be produced. You still see some bees, but it used to be common to see them during the day moving around in a big group. Now it's difficult to see a large group of bees.



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- Lessons from Argentina - there were many pesticides. Price of our national honey dropped when we started importing honey from Argentina. Much was lost because we couldn't sell it. But the Argentinian honey was already poisoned. So now we hardly have any honey. We need to take care of these little beings because they're responsible for our food chain.
- Eucalyptus is not good, we know this. But the bees take benefit from it. But the clones don't flower anymore so the bees are also harmed. So in a monoculture - there should be more diversity, and if there isn't, everybody is harmed.