

Cargill – Eating up the Amazon

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The Amazon rainforest

The Amazon rainforest is one of the most biodiverse regions on earth. It is home to a staggering 15% of the world's known land-based plant species¹ and nearly 10% of the world's mammals,^{2,3} and has as many as 300 species of trees in a single hectare.⁴ The Amazon is home to about 220,000 people from 180 different indigenous nations⁵ who live deep in the rainforest, along with many more traditional forest dwellers. The rainforest provides these people with everything from food and shelter to tools and medicines, and plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of indigenous peoples. It also plays a vital role keeping the world's climate stable. All this is threatened by deforestation and related crimes to grow agricultural commodities such as soya, which is mainly used to feed animals.

Cargill – a global giant

Cargill is a US-based international food and agricultural commodity company that employs over 140,000 people in over 60 countries.⁶ The world's largest privately-owned company,⁷ it had 2005 revenues of over \$70 billion.⁸ With an estimated 13 silos and an illegal port facility already built into the Amazon rainforest, Cargill is leading soya's invasion of the region – spurring the incursion of illegal farms and building infrastructure to deliver Amazon soya to global markets.

How Cargill is driving destruction

Much of the Brazilian soya that is fed to chickens, cows and pigs in Europe is supplied by agricultural giant Cargill.

Soya farming is one of the primary drivers of deforestation in the Amazon. In the last three years 70,000 km² of the Amazon have been destroyed. This equates to six football pitches a minute. Much of this destruction is due to the expansion of soya farming. Soya is a cheap and readily available source of protein for farm animals. Greenpeace research on the ground shows that many of the biggest poultry companies in Europe, including Cargill-owned Sun Valley Foods, which itself supplies some of the most prominent European supermarkets, are using soya supplied by Cargill, that sources directly from the Amazon rainforest. Soya farmers supplying Cargill are linked to the use of slave labour, illegal land grabbing and massive deforestation.

Brazilian government export figures show that, since March 2005, over 340,000 tonnes of soya were shipped into Liverpool from just one port in Brazil – Santarém.⁹ As recently as April and May 2006, Greenpeace has documented the import of Amazon soya into Liverpool and Amsterdam. This soya came from three Amazon states – Mato Grosso, Rondonia and Pará. While not all the soya from these states is coming from within the Amazon rainforest, the export figures clearly indicate a significant volume coming from areas where Amazon destruction is rampant.¹⁰

Greenpeace research shows that the arrival of Cargill in Santarém, and of soya farmers close behind, is having severe environmental impacts in the Amazon in western Pará.¹¹ Since Cargill's arrival, soya has been the major driver of deforestation in the region. Between 2002 and 2004, annual deforestation rates jumped from 15,000 to 28,000 hectares in Santarém and the neighbouring municipality of Belterra in Pará state.¹¹ The Cargill plant in Santarém itself was built illegally,¹² and according to official statistics around 2 million tonnes of soya has been exported through the port since it was opened in 2003.¹³

Taking a bite out of the Amazon

Much of the soya coming into Europe from Brazil is a product of forest crime. Recent Greenpeace investigations in the heart of the rainforest have shown:¹⁴

- *Membeca Farm, Mato Grosso* – this large soya farm has invaded the traditional lands of the Manoki people. Deforestation to plant soya continues.
- *Roncador Farm, Mato Grosso* – 215 slave labourers, working 16 hours a day, seven days a week, were recently freed from this giant soya and beef farm.
- *Vó Gercy Farm, Mato Grosso* – slave labour on this farm has been used to clear forest land for soya, which was then sold to major international agricultural companies.
- *Xingu Indigenous Park, Mato Grosso* – this area is home to 14 indigenous tribes. There are claims the Xingu Park is being slowly poisoned by the toxic run off from chemical weedkillers used to grow soya. Satellite photos show that almost 30% of the Xingu River headwaters have been deforested.
- *Lavras Farm, Pará* – illegal deforestation has been documented on this farm that has sold soya to Cargill.

Cargill can't handle the truth

Greenpeace has recently obtained copies of a confidential briefing sent by Cargill to its customers in response to the publication of Greenpeace's recent report *Eating up the Amazon*. Unwilling to face the hard truths about the soya industry in the Amazon spelt out in this report, Cargill's briefing is a lesson in obfuscation and denial. The response leaves the fundamentals of the report entirely unchallenged – the environmental destruction, the slavery, and the land grabbing linked to the soya industry in the Amazon. Instead, it seeks to placate major customers by apparently denying or questioning details on six pages in the report. Cargill's briefing to its customers does not demonstrate to Greenpeace a genuine effort to assess the findings of our investigations.

Greenpeace demands that Cargill:

Ends the destruction – immediately stops buying soya from the Amazon rainforest.

Cleans up the soya trade – demands a full chain of custody to ensure all the soya comes from legal sources outside the Amazon rainforest and guarantees it is non-GE.

Supports the solution – develops responsible soya supplies to eliminate the pressure on the world's remaining ancient forests.

¹ See for instance

www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2003/01/07/000094946_02121704045792/Rendered/INDEX/multi0page.txt – figures for biodiversity in the Amazon vary wildly.

² Amazonia, in R. A. Mittermeier et al, eds. *Wilderness: Earth's last wild places*. CEMEX, Agrupaci' on Serra Madre, S. C., Mexico, 56–107, Rylands, A. B., et al, 2002.

³ *The wealth of the poor – managing ecosystems to fight poverty*. Table 10. United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, The World Bank, World Resources Institute, 2005

http://pdf.wri.org/wrr05_lores.pdf

⁴ *Tree species richness of upper Amazonian forests*. AH Gentry, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci., 85: 156–159, 1998.

⁵ Coordenaç' ao das organizaç' oes indigenas da Amaz' onia Brasileira (COIAB)

⁶ <http://www.cargill.com/about/index.htm>

⁷ <http://www.cargill.com/about/history/history.htm>

⁸ <http://www.cargill.com/about/financial/financialhighlights.htm>

⁹ Analysis based on official Brazilian government statistics (<http://aliceweb.desenvolvimento.gov.br/>) and port websites in Brazil and the UK show that between March 2005 and April 2006 348,000 tonnes of soya was exported from Santar' em to Liverpool.

¹⁰ Since March 2005, over 800,000 tonnes of soya has been exported from Santar' em to various ports in Europe. Of this figure, 685,457 tonnes came from Mato Grosso, 87,451 tonnes from Rondonia and 33,453 tonnes from Par' a. In all 128,904 tonnes of soya is confirmed as having come from the Amazon rainforest.

¹¹ *A expans' ao da fronteira agr' icola e sua relaç' ao com o desmatamento detectado em imagens Landsat TM e ETM+ na regi' ao norte da BR-163, Par' a entre os anos de 1999 a 2004*. D Conhenca, Santar' em, 2005

¹² Interview with Felecio Pontes Jr. Federal Prosecutor, Belem, Par' a State, "In the name of Progress". Greenpeace 2005

¹³ See <http://aliceweb.desenvolvimento.gov.br/>

¹⁴ For more detailed information on these case studies, see *Eating up the Amazon*. Greenpeace 2006

<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/eating-up-the-amazon.pdf>