



ABIOVE NEWSLETTER ON SOY SUSTAINABILITY
March 8, 2008

MATO GROSSO GOVERNMENT CONTESTS DEFORESTATION INCREASE

In January of this year, INPE - Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais [National Spatial Research Institute] published a report, based on the DETER System, indicating a substantial increase in the Amazon Rain Forest deforestation from August to December 2007. Despite INPE clearly alerting on its website www.obt.inpe.br/deter/ that DETER's quantitative results should be seen with a grain of salt, since they could contain errors, Brazilian Government authorities identified the State of Mato Grosso as one of the states where deforestation expanded, and soy production was indicated as one of its main causes.

It occurs that the monthly surveys of the NGO Imazon – Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia, through the Sistema de Alerta do Desmatamento [Deforestation Alert System] – SAD, which are published in the Boletim Transparência Florestal [Forest Transparency Newsletter] (www.imazon.org.br) pointed to the contrary — a strong drop of 21 percent in deforestation in the State of Mato Grosso during the same period mentioned by DETER. However, in the State of Pará, where soy plantations are incipient, there was a strong deforestation expansion of approximately 74 percent.

It is very important to clarify if the State of Mato Grosso increased or reduced its deforestation between August and December 2007. In this sense, the Government of Mato Grosso announced that it has completed a field survey of all the deforestation detected by INPE and that there are strong divergences concerning the data published by INPE. According to news published in the newspaper Folha de São Paulo on March 6, Governor Blairo Maggi commented that 90 percent of the cases do not refer to recent deforestation. In some areas there was no deforestation and in other areas there were pastures. Gilberto Câmara – Director of INPE stated that the differences of opinion are based in “a misunderstanding” about the criteria used in analyzing the satellite images. It is important to stress that deforestation in the State of Mato Grosso has been greatly reduced in recent years, according to official data from the INPE – PRODES System.

Below is the news published in Folha de São Paulo.

DEFORESTATION

Report from the State of Mato Grosso (MT) affirms that Inpe's data is 90% wrong
by AGÊNCIA FOLHA, in CUIABÁ

The governor of Mato Grosso, Blairo Maggi (PR), stated yesterday that Inpe (Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais) [National Spatial Research Institute] report about the data field survey on deforestation has been completed, and that there are 90 percent of errors in the points Inpe detected in October and December in the State of Mato Grosso.

According to the governor, the deforestations pointed out as being recent are actually old, and the result of forest fires or wrong interpretation of satellite images.

"Today, we can affirm that 100 percent of the points were checked. And, in approximately 90 percent of the cases, there was no recent deforestation. In some areas, for example, there was no deforestation whatsoever. Other areas were pastures", said Maggi, who plans to issue a report next week.

The governor announced that he would take the document to his meetings with president Lula and with ministers Marina da Silva (Environment) and Reinhold Stephanes (Agriculture).

Based on Inpe's survey, the State of Mato Grosso had 19 municipalities included in the list of the 36 largest forest clearers during the five last months of 2007. All were prohibited from making any further deforestation. Maggi says that the Lula government "is right" in being concerned with environmental issues. But it "should not exaggerate".

The other side

From Germany, by phone, Inpe director Gilberto Câmara said that he does not intend to "polemicize" with the governor through the press. According to him, the differences of opinion are based on "a misunderstanding" about the criteria used to analyze the satellite images.

Câmara says that Inpe stands for the data it disclosed in January, even in relation to the areas whose deforestation began earlier, before the last five months of 2007. (RODRIGO VARGAS)

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