

Soy Moratorium Workgroup – News release

Most recent data on soy monitoring in the Amazon Biome

The Soy Moratorium, signed in July 2006, when industries and exporters members of ABIOVE and ANEC committed themselves not to acquire soy planted in new deforested areas of the Amazon Biome, has just presented its first result: the field evaluation to identify if there were any soy plantations in the deforested area between August 2006 and August 2007.

The business sector and the civil society organizations got together to perform this unheard of task. Through the action of the GTS (Soy Workgroup), responsible for implementing and controlling the Moratorium process, the Globosat company was hired to locate the deforestations with over 100 hectares, which occurred during the above-mentioned period, in the municipalities that plant soy in the states of Mato Grosso, Pará and Rondônia. Data of INPE's (National Institute of Spatial Researches) PRODES system were used. The company flew over and paid field visits between January 2008 and February 2008 to all deforested areas above 100 hectares to identify how the soil was being used. All the areas were photographed and documented.

This survey has determined that there were no soy plantations in the 193 areas analyzed, which leads to the conclusion that the soy produced in the current crop is not from recent deforested areas in the Amazon Biome with more than 100 hectares.

Companies and NGOs agreed that the monitoring would cover only the deforestations above 100 hectares, which is evaluated as being the minimum economically feasible deforested area to cultivate soybeans. Even so, an additional pilot study was developed in three municipalities of the Moratorium area, where soy is traditionally produced, to verify if there had been deforestations below 100 hectares during the same period, and if so, to verify what had been cultivated in such areas. There was no soy planted in such areas.

Although the results obtained this season do not indicate the presence of soy in the deforested areas, risk factors remain that can change the result for the coming crops. For example, high current international prices represent a strong stimulus to increase Brazilian soy production for the next crop, to meet the increasing world demand for the oleaginous protein.

Furthermore, it was observed that deforestation has occurred in areas neighboring those that are currently already used for soy production, which may indicate a future utilization potential. Such fact stresses the importance of the soy moratorium as a tool to discourage deforestation, since companies have clearly stated that they would not buy soy from those that do not respect the decision announced in July 2006.

Production monitoring is one of the Moratorium governance tools, but its efficiency is restricted to companies that have made the commitment, and it is not enough to control deforestation, especially at times of more pressure. Different government levels must perform as soon as possible their part and rendering effective a broader governance system, which is fundamental for the conservation and sustainability of the Amazon Biome region.

Furthermore, the government should promote the creation of strategies to aggregate value to the standing forest, and offer economic options for those that are ready to give up their rights to produce agricultural products, totally conserving all natural resources of the area. The GTS believes that the payment of environmental services will allow a fair remuneration to rural owners, and is the natural way to avoid deforestation.

GTS comprises the entities ABIOVE and ANEC; companies ADM, Amaggi, Bunge and Cargill; and civil society organizations, namely Conservação Internacional Brasil, Greenpeace, IPAM, TNC and WWF Brasil.