

SOY MORATORIUM

New challenges mark the renewal of the business sector - NGO partnership

This Tuesday, July 28, 2009, the business sector connected to soy processing and export (ABIOVE, ANEC and their members), civil society organizations (Greenpeace, Conservation International-Brazil, WWF-Brazil, IPAM and TNC) and the Ministry of the Environment announced the renewal of the Soy Moratorium in the Amazon Biome until July 2010. The Moratorium is the commitment not to trade soy from areas in the Biome deforested after July 24, 2006, and celebrated its third anniversary.

Initially an initiative of the private sector and civil society, the Moratorium received the support of the Minister of the Environment, Carlos Minc, who formally joined the initiative last year. According to Minc, "Soy Moratorium is a well succeeded example. The monitoring of the Ministry of Environment concluded that soybean is not anymore an important element in the Amazon deforestation."

Created in 2006 to implement the Moratorium, the Soy Work Group (GTS), made up of representatives from the companies and the NGOs, believes that the initiative has given an important contribution to the reduction in the Amazon's annual deforestation rate. According to the GTS, in these three years of the Moratorium, concrete advances have been made, such as the creation of a monitoring system based on satellite images, flyovers and field visits that allows companies to identify properties that are not complying with the Moratorium, removing them from the ABIOVE and ANEC supplier list. Nevertheless, the GTS considers that the Amazon Biome governance conditions are not yet sufficient to allow a suspension of the Moratorium.

Innovations in monitoring

INPE data on last year's forest canopy loss in the Amazon indicate the deforestation profile is changing, with an increase in the number of deforested areas with less than 100 hectares, compensated by a significant drop in deforestation of larger areas – precisely those directly monitored by the GTS. Therefore, the monitoring system has to be changed to include small deforestations in the analysis of next year's crop, whose planting starts in October. The GTS intends to adopt a sampling system, using remote sensory technology to identify crops through satellite images of adequate spatial resolution. This technological advance should make it possible to preselect properties for field visits, so that a significant number of deforestations in the Amazon can be monitored in 2009/2010.

Priority for registration of properties

According to ABIOVE's President, Carlo Lovatelli, the industry's GTS coordinator, one of the main priorities will be to stimulate registration and environmental licensing of rural properties. Registration allows consultation of the property's exact location, identification of the owner and follow-up of the property's Legal Reserve and Permanent Preservation (APP) areas. The companies will promote orientation and awareness campaigns among rural producers, in harmony with state government efforts, such as the "Legal MT" program recently launched by the Mato Grosso state government. At the same time, the GTS will encourage the federal government to support a better structure for the state organs responsible for registrations and licensing.

“For agribusiness to operate transparently in the Amazon Biome, the soy producer must register his property and the government must do its part. This is a fundamental step to give our customers a guarantee of the environmental quality of our product”, said Lovatelli.

The Moratorium in Copenhagen

The GTS plans to report the Moratorium case in a parallel session to the U.N.’s Convention on Climatic Changes, which will be held in Copenhagen in December. The objective is to show that corporate responsibility measures, such as the Soy Moratorium, can contribute positively to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

“Initiatives such as these need the international community’s support, through adoption of financial mechanisms that allow support for forest and climate conservation without damaging food production”, said Paulo Adario, Greenpeace’s Amazon Campaign Director and the civil society’s coordinator in the GTS. “In addition to increasing the government’s institutional capacity for monitoring and conservation, new money is needed on the table so that local communities and rural producers can produce without cutting down the forest”, states Adario. ABIOVE’s Lovatelli echoes this: “Payment for environmental services will be a big incentive for the rural producer not to deforest. The industry hopes that, in Copenhagen, governments from different countries assume this commitment”.

Verification System

According to Lovatelli, ABIOVE will propose to the GTS a voluntary and remunerated verification system, in a partnership between the productive sector and civil society organizations, by allying the Moratorium experience with the creation of simple and operational tools adjusted to Brazilian specifications and respecting the consumer’s expectations for a responsible product. “Additional remuneration through verification would be an added attraction for producers to register their properties and comply with Brazilian environmental and labor legislation, at the same time as they adopt best practices”, emphasized Lovatelli.

GTS Members

