

Women Occupy Research Site in Brazil to Protest GM Trees



Sao Paulo, March 6 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Nearly 1,000 women affiliated with the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) occupied a corporate research facility in the state of Sao Paulo on Thursday to protest the possible introduction of genetically-modified eucalyptus trees in Brazil.

The MST is concerned that the introduction of genetically modified eucalyptus trees will have negative consequences for the environment, people's health, and the livelihood of beekeepers.

The women occupied a research site affiliated with the FuturaGene company, owned by the Suzano corporation, which is dedicated to the production of eucalyptus trees for pulp.

The genetically modified eucalyptus trees reportedly result in 20 percent higher productivity. However, the MST has warned that the pollen of the genetically modified eucalyptus trees will contaminate the honey produced by bees that visit areas where genetically modified trees are introduced.

According to the MST, Brazil is the tenth largest producer of honey in the world, employing 500,000 beekeepers, the majority of who are small-scale producers. The contamination of the honey could pose a threat to beekeepers who produce organic honey for export.

The MST is also concerned that genetically modified eucalyptus trees require an exceptional amount of water; Brazil's southeastern states are currently in the midst of an unprecedented drought.

In addition, the social movement alleges that these genetically modified trees require the heavy use of pesticides, with claims that one pesticide commonly used at sites with genetically modified eucalyptus trees is sulfluramid, a substance banned by 152 countries, including Brazil.

The National Biosafety Technical Commission (CTNBio) is set to decide whether or not to approve the introduction of genetically modified eucalyptus trees to Brazil. The decision by the CTNBio was postponed after another group of 300 persons occupied the meeting room where the commission had gathered to deliberate on the decision.

“The principle of practicing caution is always ignored by CTNBio. The vast majority of its members are in favor of business interests of the large multinationals, at the expense of environmental, social and public health consequences,” said Atiliana Brunetto, a member of the national leadership of the MST.

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