

BIOFUELWATCH MEDIA RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE USE THURSDAY 14TH NOVEMBER

Media Contact: Oliver Munnion 07917693337

Link to report: <http://biofuelwatch.org.uk/2013/chain-of-destruction/>

Photographs available on webpage above & on request

Biomass power station plans on Tyneside and Teeside causing land-grabbing in Brazil

A new report launched by Biofuelwatch [1] and authored by the World Rainforest Movement [2] and Brazilian group CEPEDES [3] reveals how an agreement signed between UK-based MGT Power and Brazilian Suzano Papel e Celulose has caused land-grabbing for eucalyptus plantations in the Brazilian state of Maranhão.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two companies shortly after MGT's Tees power stations in Middlesbrough was consented by planners. The Port of Tyne application is still pending. This agreement prompted Suzano to invest in new biomass plantations in anticipation of the increasing demand for wood pellets, and has caused some 30-40,000 hectares of land to be taken from traditional communities, cleared of its diverse ecosystems and converted to monoculture eucalyptus plantation. Neither power station has so far been built.

Co-author of the report and World Rainforest Movement campaigner Winnie Overbeek said: *"Taking the territories and the forest areas away from the traditional communities in this region stops them from maintaining and reproducing their way of living, one that is closely connected to the surrounding biome – a transition area of savannah and Amazon forest. It means taking away a future for the children of these people and consequently preventing the survival of these communities. Eucalyptus plantations severely affect the quantity and quality of water that people in the area depend on, because of the huge water consumption of the thousands of hectares of eucalyptus and contamination from agrottoxins."*

Ivonette Gonçalves de Souza, campaigner with CEPEDES and co-author of the report said: *"Can an energy industry that destroys ecosystems and people be considered renewable or clean? Why should us Brazilians sacrifice our lives to produce energy for the UK?"*

Biofuelwatch Campaigner Oliver Munnion said: *"Suzano's investment in these plantations is clearly speculative, and a result of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with MGT and the anticipated demand from their power stations. Even if MGT doesn't succeed in attracting finance for its projects, or chooses to source pellets from elsewhere, the company is directly implicated in the severe impacts on communities in Maranhão."*

Eucalyptus Plantations for Energy: A case study of Suzano's plantations for wood pellet exports in the Baixo Parnaíba region, Maranhão, Brazil, [4] was published as part of Biofuelwatch's new report – *Biomass: the Chain of Destruction* – which focuses on the human and environmental costs of UK biomass and renewable energy policy.

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Notes:

[1] Biofuelwatch is a not-for-profit grassroots organisation set up to raise awareness of the negative impacts of industrial biofuels and bioenergy. <http://biofuelwatch.org.uk/>

[2] The World Rainforest Movement (WRM) is an international organization that, through its work on forest and plantation related issues, campaigns for the rights of local peoples over their forests and territories. <http://wrm.org.uy/>

[3] CEPEDDES: Center for Study and Research for the Development of the Southern Bahia Region, <http://www.cepedes.org.br/>

[4] Report .pdf document available here: <http://biofuelwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/eucalyptus-plantations-for-energy-online.pdf>