



## GE Free New Zealand

PO Box 13402, Wellington, Aotearoa | NZ

*"International Day of Trees"* - 21 September 2023

Tēnā koe His Excellency Mr. Marcos de Silva,

The New Zealand community would like to express our concerns to the Brazilian Embassy over the recently approved Genetically engineered (GE) eucalyptus designed to have tolerance to herbicides and insects. These pesticides are highly toxic to aquatic organisms, will kill the food sources for the birds and silence the native forests. The pesticide toxicity application methods by drone or aerial spraying, will affect the soil ecosystems, pollute the water sources and harm the peoples living in the region. The degradation, contamination and pollution will further increase if GE eucalyptus trees tolerant to herbicides are planted.

Large plantation corporations are illegally infringing the rights to the lands of the Brazilian indigenous, Quilombola and landless peoples due to the absence of political demarcation that would guarantee their right for their ancestral lands. This has led to illegal "Green land-grabbing" or "Grilagem Verde" with a massive increase of industrial plantations on the illegally obtained land and deforestation in the Cerrado, Atlantic and Amazon Forest regions.

The land taken by international industrial corporations for commodity gain is home to traditional and indigenous communities who have lived there hundreds of years and cause minimal environmental harm feeding their communities using traditional agroecological systems that enhance natural ecosystems. The illegal encroachment from large corporation's industrial eucalypt plantations is causing extreme suffering. The industrial plantations are destroying the native forests; toxic pesticides are polluting the rivers and farms; the waterways drying up and the loss of fish and animals due to the corporate colonisation of large plantation businesses.

The 16 million acres of Eucalyptus trees are affecting the peoples leading to displacement and poverty as people are driven off the land. The corporations use armed militias with security guards to police the illegally taken land. This has led to the assassination of leading indigenous people and there is a strong link to their opposition and airing of their concerns over the encroachment of the land grab of the eucalypt plantation corporations.

We ask that you relay our concerns to the Brazilian government over the approval of genetically engineered Eucalyptus and the lack of protections these trees will have on people and the environment.

We ask the Brazilian government reconsider the approval of the genetically engineered eucalyptus, in light of the harm that the continued destruction of the rich diverse flora and fauna of Brazil will have on the future generations and overturn the decision to plant GE trees.

In summary -

1. Call on the Brazilian government to overturn the approval for GE eucalyptus plantations.
2. Expediate the land demarcation for indigenous, Quilombola and landless people.

We thank you for your time,

Ngā mihi nui,

Claire Bleakley,  
President **GE FreeNZ**

on behalf of the following individuals and organisation



The following demands have been compiled from Quilombola Communities and Landless Workers Movement (MST) representatives in Northern Espírito Santo and Southern Bahia, Brazil.

These communities are directly impacted by the effects of eucalyptus plantations and the potential ramifications of GMO eucalyptus trees.

- We call for an end to the aerial spraying of pesticides. Spraying eucalyptus plantations and other production monocultures by drones or planes results in the poisoning of soils, crops, livestock and water that communities depend on for survival.
- We call for immediate access to safe water for communities that have had their water sources sucked dry by eucalyptus plantations or poisoned by aerial pesticide spraying.
- We call for a ban on genetically engineered trees which, if planted, will intensify problems associated with industrial tree plantations. History shows that GE crops with herbicide tolerant traits result in an increased use of pesticides.
- We call for the removal of eucalyptus plantations and prosecution of Suzano for their illegal activities including land theft.
- We call on Brazil's national government to return land to Indigenous, Quilombola, and peasant farming communities and accelerate the demarcation process to secure their land titles into the future.
- We demand legal, financial, and policy support from official bodies for farmers wishing to pursue agroecology and other ecological production methods for growing healthy food for their communities.

#### Background:

Large scale eucalyptus plantations have been taking over Brazil's native forest landscape for decades. Brazil-based Suzano, one of the world's largest pulp and paper companies, is a key driver of plantation expansion and ongoing land theft from Indigenous, Quilombola, and peasant farming communities. In addition to the forced displacement of traditional communities, eucalyptus and other industrial forest plantations result in the poisoning and depletion of land and waters, and loss of biological diversity.

The social and ecological problems posed by these plantations will intensify if Suzano begins to plant its genetically engineered (GE, GMO or genetically modified) eucalyptus trees. As of August 2023, Brazil's national government has approved seven GE trees for commercial planting, but none have been planted yet.

During May and June of 2023, the International Campaign to STOP GE Trees brought people from Argentina, Canada, Chile, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, the UK, and the US, to Brazil to advance plans to stop the development and commercial release of genetically engineered trees, and to support and highlight opposition to pulp company Suzano's ongoing destruction of native forests, expansion of industrial eucalyptus plantations, and potential use of GE eucalyptus trees modified to tolerate toxic herbicides.

The Campaign met with Brazilian NGOs, Indigenous and Quilombola communities, and MST members in order to learn, document and amplify the voices and concerns of rural communities who are on the front lines of resisting industrial eucalyptus plantations and their devastating social and ecological impacts. The demands in this document come from these communities.

As an international campaign, we stand in solidarity with communities who say NO to industrial tree plantations and NO to GE trees.

Marina Wright

**Global Justice Ecology Project (GJEP)**

*explores and exposes the intertwined root causes of social injustice, ecological destruction, and economic domination.*

<https://stopgetrees.org/noplantations/>

[www.globaljusticeecology.org](http://www.globaljusticeecology.org)

<https://www.gefree.org.nz/>