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Brazil: Don't be fooled by the Swedish timber industry

The Swedish Minister for Rural Affairs, Sven-Erik Bucht, forestry researchers and timber industry representatives was visiting Brazil this week to promote the so-called 'sustainable' Swedish model of forestry and their vision of bio-economy. However, according to leading environmental scientists and the Swedish environmental movement, the Swedish model of forestry is far from sustainable. The Swedish organization Protect the Forest warns Brazil that an adoption of (or inspiration from) the Swedish model of forestry risk having detrimental consequences for the climate and biodiversity due to its principal concept of clear-cutting natural forests and replacing them with artificial monoculture plantations and young industrial tree stands with only one or two tree species. Brazil is already losing large areas to deforestation and illegal logging, the Swedish forestry model is not the solution to these problems.

"If this model will be used in Brazil's forests, it would further mean disaster for biodiversity and the climate," says Viktor Säfve, Protect the Forest.

Research has shown that clear-cuts release huge amounts of greenhouse gases and that monocultures are much more vulnerable to negative climatic effects than natural forests.^{1,2,3, 4,}

"Putting the Swedish forestry model in practice would mean that Brazil's resilient natural forests would become unstable," said professor David van der Spoel, spokesman for Protect the forest. "In addition, a large part of the carbon stored in the biomass would be released into the atmosphere if this system would be introduced as a standard model in Brazil. "

Sweden holds a considerable proportion of north Europe's remaining high conservation value forests. However, many of these forests are being logged and converted into monocultures. Sweden has never had as few natural forests as today. At the same time forest companies continue to log unprotected high conservation value forests under the cover of forest certification. Customer countries unaware of this may be misled into buying Swedish wood and paper products from these sources, or into adopting its forestry model.

Over 1 800 animal and plant species in the Swedish forests are threatened or near threatened. In 2017 only less than 5 per cent of the Swedish productive forests were formally protected from logging. There is a consensus among Sweden's leading biology- and ecology researchers that the Swedish forest politics is threatening the biological diversity in the forest.

"The Swedish government and timber industry ignore scientific facts regarding the negative effects of the dominant forestry practice on the biodiversity and climate", says David van der Spoel, Protect the Forest.

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According to information on the Swedish government website, the program for the trip to Brazil looked like this:

- Open the Swedish Innovation Week in Brazil.
- Carry out bilateral meetings on cooperation in the bioeconomic area with the state of Paraná.
- Visit Embrapa, Brazil's leading research institution on land use issues, to discuss future cooperation on forest issues.
- Visit to Paraná's FIEP to establish contact for future collaborations.
- Bilateral meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Initiate dialogue for cooperation with Brazil on the theme "satellites, remote sensing, land use and sustainable development policy".

Read more about the Swedish forestry model here:

<https://plantationdefinitiondiscussion.wordpress.com/2017/03/07/the-swedish-experience-shrinking-forests-expanding-tree-plantations/>

Watch a video clip about the Swedish forestry model here:

<https://vimeo.com/56146911>

Read more about the forest and climate here:

<http://www.klimatetochskogen.nu/en/>



Clear-cut by the state-owned FSC-certified forestry company Sveaskog. Photo: Viktor Säfve

¹ Balvanera P. et al. (2013). *Linking biodiversity and ecosystem services: current uncertainties and the necessary next steps*. *BioScience* 64, 49–57.

² Gamfeldt L. et al. (2013). *Higher levels of multiple ecosystem services are found in forests with more tree species*. *Nature Communications* 4, 1340.

³ Tilman D. et al. (2014). *Biodiversity and ecosystem functioning*. *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 45, 471–93.

⁴ Holm, S-O. (2015). *A Management Strategy for Multiple Ecosystem Services in Boreal Forests*. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 34 (4): 358-379.