

# **“Sustainable Soy” in Santarém: Power Struggles for the Future of Development**

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## Abstract

This study examines the environmental and socio-economic effects of soy development in the city of Santarém, located in the western part of Pará state in the Brazilian Amazon. In the past decade the soybean has emerged as one of Santarém's primary crops, largely as a result of Cargill Corporation's construction of a fluvial port in the city that now exports one million tons of soy per year to European markets. The arrival of soy agribusiness in Santarém has transformed the agricultural scene and has had drastic impacts on both local communities and the forest.

Surrounding the soy conflict are various interest groups all vying for power and for their own models of development. This paper analyzes the differing visions of "Sustainable Soy" models held by four primary groups of soy actors: regional government, agribusiness, grassroots actors, and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS). Uncovering the various perspectives regarding sustainable development will allow a discussion of each actor's role in the unfolding of conservation and social movements. It will be seen that government and agribusiness hold a similar vision of soy development that focuses on positive economic effects, while the negative environmental and socio-economic impacts on local communities are often ignored.

Next, this study aims to interpret the history of the government-agribusiness relationship and examine government and agribusiness responses to growing market pressures for "Sustainable Soy." The efforts and perspectives of ENGOS at work in Santarém must be studied in order to identify the ramifications of the push for sustainability among soy actors. In particular, the problem with most NGO value systems is that they place primary forest conservation as the sole focus of their efforts. While primary forest is undoubtedly important, many of these international ENGOS, like their government and agribusiness counterparts, often neglect to include the needs of the local community in their discourses.

Finally, this study will identify spheres of grassroots resistance in the communities of Santarém, and demonstrate how grassroots perspectives and approaches to development are vastly different from those held by government, agribusiness, and ENGOS. These grassroots movements are acting by empowering local communities and spreading a discourse of sustainability that stands in stark contrast to both government-agribusiness discourses and the ENGO criteria for "Sustainable Soy". However, these localized actors face complex and powerful globalized forces, and may lack the resources necessary to stop the destructive impacts of soy in Santarém. It is clear that a better relationship must develop between international conservation groups and local grassroots movements if we are to build a more progressive model of soy development.

## Sumário

Este estudo examina os efeitos ambientais e socioeconômicos do desenvolvimento da soja na cidade de Santarém, situada na parte ocidental do estado do Pará, na Amazônia. Na década passada a soja emergiu como uma das safras preliminares em Santarém, pela maior parte em consequência da construção, pela Corporação de Cargill, do porto fluvial na cidade, que exporta agora um milhão de toneladas de soja por ano para mercados europeus. A chegada da agroindústria da soja em Santarém transformou a cena agrícola e teve impactos drásticos nas comunidades locais e na floresta.

Em torno do conflito da soja surgiram vários grupos de interesse diferentes que brigam para ter o poder e para seus próprios modelos de desenvolvimento. Este projeto analisa as visões diferindo os modelos da “Soja Sustentável” influenciados por quatro grupos preliminares de atores da soja: governo regional, agroindústria, atores dos trabalhos de base e organizações não governamentais (ONGs) que trabalham em prol do meio ambiente. Descobrir as várias perspectivas a respeito do desenvolvimento sustentável permitirá uma discussão do papel de cada ator no desdobramento da conservação e de movimentos sociais. Ver-se-á que o governo e a agroindústria têm uma visão similar do desenvolvimento da soja que focaliza em efeitos econômicos positivos, ignorando frequentemente os efeitos negativos dos impactos ambientais e social-econômicos em comunidades locais.

Em seguida, este estudo aponta interpretar a história do relacionamento e as respostas do governo e da agroindústria sobre as pressões crescentes do mercado para “Soja Sustentável.” Os esforços e as perspectivas de ONGs no trabalho em Santarém devem ser estudados a fim de identificar as ramificações do impulso para a sustentabilidade entre atores da soja. O mais importante para as ONGs é colocar a conservação da floresta como o único foco de seus esforços. Para eles floresta é muito importante, mas muitas destas ONGs internacionais, assim como as contrapartes do governo e da agroindústria estão negligenciando as necessidades da comunidade local em seus discursos.

Finalmente, este estudo identificará esferas da resistência dos trabalhos de base nas comunidades de Santarém e demonstra como as perspectivas e as aproximações dos movimentos de base ao desenvolvimento são vastamente diferentes daqueles prendidos pelo governo, pela agroindústria e pelas ONGs. Estes movimentos de base estão agindo no capacitamento de comunidades locais e espalhando um discurso da sustentabilidade que está no contraste duro aos discursos do governo e a agroindústria e aos critérios de ONGs para “Soja Sustentável”. Entretanto, estes atores localizados em Santarém enfrentam complexas e poderosas forças da globalização e faltam os recursos necessários para parar os impactos destrutivos da soja em Santarém. Está claro que um relacionamento melhor deve se tornar entre os grupos internacionais da conservação e movimentos locais dos trabalhos de base para construirmos um modelo mais progressivo do desenvolvimento da soja.

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Thanks to everyone working to spread knowledge to places where it lacks, to the people who are too often blissfully ignorant to the distant realities of the world. Thank you to those that have not caved, who hold firm persuasions and challenge me to question mine. Thank you to those that are trying to make a difference in the world- and thank you to those of you who the world has changed.

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## **Introduction**

A rising demand for soy on the global market is threatening the forests and communities of Amazonia. Since construction was completed on Cargill Corporation's "Northern Exit" port on the Amazon River in 1999, over two million tons of soy have been shipped through the city of Santarém, destined to feed European livestock. Along with the soy, the interests of local farmers are being exported for the sake of GDP growth and first-world profit. As the agribusiness model grows in the region, the diverse subsistence farming techniques of local populations are quickly being replaced by a dangerous and pervasive monoculture.

A complex structure of power has emerged in Santarém as a result of soy's growing influence- and with it a thick web of deception. Involved in the soy game are a number of actors at local, national, and global levels, all vying for control over valuable resources and the means of production and communication. This study seeks to analyze the power struggle between localized and globalized forces that has developed in Santarém since Cargill entered the scene in 1999. At the heart of this discussion are the varying conceptions of sustainable development that exist among the soy actors- and their means of conveying these ideas. A thorough understanding of the various development discourses, therefore, will prove essential to understanding the nature of the soy conflict.

This study explores the role of four primary actors (government, business, environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), and grassroots movements) involved with soy development in Santarém and their varying visions of sustainability. Part I focuses on the state's role in soy expansion at local and national levels, and identifies the historical shortcomings of local law enforcement in overseeing land title distribution, forest conservation projects, and in enforcing the law against agribusiness (as will become evident through an investigation into the prolonged judicial proceedings surrounding Cargill's port). It will identify the close relationship of government and agribusiness as a major catalyst for the growth of soy- and show that these actors share an optimistic vision of soy development which focuses on national economic benefits and agricultural expansion.

Part II will focus on the agribusiness model of development and the perceived economic benefits that fuel soy growth in Santarém. It will take into account the approach of Cargill and local soy producers toward soy development and their visions of sustainability. This study recognizes the agribusiness development model as one that identifies agricultural output and GDP as the essential indicators of economic activity, which in turn shapes their perspective regarding the beneficial nature of soy. In the process, the agribusiness discourse overlooks regional environmental and socio-economic impacts in the name of larger aspirations for profit and GDP growth.

Part III examines the local perspectives that serve as a sharp contrast to both the government and agribusiness development discourses. The local actors include small farmers and representative grassroots organizations fighting for land rights, political power, and the preservation of familial agriculture. The localized vision of sustainability marks a clear departure from that of government and business as it understands the importance of the relationship between communities and nature. While national and international agricultural actors consider land important because of its economic potential and forest valuable because of its rich biodiversity, the local communities threatened by the soy monoculture depend on the forest for their very lives. After an analysis of the regional environmental and socio-economic impacts of soy, this study will turn to a survey of the grassroots movements that are fighting for local interests, weighing their strengths and weaknesses. It will show that local organizations such as the Amazon Defense Front ( Frente Defesa da Amazonia, or FDA) and the Rural Workers Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Ruraís, or STR) are essential to build resistance power in the community, they generally lack the resources and media tools to effectively fight against global developmental pressures.

Part IV offers an analysis of the work of environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) who are working in Santarém to negotiate more responsible soy development practices in the Amazon. These organizations have emerged at the center of the conflict as their resources and command of international media grant them an important role. The Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund have been at the forefront of the so-called “Sustainable Soy” movement, focused on working closely with agribusiness and government players to preserve primary forest lands in the Amazon Biome. An investigation into the work of these ENGOS will reveal that in their single-minded focus on forest conservation these projects often overlook the interests of local communities who depend on the forest for subsistence. In the process of building campaigns geared toward “Sustainable Soy” (or “Responsible Soy”, “Forest-Friendly Soy”, etc.), the work of these ENGOS has played into the hands of agribusiness-improving the public environmental image of the soy industry while failing to make any ground-breaking changes in development practices.

However, the work of ENGOS has also shown the potential for helping local communities in Santarém. In particular, Greenpeace has emerged as a central figure working to balance the needs of grassroots social movements with the conservation efforts of international ENGOS. This study will analyze the function and effects of the Soy Moratorium that Greenpeace helped establish in 2006 through market pressure. The Moratorium is an agribusiness agreement to stop buying soy from newly deforested lands for two years. While the agreement has drawn local criticism for its short length and its conservative scope, this paper will conclude that the Moratorium is an important and necessary step toward developing more responsible soy practices in the Amazon. The investigation into the power struggle surrounding soy

development will demonstrate that only by combining grassroots-driven social movements with larger conservation concerns can we hope to preserve local communities and the forest on which they rely.

## Background



Figure 1. Map of the Brazilian Amazon (Source: BBC)

### A Brief History of Development in Santarém

Santarém is a city with a population of approximately 250,000 people, making it the second largest city in the state of Pará. It lies at the meeting of the Amazon and Tapajós rivers in the western part of Pará, halfway between the capital cities of Belém and Manaus. Since its founding in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Santarém has been an important port for exploration in the Amazon. However, until recent decades, a lack of transportation (roads) to the city meant the cultures of Santarém (indigenous native populations and river colonizers such as the Riberinhos and Quilombolas) were left for the most part untouched by large-scale development. That all changed with the coming of the military government in the 1960s.

The military leadership brought new economic ideals that would become the Brazilian “economic miracle” of the late 60’s and 70’s. Huge agrarian reform projects were proposed, designed to make use of Brazil’s natural and human resources to stimulate economic growth. As a result, roads were cleared through the forest and thousands of families moved to the Amazon, looking for land and opportunity. In the early 1960’s, Santarém’s population nearly doubled as colonos immigrants (small settlers arriving in the Amazon by the newly established road network) arrived in mass<sup>1</sup>.

Throughout the 70’s and 80’s the Brazilian government would continue massive settlement and agrarian reform projects. The Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) was created to

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<sup>1</sup> Steward (2006), 110.

facilitate the ongoing migration to the Amazon and other undeveloped areas. A large part of INCRA's responsibility was to help families secure land tenure, but thanks to lack of support (inadequacy) and the growth of private migration outside of INCRA's control, illegal ownership grew into an enormous and difficult problem to deal with. The land titling problem has only gotten worse and is one important factor contributing to the current conflict in Santarém- today, about 70% of the colonos settlers in Santarém do not have legal ownership of their land.<sup>2</sup>

Many hardships faced families trying to settle in the Amazon during this period. Most came from impoverished lives and now were trying to deal with growing crops on poor soil in conditions they were not accustomed to. These factors, when combined with a lack of government support, led colonos to take matters into their own hands. More forest was cleared as farmers moved deeper into the Amazon, and Santarém and other Amazonian towns became more and more densely populated. Further relocation followed when the Brazilian government announced the planned paving of the BR-163 highway connecting Santarém and the Amazon River with Mato Grosso state (the largest soy producing state in Brazil) in 1995.<sup>3</sup> This set the stage for today's agriculture scene and the emergence of the next great miracle crop: soy.

## **Emergence of a Monoculture- The Significance of Studying Soy**

Grain production has always been an important economic activity in the region of Santarém, long before the entrance of Cargill to the agricultural scene. Rice, beans, and corn are staple crops for the region. The difference between these grain crops and soy is that their primary use has been for providing food for the local community. The two primary crops grown today in Santarém are rice and soy, but they are grown for very different reasons. While 95% of the rice grown in Santarém is used to feed the community, 95% of soy grown in Santarém is sold to Cargill and exported to Europe.<sup>4</sup> In the past five years grain production in Santarém has skyrocketed, largely due to the introduction of soy to the region.<sup>5</sup> In 1999, soy was non-existent in Santarém. In 2006, nearly 20,000 hectares were planted in the Municipality and 33,000 tons of soy was produced,<sup>6</sup> meaning that almost 1% of all land in the municipality is now being used to feed livestock in the European Union.

To provide context, Mato Grosso state is largely considered one of the areas with the most deforestation in the world (responsible for 48% of total land lost in the Brazilian Amazon<sup>7</sup>), and also is the

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<sup>2</sup> Steward (2006), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Pontes (COOPERAMAZON), Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Clouis Lisbôa (SIRSAN), Interview.

<sup>6</sup> IBGE statistic, obtained during interview with SIRSAN.

<sup>7</sup> In 2005, Greenpeace awarded the governor of Mato Grosso state, Blairo Maggi, the "the Golden Chainsaw Award for the Brazilian person who most contributed to Amazon destruction" (Greenpeace International, 19 June 2005). In addition to being governor of Mato Grosso, Maggi also happens to be the single largest individual soy producer in the world.

primary soy-producing state in Brazil with 1,170,000 hectares planted<sup>8</sup>. This area dwarfs the area planted in Santarém- during interviews with agribusiness soy actors, this fact was often raised to demonstrate that soy production in Santarém was comparatively smaller and therefore not a concern. However, when one takes into consideration the fact that Mato Grosso state is over 30 times larger than Santarém municipality (903,000 square kilometers to 27,000 square kilometers), soy development in Santarém is clearly significant- the nearly 1% of land used for soy in Santarém is not so far from the 1.3% of land used for soy in Mato Grosso. It is also important to keep in mind is that soy has been an established crop in Mato Grosso for decades, whereas soy growth in Santarém is a very recent phenomenon.

Soy development in Santarém began in 1997 when the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) began conducting tests in the region to gauge the possibility of growing soy there. Research revealed great potential for Santarém because of good climate conditions and proximity to the Amazon River shipping route. In 1998, local government officials and businessmen went to Mato Grosso to convince producers there to come to Santarém. Simultaneously, the US-based agro-corporation Cargill began implementing the “Northern Exit Project”, a plan to export soy to Europe through the Amazon River.<sup>9</sup>

By 2000, Cargill had started construction on the port in Santarém and small farmers had begun to be displaced. Soy would drastically change the economic conditions of land use in Santarém in a very short time period. The price for land in the region in 2001 was 100 Reals (US \$50) per hectare. By the time Cargill had opened its port for operation in 2003, it was 3,000 Reals (US \$1,500) per hectare.<sup>10</sup> Farmers displaced by the incoming soy entrepreneurs would generally either move to faraway lands distant from society or into the slums surrounding Santarém, putting pressure on public services and job markets in the city. Often these now landless people have no marketable job skills and many now lead impoverished lives. Those that didn’t move far away or into the city simply migrated further into the forest, claiming land illegally and contributing to further primary forest degradation.<sup>11</sup> Painfully evident only several years after the soy crop’s arrival in Santarém were drastic social, economic, and environmental effects on the region. On many fronts, the soy monoculture has proven to be a destructive force in the area, one that must be mediated in order to save Santarém’s forest and communities.

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Clouis Lisbôa (SIRSAN), Interview.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Ivete Bastos (STR), Interview.

## Methods

Research for this study combined an investigation of the current discussions among scholars<sup>12</sup> regarding both sustainable development and soy with first-hand information from soy actors in Santarém. The primary actors involved in this research were: (1) government actors at both local and national levels—mainly the agricultural department of the mayor’s office, the federal environmental agency (IBAMA) and the federal agricultural agency (EMBRAPA); (2) agribusiness actors in Santarém including local soy farmers, local producer’s unions and cooperatives, and soy buyers such as Cargill; (3) Environmental non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) working in Santarém, in particular Greenpeace, The Nature Conservancy, and the World Wildlife Fund; and (4) grassroots organizations that represent the local community, such as the Rural Workers Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais or STR) and the Amazon Defense Front (Frente Defense da Amazonia or FDA).

After identifying the key soy actors, I conducted roughly 25 interviews in Santarém and Belém during May of 2007 to uncover the differing approaches to development held by the actors. The interviews focused on a variety of issues but in each I asked a common question: What does sustainable soy mean to you? The varied responses to this answer would help understand both the different approaches to sustainability and the diverse perceptions of ENGO work in Santarém, which has focused on the idea of “Sustainable Soy” land use practices.

To understand the role of government actors, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the head of agricultural development in the mayor’s office (SEMAB) and a representative from IBAMA in Santarém. These interviews focused on the history of soy development in the region, the office’s role in soy development, recent trends in soy production, perceptions of sustainable soy practices, and socio-economic/environmental costs and benefits of soy growth in the region.

For agribusiness actors I conducted semi-structured interviews with the regional public relations officer of Cargill in São Paulo, the operational director of the port terminal in Santarém, and a soy buyer at the port. These interviews focused on: socio-economic/environmental impacts of soy and sustainable soy practices; the operation of the Cargill port; and economic trends and buying practices of Cargill buyers, respectively. In addition to Cargill representatives I conducted semi-structured interviews with the vice president of the local Farmers Union (SIRSAN) and with the president of a local farmer’s cooperative (COOPERAMAZON). At the cooperative I also had the opportunity to interview eight local farmers that were members of the cooperative, six of which produced soy to sell to Cargill. Interviews with farmers and farmer’s organizations focused on personal history and land-use practices, the impacts of Cargill’s port on

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<sup>12</sup> Among the many documents reviewed for the purpose of this study, the groundbreaking work of Corrina Steward in the region was of particular importance as a precedent for research, a source that helped develop both effective research methods in Santarém and a framework for discussion of development discourses among soy actors.

the community and the environment, the effects of the Soy Moratorium and other ENGO initiatives, and visions of sustainable soy practices.

I interviewed leaders with several major international ENGOs, most notably Greenpeace and The Nature Conservancy, to understand their approaches to sustainable development and conservation. I also interviewed the director of agro-forestry at the Health and Happiness Project in Santarém and spoke with members of an American ENGO, Rainforest Action Network, who had attended the most recent meeting of WWF's Roundtable on Responsible Soy in São Paulo. ENGO interviews focused on environmental/socio-economic impacts of soy, visions of sustainability and the impacts of current NGO work in the region.

Besides interacting with farmers at COOPERAMAZON, I also learned more about grassroots perspectives through semi-structured interviews with Padre Edilberto Sena, a leader at Radio Rural and the Amazon Defense Front (FDA), and Maria Ivete Bastos, the president of the Rural Workers Union (STR). In addition, I attended an FDA meeting in Santarém and spoke with concerned locals about Cargill and community resistance. Interviews and conversations with local actors focused on the socio-economic and environmental impacts of soy, perceptions of sustainable development and "Sustainable Soy", and the advantages and difficulties of grassroots resistance.

## **Part I: The Government Development Discourse**

### **The Role of the State in Soy Development**

The Brazilian federal government and local government actors are committed to developing the soy crop in order to take advantage of beneficial conditions on the global market. The growth of China as an international soy importer and the outbreak of Mad Cow disease (causing an increased demand for soy free of Genetically Modified Organisms) in Europe caused the global price of soy to skyrocket, from US \$12 per bag (60kg of soy) to US \$34 dollars a bag<sup>13</sup>. These market conditions have driven the Brazilian government to ramp up soy development in a big way- today Brazil is the world's second largest soy producer and exporter, behind only the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Part of the federal government's drive for exports and GDP growth can be explained by the restructuring of the Brazilian economy done by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the late 1990s in order to pay back Brazil's growing national debt. Sections of the IMF mandate demands that Brazil increase export earnings and to use its land more efficiently, meaning expanding agriculture into Amazonian states like Mato Grosso and Pará<sup>15 16</sup>. The national push for a growth in agricultural exports has

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<sup>13</sup> Father Edilberto Sena, Interview.

<sup>14</sup> Soyatech, 1.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 1, which indicates Pará as having the highest potential soybean expansion area (17 million hectares).

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 2, a map of agricultural expansion into Mato Grosso and Pará.

placed a great pressure on local governments to facilitate the growth of agribusiness. According to Cargill representatives, local government officials in Santarém hold “agro-industrial development as the most ideal economic activity for the region.”<sup>17</sup>

The recent history of soy development in Santarém reveals the integral role government actors have played in fostering soy growth in the region. See Table 1, a timeline of soy development in Santarém that tracks government’s interactions with agribusiness, their involvement in soy growth, the controversial court proceedings against Cargill that have played out since 2000, and other important developments in the region.

### **Table 1. Timeline of Soybean Development in Santarém**<sup>18</sup>

- **1995**
  - *National and Local:* The Brazilian government begins implementation of the Avança Brasil development program. BR-163, a highway connecting Santarém with Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso, is planned to be paved to facilitate transportation of soy and other goods to and from Santarém.
  - *Local:* The governor of Pará finances the Agrária Engenharia e Consultoria (Agricultural Engineering and Consulting) program to study Santarém and nearby municipalities for their commercial agriculture potential.
- **1996-1997**
  - *State and Local:* EMBRAPA (The Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) and other regional government actors begin a soybean pilot project and begin the process of soliciting money from the state for soybean development.
- **1997-1998**
  - *National and Local:* Regional maps depicting agro-ecological zoning, soil types and forest cover were completed. Local government actors and entrepreneurs travel to Mato Grosso marketing Santarém as the new frontier for soybean development. Agribusiness players in Mato Grosso begin visiting with representatives from the municipal government and EMBRAPA.
  - *International and Local:* The United States-based multinational agribusiness giant Cargill Corporation (arguably the largest private company in the world) begins the “Northern Exit Project,” aimed at seeking northern export routes for Brazilian soy. Cargill establishes an office in Santarém and begins meeting with soy producers from Mato Grosso.
  - *Local:* First soy farm established in Santarém. Other agribusiness players soon follow, such as soy buyers, agricultural technicians and input suppliers, and land speculators.

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<sup>17</sup> Steward (2006), 111.

<sup>18</sup> The Timeline in Table 1 was created primarily using two previous case studies by Corrina Steward (see bibliography) with supplemental information from interviews and other sources.

- **1998-2001**

- *Local:* Cargill begins port construction in Santarém (some say illegally) in 1999 and the first wave of soy-related small farmer displacement occurs. According to an IBAMA representative, land prices in 2001 were about 100 Reals (US\$50) per hectare.
- *Local:* In 2000, Cargill is brought to court for the legality of its operation in Santarém, and the judge issues an injunction against the port, barring it from operation with an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). While Cargill representatives claim to have gained rights to the port by enacting an “Environmental Control Plan” during port construction, community and environmental activists dismiss this merely as a ploy intended to extend legal battles in the courts..<sup>19</sup> A series of seven appeals to the 2000 decision would follow over the next seven years, each time with the court ruling against Cargill. However, in the Brazilian court system, appeals can have a suspending effect on the original ruling being argued. In practice, what this means is that despite the condemnation of the 2000 court ruling, Cargill was able to continue construction while the authorization was still under appeal.<sup>20</sup>

- **2001-2003**

- *National and Local:* In April of 2003, Cargill completes construction in the midst of the appealing process and opens the port for operation, accepting soy from farms in Mato Grosso and Santarém.
- *Local:* Second wave of small farmer displacement begins, corresponding with the completion of the Cargill port. Large numbers of landless people move onto government lands and into the city of Santarém. Land prices in Santarém increase to 3,000 Reals (US\$1,500) per hectare.<sup>21</sup>
- *Local:* In July of 2003, the Rural Workers Union launches a campaign against regional soy production, encouraging colonos not to sell their land to soybean farmers.

- **2004**

- *Local:* The law suit against Cargill reaches the next step of the judicial process four years after the original ruling. What was an injunction against the port became a “conclusive” sentence when the federal justice in Santarém condemned Cargill once again to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment. However, Cargill’s lawyers would continue to appeal both the original injunction and the new sentence against the port, and operations went on uninterrupted.<sup>22</sup>

- **2005**

- *National and Local:* Powerful ENGOs such as The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) become more actively involved in the situation surrounding soy development in the Amazon. TNC begins working with Cargill on its “forest friendly soy” project, and the WWF hosts the first Roundtable on Sustainable Soy. Both aim to initiate direct dialogue between environmental groups and agribusiness in order to create criteria for a “sustainable soy” development model.

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<sup>19</sup> Father Edilberto Sena, Interview.

<sup>20</sup> Greenpeace International, March 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

<sup>22</sup> Greenpeace International, March 2007.

- **2006**
  - *International and Local:* In May of 2006 Greenpeace launched a high-profile protest against Cargill. They published the results of years of on-site research in an exclusive report, “Eating up the Amazon,” which exposed the link between first-world soy consumers (such as McDonalds) and deforestation in the Amazon. Their work influenced first-world consumers to put pressure on Cargill and other agribusiness actors to be more environmentally conscious.
  - *International and Local:* Due to pressure from high-profile customers like McDonalds, regional agribusiness actors sign the Soy Moratorium, a ban on the purchase of soy from newly deforested lands.
- **2007**
  - In February IBAMA agents began inspection of Cargill’s port in Santarém and on March 24<sup>th</sup> the port was finally closed down. Environmentalists in the community and around the world cheered the government for taking action. The Federal Prosecutor of Santarém commented that, "this is a historical decision and it changes the pattern of lack of governance in the region"<sup>23</sup>.
  - Just one month after this historic victory for the community and the forest, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, Cargill was allowed to reopen after negotiating a new court ruling from a different judge. Cargill will now be required to provide the EIA that it was originally required to provide in 2000. However, they will be allowed to continue operations while the EIA is completed- which could take up to two years.

### **The Effectiveness of Government Sustainability Efforts**

The inability of the Brazilian judicial system to enforce the unanimous sentences of numerous judges over seven years indicates that the state is incapable of holding agribusiness players accountable to the law. Some representatives of the local community suspect bribery and coercion have played important parts in allowing Cargill’s port to remain in operation all these years, especially in the last re-opening of the port, when one judge broke with the unanimous decisions of the original judicial mandate and seven appeals- all of which were decisions against Cargill. Even if bribery has not played a factor, it is clear that the Brazilian judicial system is an inadequate check on agribusiness if Cargill’s lawyers have been able to manipulate sentences since 2000 and allow Cargill to build a port and export millions of tons of soy in that time period.

The state environmental agency (IBAMA) has also had serious problems monitoring and enforcing the law. The forest code of Para and Amazonas dictates that 80% of a farmer’s land must be reserved for forest to compensate for economic usage in the other 20%. Government actors consider enforcing the forest code to be the most important step toward building a sustainable model of agriculture development.<sup>24</sup> However, this has proven to be easier said than done.

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<sup>23</sup> Greenpeace International, March 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

Interviews with representatives from IBAMA and the mayor's office of Santarém have revealed a complicated and prevalent practice of land-grabbing in the region. Government actors' past conservation efforts have resulted in the creation of forest reserves and a high percentage of publicly-owned land in Santarém municipality. Thus, there is not enough private land to facilitate the kind of soy growth that is desired by federal government and agribusiness development models. This has led to widespread and well-documented land conflicts in the region.<sup>25</sup> As one might expect and as will be explored later in Part III, small farmers have trouble standing up to invasive soy interests, and many end up being forced to sell or abandon their land. Many farmers' only (or best) choice is to migrate to protected forest areas and claim the land for themselves. Some farmers even sell illegally taken land back to agribusiness entrepreneurs and continue the cycle of deforestation.<sup>26</sup> According to Steward, 70% of the local colonos (local familial farming) population lack a legal land title.<sup>27</sup>

The biggest challenges, therefore, facing the state today are first to locate and identify illegal landowners (improving the land title situation), and second to ensure that legal landowners are preserving 80% of their land as forest (enforcing the forest code). However, IBAMA lacks the resources or the manpower to inspect all the preserved zones to prevent deforestation there, and finding land-owners who technically own no land has proven even more difficult. To make matters worse for forest code enforcement, punishments for not complying with the code are purely monetary- farmers cannot go to jail or face serious punishment for misusing their land.<sup>28</sup> Facing only slight economic penalties makes it worthwhile to take the risk of getting caught and open up more land for economic activity. In the case of small-scale land-grabbers, they might be punished if they are found out, but this means that the government is punishing desperate victims of soy displacement rather than addressing the soy producers that forced them into preserved forest zones in the first place.

Overall, the federal and regional government actors have shown throughout the history of soy development in Santarém that they share an enthusiasm with agribusiness toward the growth of the soybean crop. Despite numerous rulings against the legality of Cargill's port in Santarém, the Brazilian judicial system has been unable to enforce the law and shut down its operations for good. Meanwhile, government actors have a conception of sustainability that is fulfilled through the creation of forest preserves (which has been shown as a potential source of land conflict in the area) and enforcing the forest code. However, IBAMA and other government agencies lack the resources they need to enforce the code or bring land-grabbers to justice. It is clear that the government discourse alone cannot be depended on as a mediating force to the destructive effects of soy growth in Santarém.

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<sup>25</sup> See Steward's case studies, Greenpeace International's "Eating up the Amazon", and Wallace's "Last of the Amazon" for recent examples of widely distributed reports of Amazonian land conflicts. Also supported by interviews with STR and FDA.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

<sup>27</sup> Steward (2006), 110

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Cohenca (IBAMA), Interview.

## Part II. Agribusiness Development Models

### The Miracle Crop

Agribusiness has responded rapidly to government enthusiasm by ramping up both the production and shipping capacity of soy. Cargill plans to build another soy storage facility on site in Santarém in the hopes to achieve its goal of exporting one million tons of soy this year. Like government actors, agribusiness and soy farmers are both highly optimistic about future growth of soy in the region. During Steward's interviews with soy producers and buyers in the Santarém region it became clear that agribusiness has high expectations. When asked the question,

“What is Santarém's soy production potential?” The majority of agribusiness soy actors replied that the area's potential is 550,000 ha. The consistency of their reply is not coincidental, but a verbatim figure from the EMBRAPA/PRIMAZ (federal agricultural and mineral research programs) agro-ecological zoning map that identifies land-use potential for the municipality (i.e. a future land-use scenario for the region).<sup>29</sup>

EMBRAPA and other government agencies hold optimistic expectations for soy development in the Amazon and further ease the transition to mechanized agriculture in the region. This has led soy actors to believe themselves to be pursuing not only personal, but national interests. “Soy farmers view themselves as fulfilling national economic goals when they purchase land, clear it, prepare it, and cultivate soy for the export market. As one farmer explained, ‘Soybean farmers believe they are national heroes.’”<sup>30</sup>

According to Cargill representatives and local soy farmers, soy has brought great economic and social benefits to the region. A recent issue of Cargill News tells the story:

Agriculture has grown in the Santarém area, bringing greater prosperity to a city so poor that parts of it still lack sewage treatment. Many people in the countryside are unable to afford electricity and running water. Unfortunately, according to some NGOs, and media reports, a lot of the local families (in Santarém) are criminals who are disobeying Brazilian laws by cutting and burning rainforest to plant soybeans.<sup>31</sup>

Cargill is aware of the impoverished conditions of Santarém and surrounding areas, and believes that soy is a hope for making the lives of locals better. One farmer is later quoted as saying that “Soy is gold.” He goes on to justify this by commenting, “With soy, we know the price and we can depend on it. That is not true of our rice crop, which we can only sell locally.”<sup>32</sup> In the soy actors' vision of soy development, the act of exporting to the global market is more beneficial for Santarém communities than providing food for local families.

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<sup>29</sup> Steward (2006), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Steward (2006), 111.

<sup>31</sup> Dienhart, 1 (in Cargill News, September/October 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Dienhart (in Cargill News, September/October 2006).

One only has to look to the numbers to see the beneficial socio-economic impacts of soy. The GDP of Santarém has grown from 227 million Reals in 1994 to an astounding 1,235 million in 2006. The GDP of Agricultural output has more than tripled in that same time period- 114 million Reals in 1994 to 375 million in 2006.<sup>33</sup> As Cargill's port is planning to increase its soy export goal from 600 thousand to a million tons of soy per year, this number should only rise in the next several years. According to José de Lima Pereira, an economist connected with Cargill as the general manager of the Grain and Oil Seed Supply Chain, closing operations at the Cargill port would result in disastrous consequences for the community of Santarém- namely, the removal of 380 million Reals of GDP from Santarém's yearly agricultural production, which is the amount of GDP accumulated from the export of a million tons of soy at current market conditions.<sup>34</sup>

Soy actors' belief that the Cargill port provides socio-economic benefits for Santarém is based almost entirely on the accumulation of GDP and growth in agricultural output for the region. Agribusiness discourses depend on connecting the national government's agenda for economic growth with the production potential of local soy farmers. Once this connection is made, even small soy farmers are willing to accept that a growth in sheer domestic product will translate to improving the welfare of the local community.

### **“Environmental Soy” Practices in Agribusiness**

Due to increasing market awareness around the world of soy's role in deforesting the Amazon, Cargill and other soy actors have felt pressure to become more environmentally responsible in soy production, in particular regarding deforestation and the preservation of the Amazon biome. While it is arguable whether agribusiness would pursue forest preservation without the demands of ENGOs and community groups, it is evident that the most pressing environmental motivator for agribusiness is the economic pressure placed on it by soy customers and other market forces.

The most promising internal environmental initiatives on the part of agribusiness are those that can both help protect forest and create opportunity for greater production. In particular, it is in the best interest of agribusiness to use more efficient land-use practices and work to get a higher quality crop. One method that ABIOVE (The Brazilian Vegetable Oil Industry Association) is advocating is incorporating grain crops such as soy with pasture land (which, according to the TNC, is the biggest single factor contributing to Amazon deforestation) to increase soil fertility. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, there are 30 million hectares of degraded pasture land in Brazil that would benefit from the planting of grains, an area

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<sup>33</sup> IBGE statistics, obtained during an interview at SIRSAN (the local farmer's union).

<sup>34</sup> Muniz, 2 (O Liberal, 22 April 2007).

roughly ten times the size of the Santarém municipality.<sup>35</sup> The Crop-Livestock Integration program is one example of an initiative that can help increase economic productivity of the land while discouraging opening more land to deforestation.

While some environmental reforms actually turn out to be in the best economic interests of agribusiness, more commonly change is brought about through outside forces (market pressure). Cargill, ABIOVE, and other agribusiness actors have been forced to take part in ENGO-led conservation projects such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Soy and the Soy Moratorium. These topics will be discussed more in depth in Part IV, but it is important to note that for agribusiness companies, the actual effects of these programs are much less significant than them being able to publicly claim, as Cargill does, that they hold a “leadership role”<sup>36</sup> in working to preserve the forest and develop “Sustainable Soy” practices. In the process they are able to quell the environmental concerns of their customers in rest of the world. However, as we shall see, while these conservation programs are geared toward “preserving the most important areas”<sup>37</sup> of forest, it is up for speculation which areas are important. Further, soy development often causes indirect environmental hazards that may not be affected by such programs. Worst of all, while the preservation of valuable rainforest lands may be enough to satisfy first-world observers and market forces, these “Sustainable Soy” projects do not adequately address the drastic socio-economic impacts of soy development and in fact may cause even further subjugation of local communities.

### **Part III: Local Perspectives of Soy Development**

#### **The Darker Side of Soy : Environmental and Socio-economic Impacts**

Despite government and agribusiness enthusiasm for the opportunities of economic growth that soy offers Santarém, there are deep localized socio-economic impacts that counter-act the supposed benefits. Communities of subsistence farmers are disappearing as families are either tempted by the cash offered to them for their farms or fearful of the violence that might occur should they refuse. Even if they do stand up to developers, they soon find themselves surrounded by “progress.” National Geographic related a story told by Aurecelia Nunes of the Rural Workers Union (STR) in Belterra, just south of Santarém:

Those who refused to sell found themselves encircled by an encroaching wasteland, as whining chain saws and raging fires consumed the trees right up to the edge of their land. Their yards were overrun with vipers, bees, and rodents escaping the

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<sup>35</sup> ABIOVE, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Afonso Champi (Cargill), Interview.

<sup>37</sup> Afonso Champi (Cargill), Interview.

apocalypse, and when tractors began spraying the cleared fields, toxic clouds of pesticides drifted into their homes. “Their health was in jeopardy,” Núnes said. “Many started getting sick. Their animals started dying.”<sup>38</sup>

There is left little choice for colonos communities but to take whatever they can get for their land and leave, moving either into the growing slums of Santarém, to distant lands without public services or support, or further into the forest, often illegally taking public land and clearing it for themselves. Often the indirect effects of soy development are even more dramatic and destructive than the direct ones- but you won’t see them on agribusiness maps or statistics showing “deforestation due to soy”.

While agribusinesses claim that soy development takes place largely outside of the Amazon biome,<sup>39</sup> soybean growth is causing widespread deforestation, both directly and indirectly. Over 1 million hectares were planted in the Amazon biome in 2005, which is small compared to the rest of Brazil (22 million hectares) but big considering soy was virtually non-existent in Amazon states like Pará just a decade ago.<sup>40</sup>

Clearing the forest is the primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil- up to 75% of Brazil’s total carbon emissions come from deforestation. Despite having low levels of industrial and automobile emissions, “Brazil is the world’s fourth largest climate polluter.”<sup>41</sup> Deforestation not only causes problems for local communities, but is affecting the global climate crisis.

In addition to deforestation, the spread of any mono-cultured crop causes loss of biodiversity, pest outbreaks, crop disease, and soil erosion. Soy in Santarém is planted only once a year and often the land is not rotated with other crops, leading quickly to soil degradation. As a result, large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides are required to continue soy production on the poor soil. Local rivers become contaminated, poisoning fish and nearby communities. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Brazilians were poisoned in 2003 due to widespread pesticide use, including 4,000 deaths.<sup>42</sup>

Another worrisome social development surrounding soy is slave labor. According to Greenpeace,

Hand in hand with illegal forest destruction and the expulsions linked to land grabbing comes slavery. In fact, slaves provide a noteworthy portion of the manpower for forest clearance. Slavery exists principally in states with the strongest agricultural expansion on native forest. The Amazon states of Pará and Mato Grosso are king.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, Pará is the state with the most slaves in Brazil- 2,475 discovered in 2005 alone.<sup>44</sup> Slavery is yet another widespread social side effect to deforestation that doesn’t fit into the agribusiness model of development.

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<sup>38</sup> Wallace, 70

<sup>39</sup> ABIOVE, 7

<sup>40</sup> AIDEnvironment, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Greenpeace International (“Eating up the Amazon”), 5.

<sup>42</sup> Greenpeace International (“Eating up the Amazon”), 21.

<sup>43</sup> Greenpeace International (“Eating up the Amazon”), 31.

Local economic effects, too, aren't necessarily beneficial. While in terms of GDP growth soy seems to be quite lucrative, for the people of Santarém there are very little benefits. While soy development was supposed to bring jobs, wealth, and prosperity to the region, it has only brought great wealth for powerful soy entrepreneurs. The local people see none of it. Instead, due to competition over land they are finding it harder and harder to produce food for the small markets of Santarém, and as a result must import food from other regions in order to feed the people of the city and its nearby communities.<sup>45</sup> In this way, food becomes scarcer and more expensive, the living conditions of the poor are degraded, and entire communities are wiped off the map by a monoculture- yet Santarém can claim burgeoning economic growth.

### **Grassroots Resistance: A Different Approach to Development**

In contrast to the development schemes facilitated by government actors and carried through by agribusiness, grassroots organizations have visions of sustainability that start with social reform. These movements face great difficulties in standing up for local communities, but their work is essential to fight the corporate power that is spreading through the Amazon.

The Rural Workers Union, or Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Ruraís (STR), was created in 1973 by the military government. In the beginning its leadership was filled with military appointees who did little practical work for local communities in Santarém. During the 80's rural workers took over leadership and since then STR has been a pivotal organization in Santarém, whose aim is to fight for the political freedom of workers and for agrarian reform in the region. Today the STR represents more than 300 rural communities in the area and is heavily involved in fighting for subsistence, familial agriculture as opposed to the soy monoculture.

María Ivete Bastos, president of the STR, knows first-hand about the fear tactics employed by her enemies. Last month she received threats of death and torture for her resistance efforts in the region. Violence and intimidation are widespread in the Amazon, and many local resistance leaders have been assassinated for standing up for the rights of local farmers. In the last 15 years, more than 1,800 rural workers were killed in Pará by land grabbers<sup>46</sup>

Despite its difficulties, STR has been influential in working to secure land titles and rights to land for colonos families. By encouraging small farmers to hold onto their land and resist agribusiness intimidation, the union hopes to preserve subsistence agriculture and diversified production in Santarém.

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<sup>44</sup> Greenpeace International ("Eating up the Amazon"), 31.

<sup>45</sup> Maria Ivete Bastos (STR), Interview.

<sup>46</sup> Maria Ivete Bastos, Interview.

Father Edilberto Sena is another grassroots figure, like Maria Ivete Bastos, who is working to empower local communities and stand up to corporate power. He has helped create Radio Rural, a public radio station that helps “feed the mind of the people.”<sup>47</sup> Radio is the key mass communication tool in the area, and other regional stations often spread messages appealing to the government and business interests. Radio Rural provides more critical news to a population that desperately needs it and who otherwise wouldn’t receive it. There are plans to expand Radio Rural from its operation in Santarém to spread all across Amazonia, a plan that promises to build up local awareness of environmental and social issues across the entire region. While Radio Rural will not start a grassroots revolution on its own, mass communication is an important tool for reaching a population that is often distant and highly disorganized.

Sena is also highly involved with the Amazon Defense Front (Frente Defesa da Amazônia), a gathering of concerned community members and activists that are working to spread awareness and fight the subjugation of the people of Santarém. Attending an FDA meeting showed that the people who gather at the meeting are not only highly motivated, but represent a wide variety of walks of life, from students to farmers to businessmen. Grassroots movements such as the FDA represent a diverse interest group that brings locals together to mobilize the population and create an avenue of resistance against the structure of power that has historically been tipped in the favor of agribusiness.

Development models for grassroots activists are different from the agribusiness model because they incorporate social change as a fundamental component of environmental sustainability. In fact, they believe these ideas to be intrinsically linked. For groups like the STR and the FDA, the preservation of familial agriculture and stable land ownership translates directly to preservation of the forest. Rather than creating forest reserves and passing ambitious land-use laws that generally fail to be enforced, grassroots movements understand that only by attacking the social issues surrounding soy development and deforestation can we begin to truly change the way that people use the resources of the Amazon.

The grassroots approach to sustainability, then, is an important counter to the discourse of government and agribusiness. However, as we have seen, grassroots activists face serious challenges in the forms of violence, intimidation, and a lack of resources. In today’s world, where policies are shaped by world-wide markets and national interests, it would be exceedingly difficult for a grassroots movement to be able to reverse the monoculture trend or slow rainforest destruction on its own. While initiatives such as the Radio Rural offer hope for the growth of local media power, grassroots actors must rely on third parties such as powerful ENGOs to get their message heard by the people in first world consumer markets and industry that shape the market for agribusiness in the Amazon.

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<sup>47</sup> Father Edilberto Sena, interview.

## **Part IV: The Role of ENGOs in “Sustainable Soy” Development**

There are a vast number of different ENGOs working in Santarém, each with their own agenda, focus, and goals. The grassroots organizations previously discussed are certainly important actors in the conflict in Santarém- they work by directly representing and supporting the people of local communities. Other localized service organizations such as The Health and Happiness Project and Pastoral do Menor are funded outside of the region but are focused on improving living conditions in the region and empowering community members. This study, however, focuses on the well-funded international advocacy groups that have been involved in promoting more responsible soy practices in Santarém- specifically, the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Greenpeace.

### **The WWF and TNC: Building “Sustainable Soy”**

According to WWF’s Forest Conversion News, the “WWF is particularly concerned about the ongoing destruction of valuable habitats through the expansion of soy fields in South America” (WWF). For this reason, the Roundtable on Sustainable Soy (RSS) was formed by the NGO in March 2005. The Roundtable’s recommendations regarding “Sustainable Soy” for agribusiness include: protecting “valuable natural areas” from soy cultivation and abiding by labor and property laws<sup>48</sup> However, *which* valuable habitats are being protected, and what are the limits of property rights of marginal colonos communities?

While the WWF claims that the RSS represented those involved with and those affected by soy production equally, “only a handful of (the 200 participants involved) work directly with indigenous and local communities”<sup>49</sup> A majority of the participants were soy buyers and other groups involved in the soy production process. This leads to a skewed representation of what a “valuable natural area” is and an approach to sustainability that reflects the agribusiness ideology. Even worse, this meeting of mostly global and national players continues to neglect the needs and perspectives of local communities, and leaves them out of the sphere of control.

Similarly, The Nature Conservancy’s “forest friendly soy” project aims at less primary forest destruction in “sustainable” soy development and has fostered a relationship with Cargill in order to exert market pressure for conservation ends. These pressures are to buy soy only from farmers with land titles and who reserve 80% of their land for forest. However, while the people at TNC do believe that exerting these market pressures is the best way to conserve primary forest, they (like the Roundtable), act in dialogue with the government, Cargill and other agribusiness players without attending to the needs of local communities. During an interview with TNC, in fact, the representative made it perfectly clear that

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<sup>48</sup> WWF, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Steward (2006), 115.

mechanized soy was “not a leading cause of deforestation in the Amazon.”<sup>50</sup>-instead, he identified small subsistence farming as a leading cause. To justify this he pointed to a chart that identified “causes of new deforestation in the Amazon.” Cattle ranching was the largest cause at 60%, with small subsistence farming second at 33%. Mechanized agriculture was listed only at 2%<sup>51</sup>. This villainizing of local farmers is unjust and misleading. As was demonstrated above, much of the new deforestation in Santarém is coming from farmers who were forced to sell or leave their settled land to soy entrepreneurs and then take claim to new lands further into the forest. While these local people are certainly a *part* of the problem- illegal land grabbing is a crime- these kinds of statistics mislead the public and play down the indirect social impacts of soy development.

These NGOs work under a controversial assumption: *that a “Sustainable Soy” model is achievable*. This assumption (in effect, a concession to the unstoppable movements of business), in addition to an alarming under-representation of those communities affected by soy development, has prompted a significant counter movement in the form of discussions that oppose the very idea of sustainable soy. Most notably, the Via Campesina, an international peasant movement, organized a counter RSS conference in 2005 which asserted that, “sustainability and monoculture are fundamentally irreconcilable, as are the interests of peasant societies and agribusiness”<sup>52</sup>

In addition, a network of social/environmental organizations in Brazil came together for an online forum entitled the Articulação Soja-Brasil, largely representing groups that are affected by, rather than involved with, soy production.<sup>53</sup>

The discussion recognized several of the socio-economic and environmental effects of soy development felt by Santarém communities, particularly increased land rights conflicts, smallholder displacement and migration, and removal of agro-biodiversity. Participants further recognized that new criteria, even if soy farmers fully implemented them, would not constitute “sustainable soy production,” but rather “production with fewer negative impacts.”<sup>54</sup>

The difference between “sustainable soy production” and “production with fewer negative impacts” is a key recognition and signals whether one takes a realistic or an overly optimistic stance on the environmental and socio-economic impacts of soy development. Indeed, the Roundtable on Sustainable Soy has recently been renamed the Roundtable on Responsible Soy, and the interview question “What is Sustainable Soy?” prompted Cargill and TNC representatives to change the word “Sustainable” to “Responsible” in their answers...but this simple change in nomenclature does little to actually change the practices that are both damaging and excluding local communities.

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<sup>50</sup> Benito Guerrero (TNC), Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Benito Guerrero (TNC), Interview.

<sup>52</sup> Rams Horn, 2.

<sup>53</sup> CEBRAC, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Steward (2006), 117.

## **Greenpeace and the Soy Moratorium**

Greenpeace has been a major resistance force to Cargill and deforestation related to soy since construction of the port in 2003. They have taken an active role through protests and political pressure. In April 2006 they released a report entitled “Eating up the Amazon,” exposing Cargill and companies it supplies, such as McDonalds, as having a direct and dramatic impact on deforestation on the Amazon.<sup>55</sup>

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, thanks largely to the pressure of Greenpeace on McDonalds and Cargill, the Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries (ABIOVE) and the Association of European Consumers (ANEC), along with their member companies, “pledged not to trade (or buy) soy originated after that date in deforested areas within the Amazon Biome, ” for the next two years (ABIOVE). They also created a working group of agribusiness and ENGO players to aid IBAMA and other government officials in enforcement.

In many ways, this agreement, which has come to be known as the Soy Moratorium, is a huge success for conservation. The same organization that had a large role in putting together the Articulação Soja-Brasil said that “The moratorium was a significant political victory, as large buyers acknowledged that they are co-responsible for the problems caused by agricultural activities.”<sup>56</sup> Certainly getting agribusiness to admit that they are part of the problem is a start toward dispelling the notion of “sustainable soy” in the Amazon.

In effect, the Moratorium has significant weaknesses for practical implementation. One problem is the time period- two years is not enough time to have a significant impact on deforestation, given local land use practices. Paulo Adario of Greenpeace is quick to point out the limitations of the Moratorium. “Anyone who lives here knows that the first year you clear land, slash-and-burn and put some cows on the land. The second year you pull out stumps and plant rice. Soy is only planted the third year - after the ban loses effect”<sup>57</sup>.

Another problem is the wording of the Moratorium, which only specifically protects newly deforested areas in the Amazon biome. This means that there is no protection for the vulnerable secondary forest or for other important biomes such as the cerrado savannah lands, where the majority of soy expansion is taking place. However, it may be unrealistic to try and end deforestation in the cerrado of Mato Grosso, where soy has already become the dominant economic product. Ending primary forest deforestation in the Amazon biome is an important first step, which will hopefully fuel future conservation projects for other dominant crops and in other areas such as the cerrado.

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<sup>55</sup> Greenpeace International (“Eating up the Amazon”).

<sup>56</sup> Reporter Brasil.

<sup>57</sup> Howden, 26 July 2006.

Perhaps the biggest weakness of the Moratorium is that, like the other ENGO initiatives before it, it has largely failed to incorporate or reflect the perspectives of local communities. The Moratorium working group, created by the Moratorium players in October 2006 to ensure the implementation of the agreement, is made up of five major actors from the agribusiness sector and five major conservation NGOs, including Greenpeace, TNC, and the WWF.<sup>58</sup>

This has resulted in a focus on the things that matter to the people in the first-world who fund the efforts of these ENGOs- most notably, the preservation of primary rainforest lands that are deemed to have a high “global value.” Therefore the Moratorium furthers the trend of pure forest conservation with little regard for social impacts.

Some grassroots organizations such as the FDA are critical of the Moratorium and its effects. FDA sent representatives to the first meetings of the Moratorium monitoring group and adamantly demanded that the Moratorium be extended to ten years and cover forest deforested after 2003, not 2006. After three attempts to force action on the part of the members of the Moratorium working group, FDA decided not to take part in the Moratorium meetings any longer. Father Edilberto Sena commented that, “We quit the Moratorium because we know that two years is not enough. Cargill built the Moratorium and they did it because of international pressure, not legitimate environmental concerns.”<sup>59</sup>

Many local farmers also expressed outrage against the work of Greenpeace and other ENGOs, believing their efforts to reflect American imperialism and the internationalization of the Amazon. A director of COOPERAMAZON went so far as to call them “mercenaries, defending the interests of capitalism and the first world, Rockefeller and the British Royal family”<sup>60</sup>. Much of the disdain for Greenpeace efforts stemmed from an underlying belief that the forest code in Pará, which dictates that 80% of a producer’s land must be reserved for forest, causes difficulties for farmers. One worker at COOPERAMAZON was quick to point out that “Here in Pará and Amazonas, we have to set aside 80% of our land for forest, whereas in the rest of Brazil only 50% needs to be reserved. This is an unfair policy and is a big reason why life is hard for small farmers here- it is very expensive to open up new land.”<sup>61</sup>. The common belief among the farmers at the cooperative (many of whom were soy planters, economically involved with Cargill) was that ENGOs were doing more harm than good for the community, and further that they had no right to dictate policy in Santarém. One local farmer (not a soy producer) added, “Amazonia is ours. It is ours to protect. When Greenpeace starts planting trees in the United States and Europe, then they’ll have my support. But it is our right to use our forest.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Greenpeace International (Amazon Bulletin). Obtained through interview with Greenpeace.

<sup>59</sup> Father Edilberto Sena, Interview.

<sup>60</sup> (COOPERAMAZON) Interview.

<sup>61</sup> Gabriel Pontes (COOPERAMAZON), Interview

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous Farmer (COOPERAMAZON), Interview.

Still, some grassroots players have reacted positively to the Moratorium and its importance. The STR still is actively involved in the monitoring group and is optimistic for the future of the agreement. While STR agrees that two years is too short of a timeframe and that local communities should be more involved in the process, the agreement represents an important political success for them. “Logistically, it may be a small victory for the community, but the Moratorium represents a big step towards real change in the future,”<sup>63</sup> said STR’s president.

According to an Amazon campaigner with Greenpeace, Tatiana de Carvalho, the Soy Working Group is near an agreement to extend the Moratorium- something which all sides seem to see as a necessary step. In addition, the group has been working to develop maps and satellite images of the region (a huge step toward helping IBAMA and government officials protect the forest code and stop land grabbing), and has been strengthening relationships with government actors in order to help enforce conservation laws. The representative from Greenpeace said that, “The Moratorium is a big step because it is both putting market pressure on agribusiness to end deforestation and is working to help government enforcement with land titles and the forest code.”<sup>64</sup>

The Moratorium has yet to show its effects. Some grassroots organizations like the FDA are frustrated because they want more wide-reaching policies, but their radical demands fall on the deaf ears of agribusiness players who care more about appeasing their first-world observers. Many local farmers also disapprove of the Moratorium and believe it will hurt small farmers more than it helps. However, despite representing largely international conservation interests, the Soy Moratorium is proof that ENGOs have the resources and the power to force agribusiness conservation through market pressure. By consenting to the agreement, agribusiness players such as Cargill have admitted that they are part of the deforestation problem and are now taking action to preserve primary forest. The working group has also shown great conservation potential in aiding the government to improve the land title situation and enforce the forest code. The Soy Moratorium is an important and necessary step toward preserving the Amazon, one that, while reflecting the interests of concerned first-world parties, has the potential to translate to real, constructive socio-economic and environmental changes in the Santarém region.

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<sup>63</sup> Maria Ivete Bastos, Interview.

<sup>64</sup> Tatiana de Carvalho (Greenpeace Brazil), Interview.

## **Conclusion: Joining Forces for Change**

The situation unfolding around soy development in Santarém has proven to be exceedingly complicated, with multiple layers of local and global interests competing for land rights and political power. The outcome of this struggle will have profound environmental impacts on the rainforest and could be crippling to communities that depend on the forest to survive. The soy situation in Santarém is telling of the effects of capitalist growth and globalization on third world populations. Entire farming communities that thrived just a decade ago are today destroyed by the soy monoculture, and what grassroots spheres of resistance do exist are lacking in funding and exposure.

ENGOS hold an important middle ground in the conflict, and this study has shown that they can either act to serve agribusiness interests or work for legitimate environmental and socio-economic change. While all multi-national ENGOS are forced focus on the issues that their constituents in the first-world are most interested in (most notably primary forest conservation), some ENGOS are maintaining working relationships with agribusiness while neglecting the needs of locals, while others are working to empower the community. As Father Edilberto Sena said, “There are two kinds of NGOs- the right ones and the wrong ones.”<sup>65</sup>

TNC and the WWF have enacted “Sustainable” Soy efforts that have held the same development ideals as agribusiness and have failed to represent local colonos communities or work for real social change. Both believe that market pressure is the best way to bring about conservation, but seem unconcerned for the population at large, so long as primary forest is saved. While grassroots movements struggle to find the resources or media power to get their message across, ENGOS have the resources but find themselves holding on to similar discourses of development to agribusiness and government actors due to their first-world constituency.

The Soy Moratorium is the latest in a series of efforts to instill market pressure on agribusiness and to slow the growth of soy in the Amazon biome. It has great potential to increase governmental enforcement of the forest code and to help colonos secure land titles, but it, too, has disillusioned many local actors due to its parameters and the exclusion of grassroots movements in decision-making processes.

Despite the current short-comings of the Moratorium, the work of Greenpeace in Santarém represents an important positive step toward the collaboration between the local and global environmental communities. Unlike many ENGOS before it, Greenpeace has sought the help of grassroots organizations and has developed a close relationship with local interests. A Greenpeace campaigner working in Santarém made it clear that, “Our job in the Amazon is to empower the grassroots movements,”<sup>66</sup> which they are

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<sup>65</sup> Father Edilberto Sena, Interview.

<sup>66</sup> Tatiana de Carvalho (Greenpeace), Interview.

doing by helping them gain exposure in the international media. These efforts have earned the trust of grassroots players. Despite their withdrawal from the Soy moratorium, Father Edilberto Sena said that the FDA believes in Greenpeace because while they have different methods, they share the same goals. According to Maria Ivete Bastos, for the STR, “Greenpeace is more than just an NGO. For us, they are a partner. They open the eyes of society to the problems of nature.”<sup>67</sup> It is clear that Greenpeace is doing the right things and is in a position to connect with local populations through allied grassroots movements, as well as exert market pressure on agribusiness and push government for better enforcement.

The complex power struggle at work in Santarém surrounding soy development defies an easy answer. Many spheres of resistance exist, but each have their own shortcomings- grassroots players have an intimate knowledge of the problems facing the community and have important lessons to teach regarding sustainable land use practices, but they lack the resources to stand up to corporate power. International NGOs have the resources and command of first-world media to effectively put market pressure on agribusiness, but they often must focus solely on forest conservation and other environmental concerns important to their donors in first world nations, while neglecting the communities that their policies will impact.

In order to fight for more sustainable soy practices, a symbiotic relationship must exist between grassroots and international conservation efforts. By taking advantage of the grassroots command of power on the streets, ENGOs can gain credibility in the community and show that they are a part of positive social change. At the same time, by taking advantage of the resources and mass media control of powerful NGOs, grassroots movements can connect their message to the world and gain a greater role in shaping the policy decisions that decide the fate of the forest and the community. While the Soy Moratorium is a small step toward the reconciliation of local and global interests, the work of Greenpeace in Santarém is encouraging and shows potential for a more sustainable model of development- one that addresses the socio-economic needs of local populations while working to stop soybean-related deforestation in the Amazon.

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<sup>67</sup> Maria Ivete Bastos (STR), Interview.

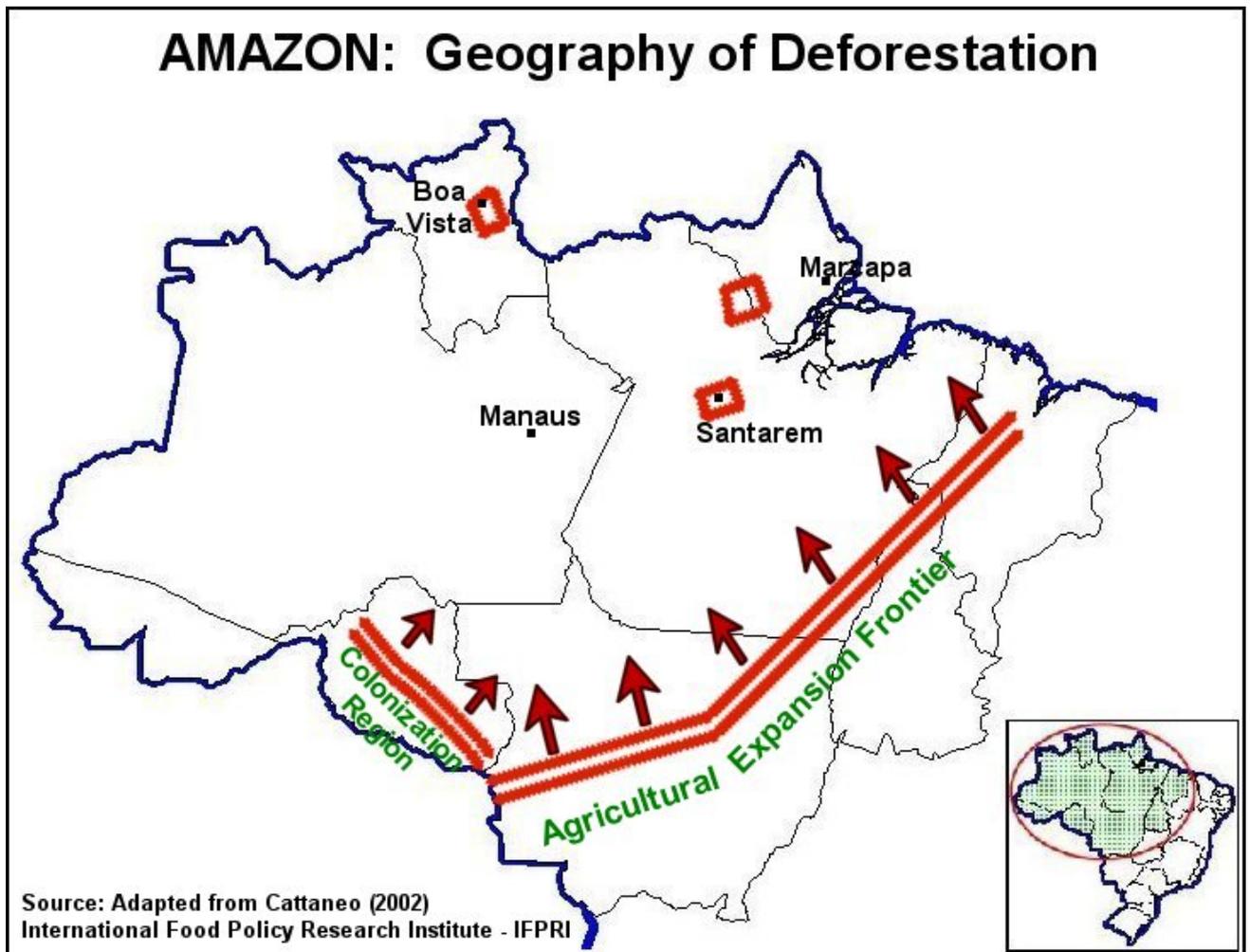
## Appendix 1

<b>BRAZIL: Amazonia Land Use Statistics</b>								
STATE:	Total Area Mil. Ha.	Pasture Area Mil. Ha.	2002/03 Cropped Area Mil. Ha.	2002/03 Soybean Area Mil. Ha.	Potential Soybean Expansion Mil. Ha.	Total Soy Area Potential Mil. Ha.	Total Soy Potential as % of State Area	
<b>Acre</b>	15.25	0.61	0.095	0.000	0.00	0.00	0%	
<b>Amazonas</b>	157.10	0.53	0.050	0.002	2.00	2.00	1%	
<b>Amapa</b>	14.28	0.25	0.006	0.000	0.00	0.00	0%	
<b>Maranhao</b>	33.19	5.30	1.237	0.275	2.00	2.28	7%	
<b>Mato Grosso</b>	90.34	21.50	6.389	4.400	15.00	19.40	21%	
<b>Para</b>	124.77	7.45	0.696	0.016	17.00	17.02	14%	
<b>Rondonia</b>	23.76	5.50	0.441	0.042	0.50	0.54	2%	
<b>Roraima</b>	22.41	1.60	0.035	0.008	1.00	1.01	4%	
<b>Tocantins</b>	27.73	11.08	0.369	0.143	4.00	4.14	15%	
<b>All-Amazonia</b>	<b>508.8</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>46.4</b>	<b>9%</b>	
Total Area & Pasture: IBGE - Census of Agriculture 1995/96; State Govts								
Cropped & Soybean Area: IBGE & CONAB; Private Trade								
Potential Soybean Area: FAS, Embrapa, State Ag Dept's, Coop's, Private Trade								

Land use statistics showing the total soybean area in 2002/2003 and potential soybean expansion area.

Source: USDA

## Appendix 2



Map showing agricultural expansion into Amazonian states

Source: USDA

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### Future Recommendations:

Well, that's that. Time here is drawing to a close and now I need to pass on some tidbits of wisdom, some wizardly advice that will make this process easier for you, my future companions. However, the things I've learned here in Brazil could never have been taught to me, even by the most descriptive words. I'm sure you'll figure it out on your own.

In my case, I came into the ISP period with a plan, and like all good plans, they changed. Soy has proven to be a fascinating and important field of study, and I would recommend pursuing it in the future. Soy's role as destroyer of forest and communities in Santarém has emerged only in the past decade and so it provides a recent and exciting field of study. I suggest working to contact farmer organizations, through STR or Father Edilberto, before arriving in Santarém- easier said than done, but this proved to be the most difficult task that faced my research in Santarém. In the end, find out where the farmers go, and look for them there. I found a co-operative where many farmers buy their feed, and ended up meeting many locals there which made my time in Santarém much more enjoyable. Be flexible and creative about solutions to your research. Most of all though, just relax,

Just calm down. You can get caught up in the immensity of your project or you can focus and take it one step at a time. Don't think too much, just analyze and write. Write early, and write often. The organization will come together. Try and take something away from everyone that you meet, every day. My time here in Brazil has been wonderful and difficult, because everyone has had something to teach me. I often felt the need to stand up for the ideologies that tend to get us into trouble here, but in the end I found that Brazilians don't necessarily want an answer to their questions, they just want to let you know that another way exists. Don't forget the things that you learn here or the conversations that you had. I hope that your research goes well and is not being completed hours before the due date, as mine is. Good luck!