



‘Responsible Soy’ in Paraguay: Grupo DAP and the advancement of soy monocultures in San Pedro.

Contents:

- 2** Introduction
- 3** The controversy on ‘responsible’ soy
- 6** Grupo DAP
- 7** Soy expansion in San Pedro
- 10** ‘Responsible’ soy and national regulation (I):
the environmental services law and illegal
deforestation practices
- 11** ‘Responsible’ soy and national regulation (II):
a new degraded pesticide law in Paraguay
- 12** Dealing with local resistance to soy expansion
- 13** Concerns and resistance in Colonia Barbero
- 16** NGO involvement in ‘responsible’ soy
- 17** Conclusion

Introduction

In the rural community of Colonia Barbero in San Pedro province, Paraguay, people are fighting the encroachment of soy fields, that have appeared over the last few years. One of the soy estates bordering Colonia Barbero - some 5,000 hectares, belongs to Grupo Desarrollo Agricola Paraguay (Grupo DAP), a company which claims to be a leader in corporate social responsibility (CSR). A Grupo DAP manager holds the vice-presidency of the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS).

The RTRS is an NGO-industry forum which is about to launch standards for “responsible” soy. The RTRS, founded by WWF and Swiss supermarket COOP in 2005, will vote on these standards at its 4th conference in Brazil in May¹. However, again this time around, the RTRS is opposed by a large group of environmental and social movements and organisations who accuse the RTRS of greenwashing unsustainable practices for the soy industry².

There are an estimated 41 million hectares of soy monocultures in South America today³, and this number is growing. In Paraguay, there are 2.6 million hectares and the soy frontier is advancing from the Eastern region towards the North West, namely into the province of San Pedro. The impacts of soy monocultures are well documented: deforestation, expulsion of the rural population, soil depletion, and serious contamination of the living environment with pesticides. Europe is one of the main destinations for this soy, mostly used to fatten pigs and boost egg and dairy production.

Grupo DAP is a new company which operates as a commodity investor and as a producer, cultivating some 30.000 hectares of commodity crops, mainly soy and maize, in the San Pedro province. As part of its “responsible soy programme”, the company is working with smallholders to encourage soy production. But in some areas, including Colonia Barbero, the local population has made its opposition clear.

Last year, Corporate Europe Observatory and others published a report on the RTRS , highlighting some of the impacts of “responsible” soy in Paraguay, and featuring Colonia Barbero⁴. One year on, researchers re-visited some of the places in Paraguay which could be eligible for RTRS “responsible” soy certification. This article shows how this new labelling scheme supports further soy expansion, wider use of pesticides by small farmers provoking further conflicts within communities, and the displacement of cattle ranching into the Chaco.

1 Round Table on Responsible Soy conference, Royal Palm Plaza Hotel, Campinas, Brazil - see: www.responsiblesoy-conference2009.com

2 See <http://www.corporateeurope.org/news/2009/05/13/responsible-soy-not-possible-gm>

3 World Agriculture Production, USDA, September 2008, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/wap/circular/2008/08-09/productionfull09-08.pdf>

4 The Round Table on IR-responsible Soy, April 2008; ASEED Europe, BASEIS, CEO, Rainforest Action Network

The controversy on 'responsible' soy

The Round Table on Responsible Soy is an NGO-industry forum, often described as a multi-stakeholder dialogue, which is setting standards for a new “responsible” label for soy. Members of the RTRS include the big companies that operate across the soy chain: ADM, Cargill, Bunge, Rabobank, BP, Shell, Unilever and AHOLD. Monsanto and Syngenta are also members. Two NGOs play a leading role: WWF and Solidaridad, a Dutch development organisation. There are 69 industry members versus 15 NGO members, mostly conservationist. One NGO member, FUNDAPAZ from Argentina, has said it will leave the RTRS. Small farmers are not represented and there are no indigenous organisations involved.

The “responsible” label is intended to cover the mainstream market and therefore, it is reasoned by its supporters, must include GM soy. Nearly all Argentinean soy is GM for example. This “responsible” label, approved by these NGO's, provides an unprecedented opportunity for the soy, biotech and agrofuel industry to gain legitimacy for their production model, for GMOs and for agrofuels.

RTRS outreach activities in producer countries, paid for by Dutch development aid⁵, seem to be directed primarily at involving more soy producers, not affected communities. At one of these outreach events in Tucuman (Argentina), the RTRS Secretary General, Miguel Hernandez, even said that RTRS membership would help the soy industry combat “disinformation” about deforestation and displaced communities which has been heard in various countries⁶.

RTRS events have attracted protesters in the past. In 2006, protesters surrounded the RTRS conference held in Asunción. Nearly all Paraguayan NGOs and urban and rural movements have signed a declaration opposing “responsible” soy.



Picture: Demonstration against the RTRS, Asunción, August 2006. Banner: “Soy is responsible for the death of 30 compañeros in four years”

⁵ See donors on www.responsiblesoy.org, and the website of the Dutch ‘Initiative Sustainable Trade’, that finances the outreach programme: <http://www.duurzamehandel.com/programma/Soja>

⁶ http://www.produccion.com.ar/ver_nota.php?edicion=Ene_Feb2009&numero=176&id=309

This year, an international open letter⁷ has been published criticising the RTRS for:

- * the inclusion of GM soy
- * the expansion of soy monocultures
- * the continued damage to forests and other ecosystems
- * the unchallenged abuse of local people's social, health and human rights

The RTRS criteria depend to a large extent on national laws and national interpretations, for example regarding pesticide use or deforestation. Although this may seem logical, in absence of stronger criteria, weakening local laws will also weaken the conditions for 'responsible' soy production. This is about to happen in Paraguay.

The proposed criteria for "responsible" soy are vague and often badly developed. But the lack of monitoring and control of current laws in countries like Paraguay also casts doubt on the value of a "responsible" label, that has compliance with local laws as an important basis. In San Pedro, to name just one example, the governor has said there are at least three illegal airports where illegal pesticides (and weapons) can be flown in from Brazil⁸.

What is 'responsible' soy? Summary of draft RTRS criteria (based on published draft criteria version October 2008⁹, and field testing version released May 2009)

Comments by CEO in italic

Principle 1: Legal compliance

Compliance with national and international laws, legal right to use the land

Principle 2: Responsible labor conditions

Compliance with relevant laws, adequate training, safe work place etc.

Principle 3: Responsible Community Relations

Communication with local community about soy production, land conflicts resolved, equal employment opportunities

Principle 4: Environmental Responsibility

Impacts of new infrastructure and pollution minimised; efforts made to reduce GHG emissions; *The criteria on biodiversity and deforestation have disappeared from the May 2009 version as there was no agreement in the criteria development group. The October 2008 version was already highly insufficient. It comprised:*

- Habitats for endangered species safeguarded;
- Deforestation cut off date 2008 or later; However, the criteria stipulate that after this cut-off date clearance is still allowed on land that has been designated as an 'agricultural expansion area by an official and participatory land use planning process', except if this area has been identified as High Conservation Value area.

7 Open letter, 'Responsible' soy process must be abandoned, GM Watch et al, May 2009, <http://www.gmwatch.eu/archives/64-Letter-of-critical-opposition-to-the-Round-Table-on-Responsible-Soy.html>

8 Personal interview with Jose Ledesma, governor of San Pedro, October 2008

9 See http://www.responsiblesoy.org/principles_criteria.php

In other words, this means that big farmers and local governments can team up to designate areas that can be cleared for agriculture including for 'responsibly' labeled soy.

Principle 5: Good Agricultural Practice

Water and soil quality are maintained; Implementation of Integrated Crop Management Techniques; Monitoring of application agrochemicals; Elimination of agrochemicals on Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, and PAN Dirty Dozen within 3 years; Monitor and minimize spread of new invasive species and pests;

Appropriate measures to prevent drift of agrochemicals to neighbouring areas.

More specifically, "Aerial application of agrochemicals within 200m of populated areas is preceded by advance notification", so that people can leave their homes.

Monitoring and compliance:

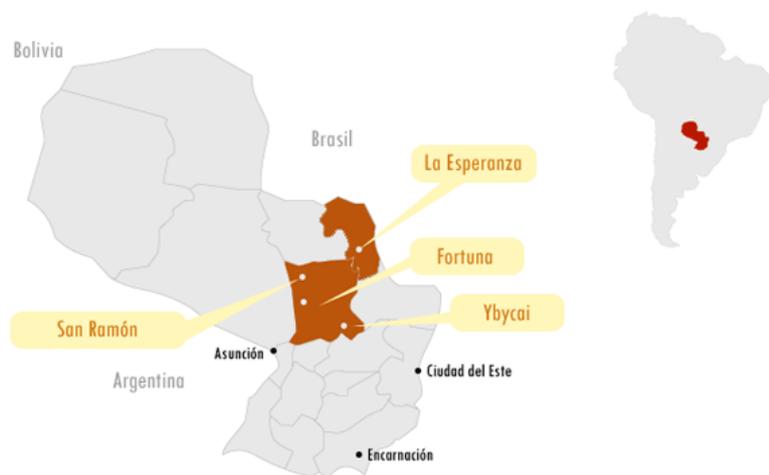
It is not clear how the appliance of RTRS criteria will be monitored and enforced. How monitoring and enforcement will be paid for or when and how sanctions will be applied if criteria are broken or ignored is not clear either. Current drafts are vague in these areas.¹⁰

10 'Roundtable on Responsible Soy: Can Monoculture Soy be Responsible?', briefing by GM Freeze, May 2009, http://www.gmfreeze.org/uploads/rtrs_brief.pdf

Grupo DAP

Founded in 2005, Grupo DAP is primarily an investment group for agricultural commodity production such as soy, headed up by marketing expert Pascual Rubiani. The Group does not reveal where its investments come from, or where they are invested. According to several sources, the major investors are Argentinean. Paraguayan investors are said to have certain rights and obligations that foreign investors do not have, but it is not known what these rights and obligations are.

Grupo DAP also grows its own commodity crops, with four estates (La Esperanza (Amambay), Yvycai, La Fortuna and San Ramon (San Pedro) growing some 30,000 hectares of soy and maize in the provinces of San Pedro and Amambay.



*Locations of the estates of Grupo DAP.
Source: www.dap.com.py*

Grupo DAP distinguishes itself from most Paraguayan businesses by an explicit profile of Corporate Social Responsibility. Their website states: “the Group adheres to a triple bottom line of results: long-term economic profit, environmental stewardship and social inclusion”.

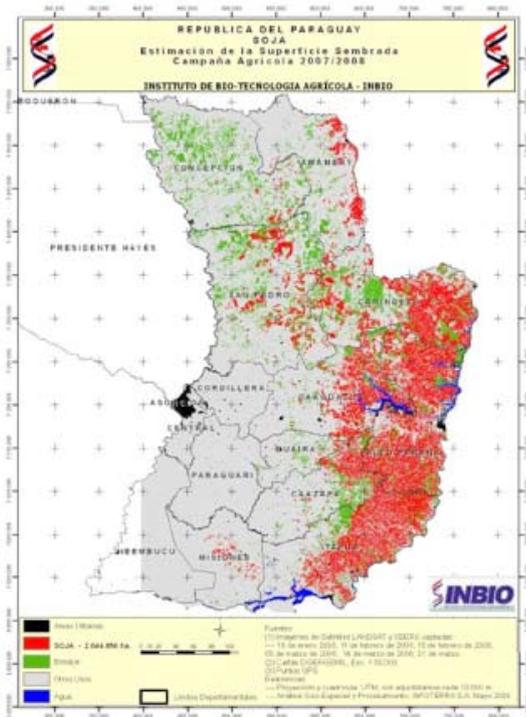
DAP is to date the only Paraguayan industry player that is member of the RTRS. Therefore, the company reasons that in order to attract more, the RTRS should set minimum standards that the average producer can achieve. Compliance with national laws, in Paraguay, is seen as an important first step. With financial backing from the US Embassy, DAP employs NGOs to coordinate projects with neighbouring small holders, which involve assistance in more traditional activities like beekeeping and animal husbandry, but also the introduction of industrial agriculture methods on their fields.

Soy expansion in San Pedro

Soy production is extending rapidly into the San Pedro region as the industry expands beyond its traditional territories. Developers are attracted by the good soil - with soil quality in the existing soy areas now depleted. Brand new infrastructure is popping up to facilitate soy expansion in the region. However, San Pedro is also known for its militant peasant movement, which is actively opposing the expansion of soy production in the region.

DAP's arrival in San Pedro follows a well known pattern of displacement, buying and renting land from cattle ranchers for soy production. Many cattle ranchers in Eastern Paraguay are taking advantage of rising land prices in this way. Cattle farms are consequently expanding into the Chaco where land is significantly cheaper. But the Chaco soil is less fertile, so more land is needed to feed each cow. This means that displacing the cattle to the Chaco causes even more deforestation than the original size of the farm. Deforestation rates in the Chaco have risen to an estimated 728 hectares per day due to cattle ranching expansion, says Birdlife Paraguay.¹¹ Paraguay has a "zero deforestation law" but this only applies to the Eastern regions, and not in the Chaco.

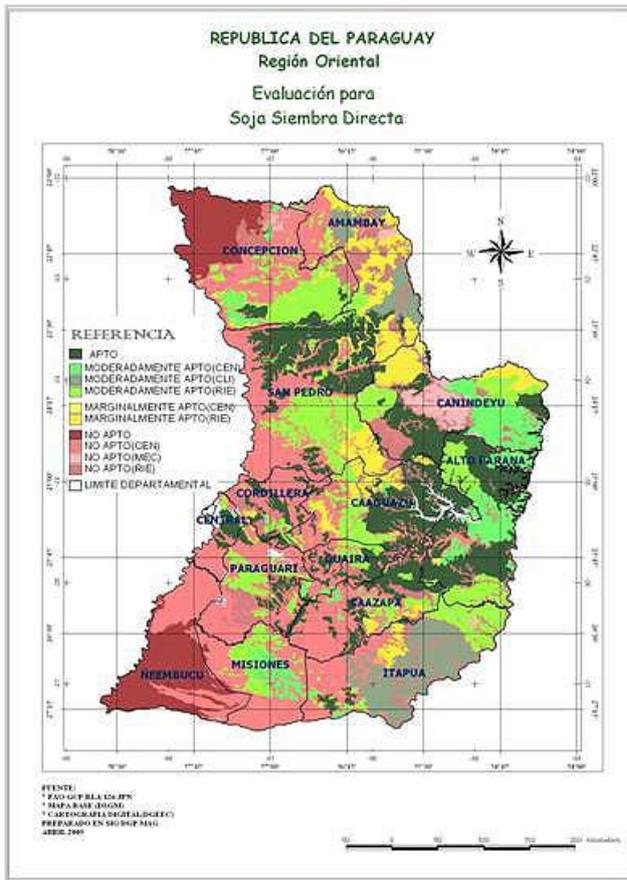
The indirect impacts of displacement are usually regarded by corporations cannot be attributed to their individual behaviour. Grupo DAP told researchers that the displacement of cattle ranching into the Chaco is not the company's responsibility, but that it is the government's responsibility to ensure there is proper land use planning.¹²



In July 2004, the Brazilian soy producer Tranquilo Favero, owner of Favero Group, announced he was going to invest US\$10 million in commodity production in the area, starting with a new silo in Santa Rosa.¹³ Local politicians and big landowners backed his proposal. Local peasants ("sin tierras" or landless people), however, threatened to occupy Favero's property if he persisted with planting soy. Favero has a bad reputation when it comes to respecting environmental laws. The Environment Ministry claims to have annulled three of Favero's environmental permits of this cattle operations in the Chaco recently.¹⁴

Map: Soy production in Paraguay, season 2007-2008.
Source: INBIO

11 Deforestación del Chaco saltó a 728 Ha. por día, ABC Color, 12 March 2009
 12 Personal communication, February 2009
 13 'Apoyo Sampredrano a empresa sojera', ABC Color, 19 July 2004
 14 Interview with the director of the 'Dirección de Control' of SEAM, Mario Vachetta, February 2009



Roughly one third of San Pedro is classified by the USDA as “excellent” for soy production, with another third “moderately” suitable.

Map: Suitability of land for soybean in eastern Paraguay, with red and pink areas not as suitable, green areas good, and dark green areas excellent for soybean production. Source: USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, ‘Crop expansion in Paraguay’, June 2008



There are visible signs of planned soy expansion across San Pedro. A new road for example, has been built to link the province with the tiny village of Antequera on the riverside. This road was lobbied for by Favero. He told a Paraguayan newspaper in 2005 that: “without a road [to Antequera] we cannot risk a lot”¹⁵. And he funded the new silo which was installed in Antequera in 2007.

Picture: New road from the town San Pedro to Antequera, before inauguration, February 2009

15 ‘Inversionista dice que problema con campesinos está superado’, ABC Color, 2 February 2005



Picture: The silo constructed by Favero on the river Paraguay, built in 2007, outside Antequera. February 2009

When researchers visited the silo, the local manager of the new silo confirmed that San Pedro's 'virgin' soils are attracting soy producers, and that commodity traders ADM and Cargill have bought land on the riverside next to the silo, and plan to build new ones.¹⁶ However, the San Pedro government has yet to approve these plans. Grupo DAP sells soy from the *La Fortuna* estate to this silo in Antequera.

¹⁶ Personal communication with manager of silo, February 2009, and tourism special Antequera ABC Color, <http://www.abc.com.py/especiales/turismo/articulos.php?pid=311341>

'Responsible' soy and national regulation (I): the environmental services law and illegal deforestation practices

In Paraguay, two different legal situations apply to the Eastern provinces, and the Western 'Chaco'. In the Eastern regions, deforestation is not allowed (the 'zero deforestation' law). However, large trees can be cut individually, with a permit. In addition, every farmer must retain tree cover on 25% of his or her land (Forestry Act No 422/73).

Paraguay's new 'Payment for Environmental Services' law, however, provides a new legal loophole to that Forestry Act¹⁷. Although it is illegal to clear forest, landowners with more than 25% tree cover can be paid to compensate for a landowner who does not have 25%. In other words, this new law allows people to break the law by paying someone else *not* to break the law.

Grupo DAP proposed such a deal to the government of San Pedro, using USAID money. There is much less than 25% tree cover on the Fortuna estate, so they proposed paying compensation to a cattle rancher. Rubiani, head of DAP, called this proposal a matter of 'solidarity' between land owners.¹⁸

This legal loophole is seen by the authorities as an effective way of preventing people from breaking the zero-deforestation law. It is difficult to see, however, why monitoring and control is expected to be better with such compensation arrangement, compared to the previous situation where deforestation was simply illegal. As a result of this loophole, less forests are ultimately preserved. But it is a very useful law for soy producers with productive land, as it allows them to use more of that land to grow soy, while paying a small sum for compensation to owners of land with less economic value.

In the case of Grupo DAP's proposal, the compensation scheme has not yet been agreed as there is a land dispute over the cattle rancher's land.¹⁹

17 Life as Commerce, The impact of market-based conservation on Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women, Global Forest Coalition,

<http://www.globalforestcoalition.org/img/userpics/File/publications/LIFE-AS-COMMERCE2008.pdf>

18 'Iniciativa busca conservar bosques', ABC Color, 12 November 2008, <http://www.abc.com.py/2008-11-12/articulos/468857/iniciativa-busca-conservar-bosques>

19 Personal communication with Mr Irala, Agriculture Secretary of San Pedro, February 2009

‘Responsible’ soy and national regulation (II): a new degraded pesticide law in Paraguay

Massive fumigations on soy plantations are causing widespread health crises and affects neighbouring food crops and animals. The RTRS criteria are to a large extent based on compliance with national regulations. In addition, some groups of pesticides are supposed to be phased out. However, in Paraguay a new pesticide law has just been approved that weakens the previous rules, under strong pressure from soy farmers. Soy production complying with degraded legal rules can still be labelled as ‘responsible’ by the RTRS.

A report based on rural doctors and residents’ accounts by the Rural Reflection Group (GRR), an Argentinean environmental, points to an increase in health problems in the countryside, such as cases of cancer at early ages, birth defects, lupus, kidney problems, respiratory ailments and dermatitis.²⁰ Recently, a groundbreaking court case in Argentina ruled that around a neighbourhood in the city of Cordoba that borders soy fields, agrochemical spraying is forbidden within a distance of 1500m.²¹

Weeds developing resistance to Roundup are leading to increased use of other herbicides like Paraquat, highly toxic and forbidden in the EU. Paraquat is supposed to be phased out within some years on RTRS-certified soy fields, however new combinations of herbicides will still be used to combat Roundup-resistant weeds.

The new law reduces the minimum distance of agrochemical spraying from human settlements from 100m to 50m, while even 100m has proven to be insufficient. Also, in the new law the minimum distance varies according to which pesticide is being used. This makes it impossible for local communities to monitor the law, as they usually cannot know what pesticide is being applied. Moreover, responsibilities on pesticide use are transferred from the Environment and Health ministries to a department of the Agriculture ministry. This department (SENAVE) has a long record of defending the intensive use of pesticides.

The new law was backed by the soy and chemical industry lobby, but was heavily opposed by the peasant organisations, NGOs and the Environment and Health ministries.²² Paraguay’s new president Fernando Lugo however, signed a new decree (nr. 1937) in order to repair some of the damage done, causing strong upheaval among the soy producers who are threatening to blockade the country with tractors as long as the decree is valid.²³

20 Argentina: Countryside No Longer Synonymous with Healthy Living, Marcela Valente, IPS, March 4, 2009

21 La justicia Cordobesa prohibio fumigar con agrototoxicos sojeros cerca de las areas urbanas, Newspaper ‘Pagina 12’, 12 January 2009

22 Personal communication with Javiera Rulli, author of the book ‘United Soy Republic’ and campaigner on the pesticide law in Paraguay

23 ‘Productores mantienen firme el tractorazo pese a sanción de ley’, ABC Color, 24 May 2009

Dealing with local resistance to soy expansion

Grupo DAP's strategy for dealing with local opposition is to set up projects encouraging smallholders to try out industrial agriculture methods in their fields. This tactic has been used frequently by soy developers to try and prevent local resistance. San Pedro is traditionally a region where few big landowners own cattle alongside many smallholders who grow food and cash crops like sesame. There has been a history of land conflicts, but soy production involving large scale agrochemical spraying has sparked particularly strong opposition.

Companies usually try to establish contact through local peasant organisations, or through local churches. They may also sign up local people as labourers. Plans are made to introduce industrial agriculture methods on the smallholders' fields, with neighbouring fields joined, or communal land used, to create economies of scale. The company first provides machines to clear the land, and inputs like seeds and agrochemicals. The smallholder family or the community pays back the costs from the harvest. Consequently, weed control using Roundup to spray the land "clean" before planting the next crop, is one example of a method introduced on smallholdings.

Favero, for example, was involved in a project with the land reform institution INDERT, in Colonia Tierra Prometida, in which he provided technical and financial support to allow 123 families to start industrial soy production on 200 hectares of land²⁴.

A Grupo DAP project in Agueritos is very similar to Favero's project in Tierra Prometida. Here too, 200 hectares of community land is to be mechanically cleared and sown with DAP's financial support. Narciso Villamayor, a local community leader, estimates the cost of clearing the land to be around US\$60,000. This is to be paid back over three years from the harvest, at market prices, with an estimated 80% of the first three years' harvest needed to return the loan.

DAP also employs someone to give technical assistance on food crops and animal husbandry. After the 80% payback, the left over 20% of the harvest return is meant to be invested in education and health. The budget is administered by a Paraguayan NGO, FUNDECA. Villamayor said that the community decided they would grow maize and conventional soy.

24 Campesinos rechazan proyecto de desarrollo agrícola, según Ibáñez, ABC Color, 24 June 2005

Concerns and resistance in Colonia Barbero

In Colonia Barbero, DAP's La Fortuna estate is still provoking heated debate. Back in 2006, the community held protests in front of La Fortuna's gates.

In mid-February 2009, researchers attended a community meeting with San Pedro's Environment Secretary, Menelio Jimenez. Members of the local community, including local farmers and teachers, raised their concerns about the impacts of the pesticide spraying on the La Fortuna estate. Children were getting sick at school, they said. Chickens were dying after eating chemically treated soybeans left on the road. There are fewer birds. But they said that it was too costly to get a local prosecutor to come and investigate.

The former pesticides law in Paraguay stated that around each field that is sprayed, there should be a 'green barrier': a densely planted border at least 2m high and 5m wide, or a 50m strip of other vegetation, or a 100m strip in case of no cultivation.

Villalba, another soy developer who has been linked to Favero has a farm in the same area, and works with small farmers promoting GM soy. When researchers visited, the six hectares of soy had just been sprayed with Roundup. In absence of the required 'green barrier', neighbouring fields belonging to smallholders were affected by the chemicals. While the current rules requiring 'green barriers' are too weak to really protect neighbouring crops, in most cases they are also not applied. In this case, the neighbour's sesame crop was clearly affected (see pictures).

A legal complaint had been made against the owner of the field, but at the local prosecutor's office in the town of San Pedro, the official responsible for monitoring the use of pesticides declared that the field complied with the environmental laws. This was clearly not the case.



For small farmers practising chemical weed control using herbicides on the entire field, it is clearly impossible to create a big enough green barrier to prevent a neighbour's crops from being affected.

Picture: Sesame crop (left) insufficiently protected (only by small border of Cameroon grass on the left) from smallholder's RoundupReady soy field. Colonia Barbero, February 2009



Picture: Detail of sesame plants on neighbouring field, clearly affected by herbicides. Colonia Barbero, February 2009

Researchers spoke to another farmer who owns a medium-sized farm who had also tried growing RoundupReady soy with DAP, but the harvest had failed. He did not see any harm in the use of Roundup and other pesticides, saying it was more economical than hiring people to work the land.

A local peasant leader in Colonia Barbero, Salustiano Carmona, on the other hand is very opposed to Fortuna's soy production. He says that when the pesticides are sprayed, he can smell them in his house, some kilometers away. He told researchers: "DAP sprays with tall tractors, almost like an airplane." According to Carmona, DAP prepares the smallholders' land, providing seeds and agrochemicals, and then urges them to involve their neighbours.

He told researchers about a woman living near La Fortuna, in Colonia Moreira, who had lost her unborn child when she was five months pregnant. According to the local health service, she and another woman had recently miscarried in the late stages of pregnancy. Researchers visited the family of one of the women. She and her husband worked on an estate near La Fortuna, where the family said land is rented out to DAP for soy.

The woman had gone to hospital after losing a lot of fluid. Her baby was born alive, but died soon after, the family said. The doctors did not provide an explanation or diagnosis for why this had happened. "We believe it was due to the poisons, since before such things did not happen here," one said. Just the day before the researchers visited, a calf had died suddenly. The mother cow was moaning near the place where it had been buried. The family said that three calves had died recently. The woman's sister had also miscarried at seven months.

One member of the family said: "The soy fields are at 400 meters from where we live. Our animals die, which we also think is due to the pesticides because this did not happen before either." She added: "The land where soy is cultivated belongs to different land owners, but they all rent out land to Fortuna. The pesticides are carried by the wind and affect children, pregnant women and our animals." They said there was a barrier of Cameroon grass in place, but that it was too low to prevent pesticides being carried by the wind.

The family said they were not willing to work for DAP, and that the company had taken a neighbour's maize harvest and he still did not know how much he would get in return.

Later that day, researchers visited a family who we were told were working for DAP. The husband was away, working on DAP's land, but the *señora* explained how DAP had prepared their land, and in return they had to give all of the first harvest to DAP.

"We lost", she said. She hopes the next harvest will be better: La Fortuna will help them 'clean' the weeds with 'mata todo' (Roundup) and then they will sow black beans.

Another farmer who was growing seedlings for reforestation told researchers he had repaid DAP with six hectares of maize, after taking part in a pilot project planting *jatropha* for biodiesel on his land. The next season, he did not plant anything as he had planned to plant sunflowers, which were calculated not to be profitable. DAP, however, claims that while market prices determine the result for the participating *campesinos*, the company is 'there to stay', suggesting they will not let them down.²⁵

A local teacher Teofilo Diaz told researchers that one of his pigs had given birth to a malformed piglet last year, and that a similar case had occurred nearby²⁶. He thought this may have been a result of the mother being fed on leftover corn cobs from La Fortuna. He has no proof but he and other neighbours have called on the Environment Ministry to carry out checks at La Fortuna and some of the other estates in the area.

25 Personal communication, February 2009

26 <http://www.diariopopular.com.py/?q=kure-con-1-ojo-y-trompa>

NGO involvement in 'responsible' soy

Grupo DAP works mainly with two NGOs, Fundación Moises Bertoni (FMB) in Colonia Barbero and FUNDECA/SER (Sociedad de Estudios Rurales) in Agueritos. They are contracted to organise smallholder involvement, and social projects. Fundación Moises Bertoni is a member of the Round Table on Responsible Soy.

However the working methods of FUNDECA/SER have become controversial in Paraguay. The stated aim of FUNDECA, is "to support campesino families in getting out of poverty by becoming suppliers to the world market without the interference of intermediating traders"²⁷. SER and FUNDECA are founded by the same person, Daniel Campos.

In January 2008, SER organised a series of regional forums to talk about problems with soy, in which also various peasant organisations took part. The resulting declaration from two of these regional forums, identically worded, states "we are seeking alliances with companies with social responsibility [...] through responsible and sustainable soy [production]".²⁸ The declaration text had not been agreed by the attending organisations, even though their names are on the document.

Via Campesina member organisations in Paraguay publicly denied their support for 'responsible' soy. "[...] the names of our organisations have been linked to this campaign without any consultation or approval on our part. We demand the immediate removal of the names of our organisations from the initiative. World Wildlife Fund, Solidaridad, [...] collaborate with multinational corporations such as Unilever, Grupo Andre Maggi, and banks such as the ABN-AMRO".

Similarly, the Paraguayan association of organic producers has complained about FUNDECA's vice director Daniel Campos interference with its internal election process. They too wrote a public statement, saying "We are willing to work together with NGOs on the basis of respect without interventions that seek to manipulate and direct the organisations in favor of interests that are not the genuine interests of *campesina* organisations."²⁹

Finally, FUNDECA's president Father Fermín García is involved in equally controversial projects in the province Caaguazu, promoting RoundupReady soy production. Statements from two communities in Caaguazu, San Isidro and Mariscal Lopez, account how Father Fermín's projects have led to indebtedness among rural families and to increased pesticide use.

27 Interview with former FUNDECA president Padre Gelpi, March 2006, <http://rescatar.blogspot.com/2006/03/funde-ca-lleva-campesinos-pobres-ser.html>

28 'Proyecto Agroecología y Desarrollo': Declaración del Foro Regional de Itapúa y Misiones, January 2008. Declaración del Foro Regional de Caaguazu y Cordillera, January 2008.

29 Written statement by COPEP, Central de Organizaciones de Productores/as Ecológicos/as del Paraguay

Conclusion

Grupo DAP promotes the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) in Paraguay. Its soy producing operations are located in Paraguay's new expansion zone, San Pedro. San Pedro is not yet dominated by the scene of endless soy fields, found in Itapua and Alto Paraná.

Local resistance to soy expansion is strong in San Pedro, and Grupo DAP's soy fields have provoked much opposition. Agrochemical spraying on RoundupReady soy fields is causing damage to people's health. Community members living around Grupo DAP's soy fields are complaining about the impacts of the spraying.

DAP's strategy is to establish projects with local smallholders introducing industrial agriculture methods such as using Roundup for weed control on their fields. This is a well known method that is frequently used in Paraguay to break resistance against large scale RoundupReady soy production. At the same time, smallholders are made dependent on costly inputs and international market prices. Moreover, agrochemical spraying on their fields affects neighbouring crops, fostering conflicts in the community.

There is widespread international rejection of the RTRS process, which is about to determine a set of criteria at its 4th conference 26-28 May 2009. The reality of 'responsible' soy in Paraguay illustrates the criticism against the RTRS: it supports rather than stops soy expansion; GM RoundupReady soy will be labelled 'responsible' while causing major damage; the overall set of criteria is very weak.

The criteria are to a large extent based on compliance with national regulations. But national laws are being degraded, like the pesticide law in Paraguay. 'Responsible' soy can continue to be grown under weakened laws.

RTRS certification provides the participating industry with a greenwash, rather than real steps to address the problems caused by the international soy industry.

