

PRESS INFORMATION NOTE

Liberation of sugarcane in the Amazon plays against forests and Brazilian ethanol

BRASÍLIA, MARCH 26th, 2018 - The wave of socio environmental setbacks promoted by the agribusiness lobby during the Temer government is so widespread that it now threatens the productive sector itself. The Senate is expected to vote on Tuesday (27) a bill that authorizes the farming of sugarcane in the Legal Amazon, banned eight years ago. If approved, the project will be tragic for Brazil's forests and biofuels industry – and will bring further damage to its reputation difficult to repair at a time critical to ethanol's success.

Senate Bill 626/2011 by Senator Flexa Ribeiro (PSDB-PA) is, above all, unnecessary for the sugar and ethanol industry. The zoning of sugarcane, approved by a decree in 2009, authorizes the expansion of the cultivation to 70 million hectares. That is ten times greater than the projected expansion of the crop until 2020. Thus, there is no shortage of land to grow sugarcane sustainably.

Allowing the cultivation of sugarcane in the Amazon, even in degraded areas, means adding another motor to the deforestation in the region: cattle farming will be pushed into new areas to give way to sugarcane, stimulating the devastation where yield should increase today. The building of a whole infrastructure for processing would add more pressure to the forest. It creates a problem where today there's none of its kind, and without any consistent justification.

Besides the environmental risk, the proposal also compromises the image of Brazilian biofuels. After all, the zoning of sugarcane was established as a response to threats of non-tariff trade barriers on Brazilian ethanol exports. A reversal in this policy suggests to our buyers that Brazil is not a serious country since it is unable to maintain an environmental safeguard. This fact made the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association (Unica) manifest itself in 2017 contrary to the proposal.

Harming the biofuels industry also means damaging the climate. In addition to having its goal in the Paris Agreement for the energy sector based on the sustainable production of ethanol – among other initiatives –, and making it possible through the RenovaBio law, Brazil also leads international efforts to develop biofuels for the rapid decarbonization of the transport sector. This leadership would be mortally wounded by Flexa Ribeiro's project.

For our competitors, chiefly the corn ethanol producers in the United States, this is great news: Brazilian ethanol is cheaper and more energy efficient. Getting it out of business is the competition's dream – especially in times of protectionist escalation promoted by the Donald Trump's administration.

The Bill 626/2011, placed on the Senate's calendar in an unexpected move on March 21st, complies with some private interests and ends up benefiting foreigners while imposing serious threats to the Amazon and the biofuels sector. We reject any attempt to its vote by the Senate. In respect to the country's main interests, President Michel Temer and Senator Eunício Oliveira must give this bill the only acceptable destination: its filing.

INSTITUTIONS THAT SIGN THIS NOTE

Associação Alternativa Terrazul
Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente e da Vida (Apremavi)
Associação de Proteção a Ecossistemas Costeiros (APREC)
CI-Brasil – Conservação Internacional
Comissão Pró-Índio de São Paulo
Conselho Nacional das Populações Extrativistas - CNS
Ecoa – Ecologia e Ação
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Fórum da Amazônia Oriental (FAOR)
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Fundação SOS Mata Atlântica
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