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"Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development"

Amazon Rainforest Current Threats: The Soybean Boom

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Abstract

Amazon Rainforest is endowed with a wide range of natural resources. Ancestral communities depended on the forest for their livelihoods and displayed a good repertoire of imaginative forms of resource management, adapted to climate extremes in temperature and rainfall. From the midst of the 1900's, however, the Amazon Rainforest became a labour safety valve, perceived as a gigantic reserve of soil for the landless and unemployed households. Simultaneously, large-scale agro-industrial projects have been promoted, major public and private efforts to develop Brazilian northern frontier, seen as good opportunities for socioeconomic advancement in the whole country. Brazil is one of the most successful cases of Green Revolution in the developing world. In 1998, Amazonian Pará state exported its first shipment of soybeans produced at Marabá municipality, next to the Trans-Amazon highway (BR 230). Currently soybean cultivation has been expanding via Cerrado (Centre-Western Region) to the Amazon Rainforest alongside Cuiabá–Santarém highway (BR 163) that connects the interior capital of Mato Grosso state with a fluvial port city located on the mouth of Tapajós River, exactly where it meets the Amazon. The soy boom has been provoking a massive soil conversion within Pará state due both to International Corporation's favourable credit system as to scarce national control over deforestation. The research followed the procedural sequence listed: **(i)** Literature survey, comprising historical documentation available on the Amazon forest environments; **(ii)** Fieldwork, including fifty in-depth interviews to four categories of informants in the municipality of Santarém. This contribution assesses mono-cultivation to be impacting negatively the vulnerable forest ecosystem, aggravating land degradation and generating climate change.

Keywords: Amazon rainforest, deforestation, soil conversion, soybean boom

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