

# Comments on Floram Project: Preliminary Reports

*Rui Fernando Romero Monteiro*



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*Rui Fernando Romero Monteiro*<sup>\*\*</sup>

The concern with developing a national reforestation plan under multiple criteria and diversified targets is always commendable. Especially when it involves the planting of biomass, environmental reforestation, land reclamation for multipurpose forestry, and the establishment of raw material reserves for later rational use.

For a continent-size country like Brazil where there has been a gradual and continuous destruction of natural forests, a plan like Floram is indeed a priority, even if other extremely important issues like the greenhouse effect had not been considered — which was not the case here.

It was precisely the aggregate reasons indicated above that led a group of top scientists, reputable and realistic experts, decided to draw attention to the need for a proper national forestry policy.

Further to the ecological damage caused by destruction of natural forests, with harmful effects on soil conservation, erosion, a decrease in water seepage and resulting decline or total dryout of water sources, extinction of some wildlife species due to the gradual destruction of their natural habitats, etc., there is yet another major issue to consider. Forests contribute to carbon fixation in atmospheric air, thereby reducing pollution, contributing to the amelioration or actual control of the greenhouse effect resulting chiefly from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuel burning.

Throughout the Project documents there is a noticeable concern with addressing the Brazilian reality. The goal is to avoid impinging upon productive agricultural areas, advising the need for environmental impact assessments in terms of physiographic and ecological dynamics as well as of the economic and social consequences of each project. They rightly believe that each case is unique and requires tailored reforestation plans contemplating both economic activities and landscape and ecological aspects.

As quite appropriately stated by the authors, Brazil is among the few countries in the world with enough room to develop a global large-scale reforestation plan without detriment to other activities.

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<sup>\*</sup> This text has been extracted from the special issue of *Estudos Avançados* on Floram Project, published in English in 1995. The original version, in Portuguese, was published in no. 9, May-Aug. 1990.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Rui Fernando Romero Monteiro is research manager of Klabin (Lagoa — Monte Alegre).

They exclude — for obvious reasons — regions with less than 850 mm annual rainfall, mostly located in the Northeast *sertões* (hinterlands). On the other hand, they suggest the replenishment of gallery forests and reforestation of slopes and interfluvial sections of the hinterland hills with multipurpose species, in our opinion the right and realistic solution for that area. On a brief visit last February to the border between Pernambuco and Paraíba states, however, to Umbuzeiro Municipality to be precise, our attention was drawn to the local relief. Perhaps small landfill dams could be built at strategic sites to store rainwater (800 to 900 mm a year). This could be used to irrigate high-yield timber or fruit tree crops planted in adjacent fields.

The idea of corrective reforestation, industrial reforestation, and mixed reforestation seems right. Conservation targets would dovetail with economic goals of vital importance in the contemporary world.

In addition to direct impacts on the environment there would also be reflections on the economy, namely more pulpwood, sawnwood, and lumber, and a relief of native forest overharvesting for methanol, charcoal, etc.

Every study shows a concern with ecological principles of a global nature as well as with local environmental characteristics, a matter of the utmost importance in my opinion.

In short, I believe this to be a study of great interest not only on a domestic but also on a world level that should be carried through. The ideas set forth and substantiated in each report should be put in practice to help Brazil become an international leader in ecological-economic reforestation policy.

Further detailing, however, is required for each country region to reflect the local realities.