



for a living planet®

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Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR) e.V.
Prof. Dr. Hardy Vogtmann
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March 3rd, 2011

WWF's engagement at the Round Table on Responsible Soy
Your correspondence dated February 9th, 2011

Dear Professor Vogtmann,

In your correspondence to myself and WWF International you expressed your concerns about participation of WWF in the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS). Since I have been very busy at the end of the university winter term with many examinations and an enormous teaching load I am sorry to respond with some delay. My reply to your letter also includes the position of WWF-International to this matter.

WWF Germany fully shares your concerns against genetically modified soy, and you are right to refer to the WWF's leading role in developing the Basel Criteria for genetically unmodified soy. In this context you probably will agree that the experiences from developing the Basel Criteria had a strong influence on the development of the RTRS certification system on a global scale, and we are proud that our role within the RTRS board was also particularly important for the adoption of a commodity/value chain free of gene modified soy that will become available in 2011. The scale of usage of these products will determine the future impact of non-genetically modified soy on the market. But it is also clear that non-genetically modified soy will only be produced in increasing amounts in Latin America if there is a growing market for it.

The pivotal target of RTRS is to combat the most serious ecologic problem in Latin America, i.e. the conversion of tropical forests, savannas and grasslands into arable land for cultivation of export-driven agricultural goods. Among these the dramatically increasing production of soy is the main reason for the rapid loss of natural habitats and ecosystems, especially throughout Brazil and Argentina.

As outlined above, WWF is one of the founding members of RTRS and has a seat in its steering committee. But this does not mean that WWF is sharing the viewpoints of all the different stakeholders in this panel. It was clear from the very beginning of this process that RTRS has to deal with a variety of different fields of interests in this economically so important issue, but this is the main reason why RTRS was initiated. Ecological and social impacts of soy production are currently in the main focus on the panel.

Der WWF Deutschland ist eine der nationalen Organisationen des WWF – World Wide Fund For Nature – mit Sitz in Gland (Schweiz)

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Due to its nature as a multi-stakeholder initiative RTRS is principally a forum open to all parties involved in the chain of production of soy from the small-scale farmer to the mass producer. According to our view, it would be fundamentally wrong to exclude the economically strong and particularly influential mass producers from the roundtable. Without these big players in the round it would be completely impossible for us to achieve any of our goals to save large parts of the still existing undisturbed ecosystems between Argentina and the Amazon. I have been several time in Brazil and know what I am talking about.

We must somehow find a way to influence the most important and relevant producers as well as the trade chains. If we followed your advice to leave the roundtable and negotiate only with the, by area and influence, rather unimportant small-scale farmers and producers of non-genetically modified or even ecologic/ organic soy, we would definitely lose the battle of saving important parts of hitherto still remaining undestroyed valuable ecosystems within the agricultural girdle of South America. To our view, there is simply no alternative left than to participate in the roundtable and try to influence decisions as good as we can.

Dear colleague Vogtmann, I have already read with utmost interest the GM Soy study attached to your letter and fully share most of the problems addressed therein including the toxic side effects of roundup. Therefore, we would be more than happy to accept your offer to discuss the matter in greater depth with us.

Looking forward hearing from you,
Sincerely yours

Prof. Dr. Detlev Drenckhahn