

## WE'RE TRASHIN' IT HOW McDONALD'S IS EATING UP THE AMAZON

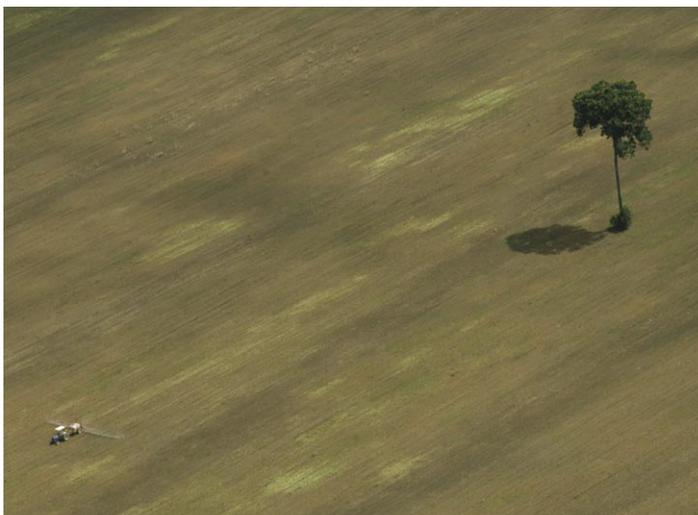
### THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

The Amazon rainforest is one of the most biodiverse regions on earth. It is home to a staggering 15% of the world's known land-based plant species<sup>1</sup> and nearly 10% of the world's mammals,<sup>2,3</sup> and has as many as 300 species of tree in a single hectare.<sup>4</sup>

The Amazon is home to about 220,000 people from 180 different indigenous nations<sup>5</sup> who live deep in the rainforest, along with many more traditional forest dwellers. The rainforest provides these people with everything from food and shelter to tools and medicines, and plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of indigenous peoples. It also plays a vital role keeping the world's climate stable. All this is threatened by deforestation and related crimes to grow agricultural commodities such as soya, which is used mainly to feed animals.



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### HOW McDONALD'S IS DRIVING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

This crime file follows the chain of rainforest destruction from the heart of the Amazon, where huge areas of forest are being cleared to plant soya, back to the UK, where McDonald's Chicken McNuggets are sold to millions of people every week.

Greenpeace research shows that not only is soya destroying the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, but soya farmers are guilty of further crimes including slavery and the invasion of indigenous peoples' lands. The soya that is fed to McDonald's chickens is supplied by agricultural giant Cargill and comes directly from Brazil. Cargill is the leading international culprit in the advance of soya in the Amazon. As one of Cargill's biggest clients in the UK, McDonald's is a partner in this forest crime.

*'By 2050, current trends in agricultural expansion will eliminate a total of 40% of Amazon forests, including at least two-thirds of the forest cover of six major watersheds and 12 eco-regions.'*

Britaldo Silveira Soares-Filho, University of Minas Gerais<sup>6</sup>

### McDONALD'S: GLOBAL BRAND, GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

McDonald's is one of the world's best known brands. The name is everywhere – from high street billboards to its sponsorship of England's World Cup team. The golden arches are hard to miss.

Founded in 1954, McDonald's is the world's biggest fast-food chain with 31,000 restaurants and over 1.5 million employees worldwide, serving 47 million people in over 100 countries each day.<sup>7</sup> The first McDonald's in the UK opened at Woolwich in 1974. Today, the company operates over 1,200 UK restaurants, serving around 3 million people every day.<sup>8</sup> In 2004 McDonald's UK sold 24,200 tonnes of chicken, 34,750 tonnes of beef and 77,000 tonnes of french fries, as well as 41 million litres of milk and 624,000,000 buns.<sup>9</sup> It buys its beef from over 16,000 UK farms.<sup>10</sup>

McDonald's say that 'the preservation of tropical rainforest is a top priority'<sup>11</sup> and that it is 'committed to establishing and enforcing responsible environmental practices.'<sup>12</sup> Yet this crime file shows that McDonald's is a partner in crime with Cargill, and this partnership is leaving a trail of destruction in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

## SOYA: THE MIGHTY BEAN



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So what do Chicken McNuggets have to do with the Amazon rainforest? Soya farming is one of the primary drivers of deforestation in the Amazon. In the last three years 70,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Amazon have been destroyed. This equates to six football pitches a minute. Or 12 pitches in the time it takes to cook a Chicken McNugget. Much of this destruction is due to the expansion of soya agriculture.

*'As radical as it sounds, the prediction that 170 million hectares of new farmland could potentially be brought under crop production in Brazil might still be considered a conservative estimate [as it] ignores the actual scope of deforestation that is occurring and is likely to continue to occur in the Amazon basin.'*

**United States Department of Agriculture**<sup>13</sup>

Soya is a cheap and readily available source of protein for farm animals – making up on average 22% of the feed given to chickens in the UK.<sup>14</sup>

McDonald's say the soya that is fed to its chickens is both non-GM and from non-rainforest areas. A letter to a Greenpeace supporter, from McDonald's Customer Services Department, said 'the soya used for our poultry is not genetically modified. Soya is produced in North America, South America and Brazil, however, non-GM soya is not from rainforest areas.'<sup>15</sup>

Greenpeace research on the ground shows that the reality is very different and that McDonald's is using soya supplied by Cargill, that sources directly from the Amazon rainforest. Soya farmers supplying Cargill are linked to the use of slave labour, illegal land grabbing and massive deforestation.

## CHICKEN McNUGGETS: TAKIN' A BITE OUT OF THE AMAZON

*'Biodiversity is the sum of all life on Earth... Food and agricultural production systems should protect native species and biodiversity by preserving natural habitats.'*

**McDonald's Worldwide Corporate Social Responsibility Report**<sup>16</sup>

*'We want people coming to McDonald's to know they will get safe, high-quality foods produced in a socially responsible way.'*

**McDonald's Animal Welfare Update**<sup>17</sup>

McDonald's chicken products are supplied by the Cargill-owned Sun Valley Foods in Hereford.<sup>18</sup> The chickens are fed on soya imported from Brazil through Cargill's soya crushing plant in Liverpool – a fact confirmed in interviews with two senior Sun Valley staff and Greenpeace on the ground investigations.<sup>i</sup>

Brazilian government export figures show that, since March 2005, over 220,000 tonnes of soya were shipped into Liverpool from just one port in Brazil – Santarém.<sup>ii</sup> This soya came from three Amazon states – Mato Grosso, Rondonia and Pará. While not all the soya from these states is coming from within the Amazon rainforest, the export figures clearly indicate a significant volume coming from areas where Amazon destruction is rampant.<sup>iii</sup>

Greenpeace research shows that the arrival of Cargill in Santarém, and of soya farmers close behind, is having severe environmental impacts in the Amazon in western Pará.<sup>19</sup> Since Cargill's arrival, soya has been the major driver of deforestation in the region. Between 2002 and 2004, annual deforestation rates jumped from 15,000 to 28,000 hectares in Santarém and the neighbouring municipality of Belterra in Pará state.<sup>20</sup> The Cargill plant in Santarém itself was built illegally<sup>21</sup> and, according to official statistics: over 1.6 million tonnes of soya has been exported through the port since it was opened in 2003.<sup>22</sup>

When repeatedly questioned on the segregation of Amazon from non-Amazon soya, McDonald's has been unwilling or unable to provide evidence that it is segregating between Amazon and non-Amazon soya, or that it is requiring its feed suppliers do so. This is despite McDonald's public claims that its feed is 'traceable to source.'<sup>23</sup>

*'McDonald's does not intend to send its own auditors to the farms. That would be far too much work and too time consuming. They want to stick to reality and avoid too much red tape and an overkill of auditing on the farms.'*

**AgriWorld Vision 2005**<sup>23</sup>

The box, below, summarises how soya from Amazon destruction ends up in products sold at McDonald's stores throughout the UK and Europe.



- **Farmers in Amazon states, including Mato Grosso, Pará, Amazonas and Rondonia, clear areas of the Amazon rainforest to plant soya (1).**
- **Soya is harvested and delivered to nearby grain silos, from where it is trucked to ports in both the north and south of Brazil (2,3)**
- **From Brazil the soya is shipped in bulk carriers to facilities in the UK. Here soya is crushed to separate the soya oil from the soya meal, which is used as an ingredient in animal feed (4,5)**
- **Soya meal is trucked to McDonald's meat producers, such as Cargill-owned Sun Valley in Hereford (6,7)**
- **Meat products are then sent out to McDonald's stores in the UK and Europe via McDonald's distribution centres in Basingstoke and Heywood. (8,9)**

Much of the soya coming into the UK from Brazil is a product of forest crime. Recent Greenpeace investigations in the heart of the rainforest have shown:

- *Membeca Farm, Mato Grosso* – this large soya farm has invaded the traditional lands of the Manoki people. Deforestation to plant soya continues.
- *Roncador Farm, Mato Grosso* – 215 slave labourers, working 16 hours a day, seven days a week, were recently freed from this giant soya and beef farm.
- *Vô Gercy Farm, Mato Grosso* – slave labour on this farm has been used to clear forest land for soya, which was then sold to major international agricultural companies.

- *Xingu Indigenous Park, Mato Grosso* – this area is home to 14 indigenous tribes. There are claims the Xingu Park is being slowly poisoned by the toxic run off from chemical weedkillers used to grow soya. Satellite photos show that almost 30% of the Xingu River headwaters have been deforested.
- *Lavras Farm, Pará* – illegal deforestation has been documented on this farm that has sold soya to Cargill.

One company in particular dominates the trade in Brazilian soya: Cargill. The company has been directly linked to many of the farms where the crimes above have been exposed. Much, if not all, of the soya that is fed to McDonald's chickens in the UK is supplied by Cargill from Brazil. Yet McDonald's has chosen to turn a blind eye to the crimes associated with the soya industry. By not ensuring the soya it receives from Cargill is from legal sources and from regions outside the Amazon, McDonald's is a partner in crime.

## THE FULL COST OF FAST FOOD

McDonald's does not only sell Chicken McNuggets, it also sells a staggering 34,750 tonnes of beef and 5,400 tonnes of pork in the UK every year. McDonald's is the largest user of beef in Europe, using up to 9,000 cattle a week to satisfy its beef requirement in the UK alone<sup>24</sup> – this is nearly 10% of all the cattle slaughtered in the UK every week.<sup>25</sup>

Like chickens, pigs and cows also eat soya – and, as with its chicken feed, McDonald's has failed to provide any evidence that this soya comes from legal sources outside the Amazon rainforest. In a letter to a Greenpeace supporter, all McDonald's would say on this issue was that 'McDonald's beef cattle are raised in the British Isles. The cattle are fed a grass and grain diet. Our pigs are all from British herds and their diet could possibly contain soya, which may be from North or South America.'<sup>15</sup>

While Greenpeace did not take a detailed look at the beef and pork supply chains, Greenpeace investigators have tracked Amazon soya through a number of large feed mills in the UK and Ireland. These mills in turn supply feed to any number of beef and pig farms throughout the UK, some of which are certain to supply McDonald's.

*'Simply implementing existing laws and proposed protected areas would spare the Amazon one million square kilometres of deforestation (one fifth of the entire forest area), avoiding 17 billion tonnes of carbon emissions to the atmosphere, the elimination of several forest formations, and the degradation of several major watersheds.'*  
**Amazon Scenarios Modeling Project<sup>26</sup>**

## AMAZON DESTRUCTION: A FOOD INDUSTRY PROBLEM

McDonald's, of course, is not the only major food company implicated in the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Over 30 major supermarket chains and fast food outlets were contacted by Greenpeace at the beginning of 2006; none responded that it is currently distinguishing between Amazon and non-Amazon soya used by their meat suppliers. Without such segregation, all are implicated in Amazon forest crime.

Company responses varied widely, with one well-known UK retailer admitting that, 'sadly we, like all other major retailers and producers, are currently unable to trace the source of soya back to an individual plantation.'<sup>27</sup> When pressed, another company put the responsibility for tracing the source of feed on to their suppliers, adding that the question of soya from the Amazon was 'not applicable' to the company.<sup>28</sup> McDonald's direct competitors were rather more cavalier. When asked about Amazon soya, Burger King suggested that Greenpeace researchers 'should be able to obtain further information from your local library'.<sup>29</sup> The parent company of KFC and Pizza Hut went so far as to suggest that soya wasn't even grown anywhere near the Amazon.<sup>30</sup>

### GREENPEACE DEMANDS

**McDonald's and other UK fast food chains and supermarkets must:**

**End the destruction – immediately stop buying meat products from animals fed on soya from the Amazon rainforest**

**Clean up the soya trade – demand full chain of custody for all Brazilian soya used by meat suppliers to ensure it comes from legal sources outside the Amazon rainforest**

**Support the solution – develop responsible animal feed supplies in order to eliminate the pressure on the world's remaining ancient forests**



## ENDNOTES

i In early 2006 Sun Valley staff told Greenpeace researchers that 25% of all the feed given to chickens destined for McDonald's restaurants was Brazilian soya, and that all of this came via Cargill's soya crushing plant in Liverpool.

ii Official Brazilian government statistics (<http://aliceweb.desenvolvimento.gov.br/>) and US Port Import Export Reporting Service shipping data ([www.piers.com](http://www.piers.com)) show that between March 2005 and February 2006 226,000 tonnes of soya was exported from Santarém to Liverpool.

iii Since March 2005, over 800,000 tonnes of soya has been exported from Santarém to various ports in Europe. Of this figure, 685,457 tonnes came from Mato Grosso, 87,451 tonnes from Rondonia and 33,453 tonnes from Pará. In all 128,904 tonnes of soya is confirmed as having come from the Amazon rainforest.

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