

# SLAPS OF REALITY: EUSKADI\* FLEEING INDONESIA

*Posted on 21/12/2011 by Naider*



Yesterday, Karmele Llano ([Veterinary](#) from [International Animal Rescue](#) and with more than 8 years of experience in orangutan habitat protection in Indonesia), Eneko Garmendia (from the research group of [Ecological Economics](#)), Arantxa Acha (from [UNESCO](#), Jakarta) and Paul Nicholson ([EHNE](#), the association of Basque farmers) brought us fresh news from that country so far away but to which we are unknowingly so close.

The majority of the Basque population associates Indonesia with surfing, jungle, paradise... yesterday this diverse group of ecologists and environmental professionals tried to add a new item to the list: deforestation.

I do not like to treat environmental news in an alarmist or sensationalist tone, but the particular situation in Indonesia is agonizing. It had been the same two years since I had seen Karmele, more than three of my trip to those lands and the question "how is everything over there" became difficult for me to ask, we knew that we left it at a point of no return.

Someone one day, from the European Union, decided that biofuels would be the solution to redirect our unsustainable model of energy consumption and alleviate the climate crisis. Thus, some optimistic objectives were set: 10% of energy consumption in transport by 2020 in Europe will come from bio-fuels. In terms of the environment, as in Euskadi (for good and for bad) we always like to lead, the new [Basque energy strategy for 2020](#) speaks of 10% targets for 2020.

Here Indonesia (but also other countries such as Brazil) comes into play when someone noticed that imports of palm oil (for Biofuel) in the Basque Country were increasing exponentially and that 96% of these came from that country. This is where Eneko and his team from the UPV-EHU began work to study "Basque palm oil imports and their impacts on Indonesia" within the framework of a more ambitious project: BLORES. A study on the ecological debt of the Basque Country and its impacts on biodiversity in the countries of origin, focused on three areas: tin production in Bolivia; tuna fishing in the Pacific and palm monoculture for palm oil in Indonesia.

The truth is that we wanted to ask Eneko about the rest of the impacts, but the afternoon focused on Indonesia.

During yesterday's meeting we witnessed a dance of figures that would not leave anyone indifferent: 11 million hectares already deforested in Sumatra and Borneo, which is estimated to increase to 20 million more hectares by 2020, helped to digest with a dose of realism. in the form of photographs and scenarios.

Indonesia has always been (along with countries like Brazil) a hot potato at climate summits that nobody knows how to deal with, what to do, but that nobody wants to see it explode in their hands. It is a country with one of the highest deforestation rates in the world (along with Brazil); the third country (behind only the US, China) in greenhouse gas emissions (precisely due to deforestation); one of the countries with the greatest biodiversity, housing endemic species, while the last specimens of orangutans inhabit its jungles.

The last primary jungles of the planet and its inhabitants are astonished to see how heartless led by corruption set the country on fire (in the year 97-98 during the El Niño phenomenon, more than 5 million hectares were burned to make way for palm plantations). for the plantation of palm monocultures

The (simplified) process is as follows: local or regional governments, upon payment, award land concessions to oil companies (of dubious origin and with the Malaya or Chinese flag). Many times these lands belong to local tribes deeply rooted in the forest and who live from their exploitation and ethnobotany. What is creating social and economic conflicts in the area. Entire villages are

forced to move, they lose their land and therefore their livelihood. This violation of human rights and the irreversible consequences of what we are causing in Indonesia seem to be starting to worry the international community.

For a few years Europe has known what is happening there, which has officially called into question its own objectives by emphasizing the origin and production of these biofuels in the countries of origin, but this is not enough.

Palm oil continues to reach our fuel tanks, our mouths through the food industry in the form of cookies, chocolates (numerous ships from Indonesia arrive at the port of Rotterdam to supply companies like Unilever). So my question is what are we waiting for? And it does not go precisely to society (which were those who yesterday were interested in listening to the words and the results of the investigations of Karmele and the rest) but to those who govern us, to the international community that has a responsibility for this. I'm talking about the Basque Country, Spain, and Europe because as long as we continue to generate demand, Indonesia will continue to respond with supply.

**There are no comments yet.**