WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR MOUNTAINS?

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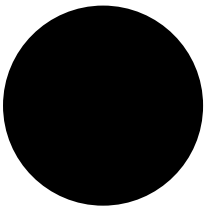

What is happening in our mountains? Why has the Cantabrian coast burned in recent years? Why do the pines turn brown after a particularly wet spring? Why are there so many floods and landslides after heavy rains? What is the cause and effect of this situation? What will happen when heat waves and torrential rains increase due to climate change? What can we do to adapt to this increasingly present situation that will worsen over the years?

As you can see, there are many and diverse unknowns. In order to answer these questions, two things need to be clarified:

More than half of the total area of the Basque Country is classified as forest. And although some voices even dare to call it wooded, the truth is that a surface is forested does not imply that it is wooded; and it's important know the difference. Have more than 50% of the total area as forest It is not necessarily a positive fact. If the forest area were a native forest in good state of conservation, then it would be news excellent. But it is not the case, our forest area is not made up of exclusively forests, in fact, they are the minority part. Here, forest area It does not mean forest, but plantation.

We are not surrounded by forests, the forest masses are rather scarce. It that we see when looking at the mountain from home or when we walk on Sundays through the mountains (especially on the Cantabrian coast) are not forests. Is about timber crops, from log fields, tree orchards, that is, from monoculture plantations. Our slopes do not cover them extensive oak groves, nor are the peaks full of beech groves, just as the oak groves on the coast. Now the mountains are mostly covered by pine trees and from now on, unfortunately, especially the coast, more and more eucalyptus.

Having a large forest area does not imply that this land use is beneficial for the environment. The forestry industry, as an industry that it is, it can also generate negative environmental impacts. The truth is that so extensive forest area does not provide the ecosystem benefits that a forest would provide. What's more, having so much area managed so intensive through monospecific cultivation, it should not be advertised as a good news. That acclaimed forest area far from providing services ecosystems provides important problems. Here we review some how many that will help us answer those questions at the beginning:

Floods and landslides: The management of these plantations are carried out by *tarrasa* (total cutting of the parcel). This involves the periodic exposure of considerable pieces of land (on hillside) exposed to air and rain, causing landslides

hillside. The lack of vegetation cover means a reduction in the uptake of water in the mountains, which translates into a higher incidence of flooding in our valleys (where our towns and cities are).

Loss of Biodiversity: This management model perpetuates the loss of both plant and animal biodiversity, on the surface and in the underground. Management by *swatter* degrades soils and implies an alteration of the ecosystem, eliminating the niches and the connectivity of the what wildlife needs. A forest is made up of a plurality of species. vegetables; with diversity of heights (grass, shrubs and trees); and with variety of ages and sizes (young, mature, old, and dead wood). This allows to host a disparity of animal species in it. Each precise species of a shelter or specific food that only plant diversity is capable of give it to him In other words, a forest is a forest if it has plant diversity in the three scopes. Therefore, a plantation of a single species; with all the trees the same age; that does not allow shrubs or young trees to grow; that cuts trees before they are mature or old and removes the material dead from the ground, it doesn't even come close to resembling a forest. Therefore, those ecosystem services associated with forests: recreation, worship, leisure, research, capturing emissions, regulation of the water cycle, biodiversity, etc., are not found in the mountains through which we walk.

Soil degradation and proliferation of diseases: What the pines stay brown, as it has been happening in recent years it is a different symptom of the same problem. We have been planting the same plant for 50 years species (brought from America). It's more than three cycles of planting and cutting what even in the forest and without giving the soil a chance to regenerate. has not been allowed the proliferation of other species or the disposal of dead wood to re-nourish the soil. For this reason, the plantations are weakening, pines are also trees, although we see them as vertical wood, they they also need the support of the community, of the forest structure. Are three fungi that have taken advantage of the weak situation and have infected the trees with the famous brown band. But the problem behind it is not neither the pine nor the fungus, once again it is forest management.

Fires spreading: The stampede ahead against the appearance of the fungus (leaving aside the plan to fumigate ourselves to everyone from heaven, a plan that was stopped by the state government) has been change species. Forest model? No, kind. Basically do what Same, but with Eucalyptus. This was introduced later than the pine in our mountains (this time from Australia), although it is already quite established in regions like Uribe Kosta.

Eucalyptus, far from solving, aggravates the problem. This prevents it from growing other species at its feet as it pours naturally onto the ground chemical substances that prevent the germination of other species. Is about a species that makes the soil waterproof (and that is also managed *scrubber*). The change of species without a change of model does not solve or eliminate all the problems generated by the pine. In fact, it aggravates and even adds some problem more. The eucalyptus is a pyrophile species (plant with affinity with the

fire). Coming from the region where it comes from, the eucalyptus does well, and
It needs in a certain way from the fires. It's a kind that burns
more easily. Portugal and Galicia have already suffered it in the last years of
stern way. Knowing this, and knowing that fires continue to be generated,
Why did we decide to plant matches in our mountains? That question is not yet
I know how to answer.

PS: the surface of deforested forest and crossed by tracks in the image is
counted as forest area. Who wants to see a forest there...

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There are no comments yet.