

## CHINA: Whither CSR? Illegal Forest Land Grab Shows Limits of Voluntary Standards

In concert with local officials and other middlemen, the global paper giant Stora Enso gained control through illegal means of thousands of hectares of forest lands in the Guangxi Autonomous Region of southern China for a eucalyptus plantation. Stora Enso is arguably one of the world's greenest paper companies and has a well recognized commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles.

Acting on behalf of Stora Enso, middlemen often violated the law in their efforts to secure land; at times they physically threatened farmers who balked at signing over their rights. In the process they undermined recent measures by China's central government to allow collectives to devolve control over land to individual farmer households, directly affecting 100 million hectares and benefiting about 400 million people. The reforms also require the active participation of households in the decision-making procedures that determine transactions in collective forests.

According to Li Ping, co-author of a joint study by RRI and the Rural Development Institute, it is "unconscionable that these important and historic measures, which were designed to give farmers secure rights to their forest lands, have been so abused." Despite having been made aware in 2006 of the legal irregularities in its land transactions, Stora Enso began to verify the legality of leasing contracts in Guangxi in late 2010, recognizing the real legal and political complexities and risks.

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Click [here](#) for the full report "PUSHBACK: Local Power, Global Realignment," which takes stock of the current status of forest rights and tenure globally, assesses the key issues and events of 2010 that shape possibilities to improve local rights and livelihoods, and identifies key questions and challenges that the world will face in 2011.