

# **CARBON CREDITS**

## **FOR NO-TILL FARMING SYSTEMS AND SOYA MONOCULTURES**

In 1997 fifty five nations adopted the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement that forms part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). On the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005, after having been ratified by the 55 nations responsible for 55% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the agreement came into force. The Framework Convention is currently supported by signatories from 166 countries. The Kyoto Protocol forms part of a number of global environmental agreements. Article 12 of the protocol establishes the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which allows industrialised countries to purchase emission reduction credits for projects which, supposedly offset or reduce the emissions produced. In practice, these mechanisms allow the countries of the northern hemisphere to continue to pollute by investing their green credits in the South hemisphere to offset their own carbon.

In June 2005, at a climate change meeting in Buenos Aires, the Argentine Minister for the Environment welcomed the main organisations representing maize and soya producers. Government officials, such as the Head of the CDM Office in Argentina, were keen to promote government policies for the biotech soya model and, since the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, the potential for agrofuels [1].

In August 2009, the soya lobby has had constant support from the Argentine Government, particularly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where an unusual ensemble has been created, consisting of officials who are influenced by the large corporations, and who appear to be assisting them in achieving their goals. The UN Climate Change Department has just developed a new methodology for carbon credits from agriculture which, if adopted, will benefit no-till chemical agriculture and soya monocultures. The methodology consists of awarding carbon credits to crops which include inoculated soya and maize. According to financial analysts, the favoured inoculant will be produced and patented by Becker Underwood. As recently as 2008, Becker Underwood signed an agreement with Monsanto to work together to produce treatments for seeds of maize, cotton and soya. The new technological package will contain the glyphosate-tolerant seed and Becker Underwood's bacteria. The company has publicly admitted that methodology applied by UNFCCC was designed by members of their own staff. By simply inoculating the seeds, RR soya will be able to enter the carbon credits market. Lobbyists are currently attempting to get no-till sowing recognised as carbon offsetting, and it is very probable that in a few months the soya territories will be taking part in the gigantic, financial Russian roulette which will be inaugurated at the end of the year – the international trade in Carbon Credits [2].

What would GM soya producers in Argentina have, in the near future, to supplement their already huge profits with Carbon Credits? Surprisingly, not much more than they have done for the past 13 years. The new agreements only require the rotation of soya and maize over the last three harvests and the use of inoculated seeds, as regularly recommended by INTA (National Institute of Agricultural Technology). Producers need to provide reliable and verifiable data on the quantity of urea used at least during the last three harvests of soya and maize. It is probable that control of this data will be provided by

the soya growers themselves, via AAPRESID (the no-till farmers association of Argentina). They may even create some corrupt mechanism to carry out this task from the Round Table for Responsible Soya which is led by the multinationals and their Argentine partners. Once again, the fox will be guarding the chicken coop.

The greatest difference between the Kyoto Protocol and the agreements to be established for the period 2012 in the next Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen next December will be that, for the first time, the United States will have to accept the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

It is only recently (and almost at the same time as the United Nations agreed the methodology for Carbon Credits for inoculated seeds which would benefit no-till agriculture) that the US government have given preliminary approval for the Climate Bill. If this legislation is approved by Senate, it would legitimise and allow financial engineering of monumental proportions to take place, with a bias towards the carbon credits market. In anticipation of this, the New York Times refers specifically to an emissions market of, probably, a trillion dollars, and which no doubt will contribute to the re-establishment of financial equilibrium. It is clear that North American politicians are working with the lobbyists from the biotechnology industry to do whatever they can to ensure that industrial agriculture is a key beneficiary of Carbon Credits – that is, the underhand subsidies for no-till agriculture. To date, the Monsanto corporation has made large investments to lobby the politicians who approved the Climate Bill.

The North American press has taken the lead in supporting the new scenarios that are being opened by the agricultural carbon markets. These scenarios imply high levels of investment for which the speculative risks will be substantial [3]. A part of that financial speculation, which is currently in crisis following the sub-prime mortgage debacle, will be recycled through the Carbon Credits and the new market opportunities that they will offer. In fact, these new bubbles of opportunity are already beginning to come together within the global markets. In his recent address to the North American soya growers, Collin Peterson, Chairman of the Agricultural Commission of the US Chamber of Deputies told them that the Climate Bill would raise the price of grain from 1.8% to 4.6%. [4].

Through Carbon Credits and Clean Development Mechanisms, no-till chemical agriculture might be able to commence its “genetically modified green revolution” in Africa and other parts of the world where agribusiness has not yet become the dominant form of agriculture. In spite of all logical discourse relating to concerns about climate change, the United Nations are facilitating an unprecedented advance towards the global commercialisation of food and agriculture, and at the same time legitimising the overwhelming concentration of agricultural food chains allowing the formation of gigantic corporations.

The next climate change conference will be held this December and if we cannot put a stop to the political stalling, there will be an increase to the already extensive destruction of rural areas, to the migrations of people away from the countryside, and the break-up of rural communities all over the world. The consequences of these policies will be to provide incentives of unimaginable proportions for the forced migrations of economic immigrants towards the rich countries of the world and towards their own urban areas. This will result in the depopulation of immense rural areas around the world, and will be the cause of massive overcrowding which will turn big cities into unmanageable urban areas and bring them closer to the point of collapse.

We reaffirm that:

- Food Sovereignty continues to be the fundamental alternative to the threat posed by agricultural biotechnology.
- It is possible to create production systems that do not harm the environment and which respect common goods and can preserve these for future generations.
- The process of providing food has increasingly become a political act, an act of conscience, of insubordination and resistance, as well as a practice which creates commercial networks which cannot function on the human scale of smallholdings and self-sufficiency.

GRR. Grupo de Reflexión Rural,

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[www.grr.org.ar](http://www.grr.org.ar)

## References

[1] <http://cdm.unfccc.int/UserManagement/FileStorage/YK33E8WHQMT2I92O2ZIMONSKS0EOG6>

[2] <http://www.seedquest.com/News/releases/2008/february/21809.htm>

[3] <http://www.reuters.com/article/GCA-GreenBusiness/idUSTRE56C2WG20090713?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

[4] [www.greenpacks.org/.../impact-of-amended-climate-bill-on-us-farms-'tolerable'/](http://www.greenpacks.org/.../impact-of-amended-climate-bill-on-us-farms-'tolerable'/)