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IT IS TIME TO VALUE FOREST CARBON

Brazil's pulp and paper sector has positive expectations in relation to results of the Conference on Climate Change (COP18), which took place November 26–December 7, in Doha, Qatar. The outcomes of the meeting, the agenda of which was discussed throughout 2012 in Brazil and abroad, will guide Bracelpa's strategies in its pursuit of commercializing forest carbon credits, the key theme of our agenda in 2013.

We hope that discussions advance towards to new market instruments besides the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) already provided by the Kyoto Protocol, and in actions that stimulate the conservation of native forests and increase forestry inventories within the scope of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).

The temporality of forest carbon credits, that is, how to discount from the average stock of planted forests calculation base the volume of carbon stored in a given area, during the period between harvesting and planting new trees, is another important matter of interest.

We have shown local and international climate negotiators that the 7 million hectares of planted forests in Brazil for producing pulp and paper, charcoal (steel), furniture and wood panels, absorb 1.3 billion tons of CO₂ annually. We also underscored that eucalyptus and pine tree plantations alone remove from the atmosphere more greenhouse gases (GHG) in one year than what the entire Brazilian industry emits in the same period. This positive balance significantly contributes to mitigate causes of global warming.

Additionally, we also experience a unique situation since emissions by Brazil's pulp and paper industry are well below the global standard for this activity. One of the reasons for this differential is that more than 75% of the energy grid used in Brazil is already renewable.

Balance – Among this year's discussions on valuing 2012 forest carbon, it is important to point out the 'Forests in Exhaustion' workshop held in April by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, which gathered climate negotiators from the four

continents in Brasília. The meeting generated an official document that was presented by the Brazilian government at the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) meeting held in May, in Bonn (Germany), subsidizing material for COP discussions.

The participation of member companies and Bracelpa at Rio+20, in June, also marked this year's agenda, particularly the seminar 'Forests: the Heart of a Green Economy' – sponsored by Bracelpa, FAO and ICFPA – and 'Business Day', an initiative by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), where leaders from various countries also discussed the theme.

Efforts of the sector to value carbon started back in 2008 with Bracelpa's participation in the Conference on Climate Change (COP14), in Poznan, Poland. Since then, discussions about this theme gained relevance and took on greater importance in each edition of the Conference. In 2010, Bracelpa became member of the main institution that addresses Climate Change in the world, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as institutional representative of the sector.

At the same time, we have worked very closely with the federal government in showing how the pulp and paper industry can help reduce GHG emissions and define policies that protect the country's interests in the social, economic and environmental spheres.

Estimates based on policies and incentives suggest that planted forest stocks for producing pulp and paper could reach an increase of 30% to 70% of stocked carbon. However, the full development and mitigation potential of the sector depends on appropriate financial considerations, and the valuing of forest carbon in market systems with strong socioenvironmental integration is one of them.

We hope that COP18 negotiations further address the theme, creating new opportunities for promoting planted forests and its role in relation to one of humanity's main challenges: to preserve the planet for future generations. ■