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Topico 303 Brazil's Extractive Reserves
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Continued Success of Brazilian Extractive Reserves Hinges on Reforms

"It is critically important that Brazil's extractive reserves not become islands of rainforest, which although they may sustain remnants of traditional populations, are surrounded by vast expanses of deforested lands," says John Pendergrass, lead author of ELI's latest research report "Brazil's Extractive Reserves: Fundamental Aspects of their Implementation." The reserve system, a promising experiment in community-based sustainable development of rainforests, now encompasses more than 2.2 million hectares and supports traditional livelihoods for over 28,000 people.

Pendergrass and a team of U.S. and Brazilian attorneys have studied the legal and institutional impediments to expansion of the extractive reserve system in the Amazon basin. Their conclusion: The future of the Reserve system hinges on improving the ability of community associations to manage the reserves, and on resolving legal and institutional obstructions to setting aside more land.

The report recommends measures to ensure the viability of the community associations that manage the reserves. "Informal education in extractive methods is already a part of the family tradition of extractivists," says Pendergrass. "Additional education on techniques for sustainable harvests and identifying profitable forest products will enable individual members to improve their standard of living and contribute meaningfully to the community's land use planning." In addition, to ensure that the plans that govern resource use in the reserves are followed, "Leaders of the community associations should be trained in techniques to induce noncomplying individuals to change their practices, and to follow the sustainable resource extraction plans of the reserve."

The cumbersome legal procedure for establishing Extractive Reserves is complicated by the confused condition of most property records in the Amazonian states. Streamlining the process and clarifying property ownership would clear the way for the establishment of more reserves. Gaps in the legislation, such as who grants land use authorizations to immigrants, and under what circumstances, must be cleared up. "Immigration is already a problem even though the Reserves are not yet a clear success economically."

Despite these difficulties, Pendergrass believes "If Brazil's

system of Extractive Reserves can be fully implemented and operated as originally envisioned, the rubber tappers and other forest dwellers could be secure not only in their homes and way of life, but also in their role as "guardians" of several important sections of the Amazonian rainforest."

The cost of Brazil's Extractive Reserves, Fundamental Aspects of their Implementation is \$25. Complimentary copies are available to the press. To order a copy or for more information about ELI, please contact Eric Eckl at (202) 939-3249, or e-mail your request to eli@igc.apc.org