

CASINO IN THE AMAZON

GROUPE
Casino

→ Formal notice served

21 SEPTEMBER 2020

→ Civil lawsuit filed

3 MARCH 2021

THE ISSUE

On 3 March 2021, the Casino Group was summoned to appear before the judicial court of Saint-Étienne (central-eastern France) on account of its sales of beef products in South America, which are linked to deforestation and the grabbing of indigenous peoples' lands. This is the first time that a hypermarket chain has been sued for deforestation and human rights abuses in its supply chain under the French law on the duty of vigilance adopted in March 2017. Indigenous organisations are seeking compensation for damage to their ancestral lands and the impact on their livelihoods.

ACTORS

The lawsuit against the Casino Group was filed by representatives of indigenous peoples from the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon (OPIAC, COIAB, FEPIPA and FEPOIMT), as well as French and American NGOs (Canopée, CPT, Envol Vert, Mighty Earth, Notre Affaire à Tous, France Nature Environnement and Sherpa), which have formed an international coalition of associations.



*Sherpa



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Further reading

Casino Group: Beef and Deforestation Report, Envol Vert, June 2020

Tainted Beef: How criminal cattle supply chains are destroying the Colombian Amazon, EIA, mai 2021

CASE DESCRIPTION

The Casino Group is the leading retailer in Brazil through its subsidiary *Grupo Pão de Açúcar*. It has a 15% market share in Brazil, and the Latin American market accounts for almost half of the group's global turnover (47%). In June 2020, the Envol Vert association published a damning report highlighting evidence of recent deforestation and land grabbing practices traced from samples of meat products sold in several Casino supermarkets in Brazil. According to **Boris Patentreger, founder of the association**, *"These investigations show links between several farms involved in illegal deforestation and products sold in Casino supermarkets. These farms alone account for 4497 hectares of deforestation."*

However, since 2017 the Casino Group has been subject to the French law on the duty of vigilance, which requires it to take appropriate measures to prevent serious human rights, environmental and health and safety abuses resulting from its activities, and those of its subsidiaries, suppliers and subcontractors. Although the Casino Group has explicitly acknowledged that the beef supply chain in Brazil presents extremely serious risks, its policy in this area is patently lacking.

Estelle Higonnet, Senior Campaign Director at Mighty Earth, added, *"Casino buys beef from suppliers like JBS, one of the worst international companies for deforestation and the largest meat company in the world. JBS has become notorious for its corruption after the 'Lava Jato' scandal, as well as its involvement in modern slavery, deforestation, fires in the Amazon, and indigenous land grabs. However, thanks to the new French law, Casino must finally take proper responsibility for JBS and all its other meat suppliers responsible for deforestation and human rights abuses. Indeed, all French supermarkets are now on notice: we intend to hold them accountable for failing to comply with the law."*

Célia Jouayed, from the association Notre Affaire à Tous, says, *"Large companies such as Casino need to be fully aware of the scope of the law on the duty of vigilance, which requires them to take concrete measures to prevent risks to human rights, the environment and health, and not just identify them formally in a document."* For lawyers **Sébastien Mabile and François de Cambiaire of the Seattle Avocats law firm** that is representing the associations, *"This is a historic case against the Casino Group, based on a pioneering law that will allow the French judge to prescribe the actions needed to stop the destruction of the Amazon by French companies and to compensate for the harm suffered."*

According to **Sandra Cossart from the Sherpa association**, *"The mere fact that Casino states in its vigilance plan that 100% of its suppliers have adhered to its policy on deforestation, while those same suppliers are regularly criticised for their involvement in deforestation, shows that this policy is either inadequate, or not being implemented, or both."*

