

## Brazilian transgenic eucalyptus trees that produce more wood target of global activists

Viewed from above, Brazil's orderly eucalyptus plantations offer a stark contrast to the hurly-burly of surrounding native forests. The trees, lined up like regiments of soldiers on 3.5 million hectares around the country, have been bred over decades to grow quickly.

On September 4, a public hearing will consider bringing an even more vigorous recruit into the ranks: genetically engineered eucalyptus that produces around 20 percent more wood than conventional trees and is ready for harvest in five and a half years instead of seven. Brazilian regulators are evaluating the trees for commercial release; a decision could come as early as the end of this year.

Researchers, businesses and activists are watching closely. Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.) — native to Australia — is grown on about 20 million hectares throughout the tropics and subtropics, and approval of the genetically engineered trees in Brazil could encourage their adoption elsewhere.

"It would have ripple effects worldwide," says Zander Myburg, who studies the genetics of forest trees at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. "Everybody will pay attention."

So far, no genetically modified tree from a major commercial species has been deployed on a large scale. The ubiquity of eucalyptus makes Brazil's decision on the modified trees a special concern to environmental activists who oppose the use of genetically modified crops.

"They have become the target of very intensive and emotionally charged debate particularly among the NGOs and nature constituencies," says Walter Kollert, a forestry officer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome.

**Read full original article:** [Brazil considers transgenic trees](#)