

Nestlé Stealing Water in Brazil

Submitted by: Citizens for Water Brazil

Key Players

Nestlé

MACAM - Movimento dos Amigos do Circuito das Águas Mineiro /of Minas Gerais

Nestlé is once again in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. In Brazil, residents are opposing a Nestlé/Perrier bottling plant, which is illegally drying up one of the country's historic sources of valuable mineral water.

The Serra da Mantiqueira region of Brazil is famous for its Circuito das Aguas, or “water circuits”, with high mineral content and medicinal properties. Four small towns, São Lourenço, Caxambu, Cambuquira, and Lambari, were built up around these water circuits in the 19th century. But now the mineral content of the water is being reduced by over-pumping by Nestle/Perrier for its Pure Life brand of bottled water.

“Around 3 years ago, many people in São Lourenço, including myself, began to notice a change in the taste of the mineral waters inside the Water Park”, says Franklin Fredrick, of the Brazilian MACAM movement. “One of the most famous water sources there, the Magnesiana, dried up and stopped flowing. Water usually needs hundreds of years inside the earth to be slowly enriched by minerals. If it is pumped in quantities greater than nature can replace it, its mineral content will gradually decrease, bringing the change in taste that we were noticing”. The residents discovered that Nestlé/Perrier was pumping huge amounts of water in the park from a well 150 meters deep. The water was then demineralized and transformed into Pure Life table water. “As the Brazilian constitution does not allow mineral water to be demineralized, we brought our findings to the attention of the public prosecutor of the State Public Ministry in São Lourenço”, says Fredrick, “and this led to a federal investigation of Nestlé/Perrier and charges against the company at the end of 2001”.

Although Nestlé lost the legal action, pumping continues as it gets through the appeal procedures, a legal process which could take ten years. Meanwhile, MACAM have organised protests against the company and collected 3000 signatures for a petition.

For more information

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www.circuitodasaguas.org

Nestlé profile from Corporate Watch:

www.corporatewatch.org.uk/profiles/food_supermarkets/nestle/nestle1.html

