



# PRO-NATURA Newsletter

July 2003

Member of IUCN, World Conservation Union

## *Vidamazônia\** a participatory development project covering 10 million hectares IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

**THE VIDAMAZÔNIA PROJECT REPRESENTS THE LATEST OF PRO-NATURA'S 13-YEARS OF PRESENCE AND DEDICATED WORK IN NORTHWESTERN MATO GROSSO. THE TARGET OF THE PROJECT IS TO TRANSFORM THIS FRONTIER ZONE OF RAINFOREST DESTRUCTION INTO A REGION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. THANKS TO FUNDING MADE AVAILABLE BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF) FOR ACTIVITIES PLANNED OVER 7-YEARS, PRO-NATURA STAFF AND CONSULTANTS SPENT THE PAST TWO YEARS IN INTENSIVE WORK WITH REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN DIAGNOSIS, TRAINING AND DEMONSTRATION TO FORTIFY LOCAL CAPACITY TO PROTECT AND SUSTAINABLY USE REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY.**

Every year vast amounts of Brazil's Amazon rainforest are destroyed, the land cleared for use mainly as pastures for raising cattle and, to a lesser extent, for subsistence and perennial farming (rice, cassava, maize, coffee, cocoa, pepper, palmito). Deforestation has been particularly devastating to the state of Mato Grosso. Over the past 20 years, Mato Grosso has been the scene of successive waves of spontaneous or government-sponsored colonization.

The colonists who settle in this region often lack experience and understanding of the particular fragility of the Amazonian ecosystem. The colonists often implement a system of slash and burn to clear the forest for planting crops. Although this technique may be highly compatible with the fragile soils of tropical forests, when undertaken with long fallow cycles - practices perfected by indigenous peoples over millenia - when these cycles are reduced, areas cultivated are prone to high levels of erosion and rapidly become unviable for crop production. It is consequently converted into pastures and continues to be burned regularly to control weed invasion (actually the forest trying

to come back!). After a 10 to 15-year period, the soil reaches a level of degradation so extreme that it is unsuitable for any type of agricultural activity. This compels farmers to migrate in search of new plots of forest to clear and begin the cycle anew. Their hope is eventually to sell the cleared forest, as the rule in this region is that the land belongs to who clears it, and a cleared forest is more valuable than a standing one.

The areas that still remain under forest cover are subject to exploitation by the timber industry, although rarely are more than about 10 native tree species actually commercially exploited. Yet, the forest is frequently seriously damaged by the construction of new roads which are built in order to access the few desired species of trees. The additional infrastructure attracts new colonists to the region who will then begin again the process of slashing and burning.



■ The 7 municipalities concerned by the project.



In Mato Grosso, the rapid degradation of agricultural terrains pushes the farmers to regularly clear new plots of forest in the hope of producing a few seasons of annual crops.

\* *Life for the Amazon*

INNOVATION TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Pro-Natura originally took root in Jurena municipality



The Peugeot Carbon Sink collaborates with the NASA-LBA project (Large-scale Biosphere Atmosphere), that has set-up a carbon exchange measurement facility.

In 1990, Pro-Natura began its activities in support of local colonist farmers of the Municipality of Jurena which covers an area of 320,000 ha. The first achievement was to establish a Research Center for Agroforestry on a 100 ha farm with the aim of encouraging farmers in the region to adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Funding for this project came entirely from the British company ICI / Zeneca.

In 1998, Pro-Natura invited the carmaker Peugeot and the French Office National des Forêts (ONF) to create an experimental "carbon sink" in an effort to absorb atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and reduce the greenhouse effect. The operation materialized in

the Jurena region where 10,000 ha of degraded and uncultivable pastureland and protected native forests were purchased from a large rancher. The project aimed to reforest land that had been converted to pasture, aspiring to the greatest possible extent to reconstitute to some degree the local biodiversity. To achieve this goal, a large nursery was installed and seeds were collected from nearby parts of the region to supply tree seedlings bred from local species, in combination with teak - widely used in the region for reforestation activities with high economic value. The project as it evolved came more and more to

support the efforts of local farmers in reforestation and to create a synergy between other Pro-Natura activities and local residents. Beyond the creation of the Carbon Sink, ONF also assumed responsibility for a subsidiary program to donate tree seedlings to small farmers, while Pro-Natura collaborates in supervision of tree planting, technical assistance to farmers, for tree monitoring and maintenance, consistent with our coordination of sustainable development activities in the region. Over 100,000 seedlings have been distributed to date among more than 60 small farmers in Jurena and Cotriguaçu through this program.

By the mid-1990s, it had already become clear that an end to massive destruction of the rainforest would require work on a larger-scale, involving the relevant stakeholders (farmers, timber companies, and public authorities . . .). Moving toward this comprehensive goal, Pro-Natura was able to obtain additional funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 2001 to develop an integrated strategy toward regional biodiversity conservation and economically viable natural resource use by local actors. Today, the project area includes 7 municipalities, accounting for a population of 100,000 people, in an effort to protect remaining forests on 10 million ha. This project was named by local secondary school students "Projeto Vidamazônia".

The Research Center for Agroforestry managed by Pro-Natura has installed a nursery which can produce 300,000 tree seedlings annually.



## > Those in charge of the project

- Scientific Director:  
*Prof. Peter May*
- Technical Coordinator:  
*Antonio Claudio Horta Barbosa*
- Regional Project Coordinator:  
*Paolo César Nunes.*

The first two years of Project Vidamazônia have been very active and have resulted in strengthened partnerships with both scientific institutions (The Federal University of Mato Grosso, Cornell University, National Institute for Amazonian Research, Large-Scale Biosphere-Atmosphere Project...) and local authorities. For Vidamazônia, The Environmental Foundation of the state of Mato Grosso (FEMA) acts as responsible government executing authority, while Pro-Natura acts as the implementing agency on the government's behalf, in collaboration with other state and federal government agencies, local municipal governments and a host of regional NGOs and interest group representatives.

# Protect biodiversity and facilitate sustainable development

Despite the influx of settlers to northwestern Mato Grosso, the region remains very rich in endemic plant species and endangered animal species. Nevertheless, the accelerated rate of forest destruction poses the looming threat

of an ecological catastrophe. The Project Vidamazônia hopes to promote sustainable economic development which will protect the rich biodiversity of the region and inspire cooperation among all stakeholders.

## ● Establishment of ecological-economic zoning maps

Accomplished initially in 3 municipalities (Juruena, Castanheira and Cotriguaçu), this component includes the constitution of a visually interactive database identifying land use, property lines, biodiversity and threats to the environment. The map provides communities with detailed information allowing them to define practices which will improve land use patterns and to impose restrictions for environmental protection and improvement which are suitable within the local socio-economic context.



The ecological pasture is based on the idea of segmenting the cultivable land into small plots used in rotation, for pasturage by cattle. This system of rotation avoids the use of fertilizer, pesticide and most of all fire, while producing sustainable and high quality pastures.

## ● Agroforestry development

The practice of growing trees in combination with raising crops and animals, called Agroforestry, embodies a promising alternative to conventional family farming. Agroforestry can lead to increased and more stable income by the diversity of crops planted and the use of crop rotation (annual crops interplanted with fruit trees, fodder, coffee...).

A Rapid Participatory Appraisal which was completed in 4 different municipalities unanimously revealed that one of the main reasons settlers destroy the forest is because by doing so they are allowed to retain ownership of the land. Deforestation by the settlers continues despite the fact they often have great difficulty selling their production due to the lack of infrastructure in the region.

As part of the project, plots of land have been devoted to demonstrate to small farmers the techniques of agroforestry and provide them with technical assistance. The agricultural methods applied are those that have been selected in cooperation with the local farmers' experience and preferences.

In support of the demonstration plots on model farms, the Research Center for Agroforestry, managed by Pro-Natura, has installed and endowed a nursery capable of producing 300,000 trees seedlings annually suitable for planting in the region. Two municipal governments have established their own irrigated nurseries and are producing a similar number of seedlings for distribution to local farmers. The Research Center also serves as a base for agroforestry experimentation and demonstration purposes.



*in brief... in brief... in brief...*

## AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION AND PRO-NATURA

> Following the Johannesburg Summit, Pro-Natura signed an agreement with this Foundation, based in Capetown, to develop this concept of trans-border parks in Latin America.

"I know of no political movement, no philosophy, no ideology, which does not agree with the Peace Parks concept as we see it going into fruition today.

It is a concept that can be embraced by all. In a world beset by conflict and division, Peace is one of the cornerstones of the future. Peace Parks are building blocks in this process, not only in our region but also in the Americas."

Nelson Mandela  
(one of the founders).

Coffee under shade : in collaboration with the National Environment Foundation of Holland, Pro-Natura has started a carbon sequestration programme based on agroforestry systems created by farmers.

in brief... in brief... in brief...

## BIOMASS CHARCOAL

> Thanks to the help of 6 engineers from Altran who worked for one year on perfecting the machine, the transfer of technology is ready to be completed. A 13-minute film on the machine, donated by the "507" agency, has also been produced and is available on DVD.

## CANOPY RAFT

> The next mission of the Canopy Raft will take place in October 2003, in Panama's San Lorenzo reserve, in cooperation with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. For the first time, the mission will combine the use of mobile techniques and a fixed crane already installed in the forest.



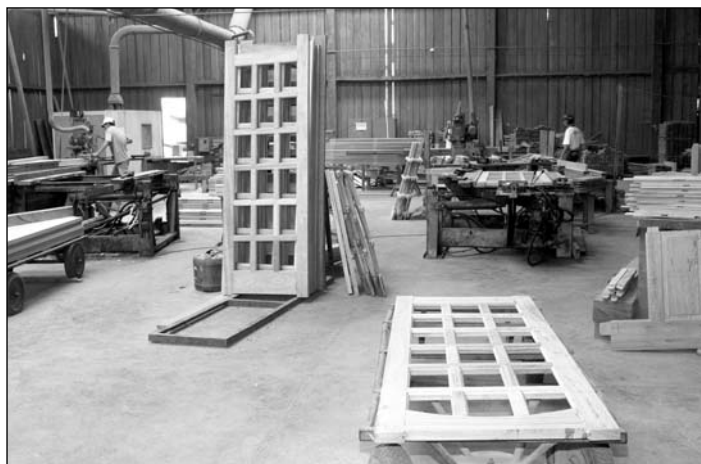
A carbon sequestration program based on planting trees in agricultural plots has started with the help of ONF. 10 000 seedlings have been distributed and farmers have received technical assistance for planting them with coffee.

To grow pepper, farmers use stakes cut in the forest. pro-Natura proposes to replace them by living trees.

## ● The Sustainable Management of Timber

Timber extraction and processing companies constitute the primary source of economic activity in the region. A preliminary identification phase sought to distinguish the businesses that were currently, or might be amenable to practicing sustainable timber management practices.

One of the goals of the project is to help businesses obtain an ecolabel from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), certifying that the wood comes from sustainably managed forests.



Of the 146 different companies identified in the 7 municipalities, findings showed that only 13% of these companies possessed a sustainable management plan pursuant to federal requirements. The overall environmental impact of commercial operations has been extremely destructive, although much less so than outright clearing, because selective logging does not require clearcutting. In an attempt to reverse these harmful practices, Pro-Natura has embarked upon a mission of raising awareness of corporate environmental responsibility and proposes the adoption of better and more sustainable practices (less destructive extraction of wood, waste management, reforestation...).

## > Our organisation



Created in Brazil in 1986, Pro-Natura is a non-governmental organisation that specialises in sustainable development. In 1992, after the Rio Conference, it became one of the first NGOs in the Southern Hemisphere to gain international status. Today it is a global organisation that is composed of two major hubs: Instituto Pro-Natura in Brazil, which is responsible for the Americas and Pro-Natura International in France, responsible for Europe, Africa and Asia. A strategic co-ordination Council manages the organisation.

[www.pronatura.org](http://www.pronatura.org)

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