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Strategic alliance with PDR-DIAM / GTZ (Proyecto de Desarrollo Rural – Desarrollo Integral AltoMayo)

- The Alto Mayo Valley, a bio-diversity hostpot & primeval habitat of high canopy, host for shade grown bird-friendly organic coffee.

- Migrant families from higher andean regions and local native communities.

- Partial felling, no burning, mulch and compost as main guidelines. Slash-and-burn is overcome on 50,000 ha rainforest.

- Independent smallholders - associated farmers: fairtrade conditions allow direct market approach

- Extension team monitoring:
  - Efficiency & product quality
  - Environment responsibility
  - Social responsibility

- Partial support by local subsidy PDR/DIAM-GTZ (Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Altomayo) and PRONATUR, synergies for efficient & transparent market support.

In 1996, the founder of the promoting agency Pronatur got to know many small and indigenous coffee growers scattered in the Alto Mayo valley situated on the eastern slopes of the Peruvian Andes. They were at the time only loosely connected by informal groupings. The agency realized the urgent necessity for these growers to become well organized, and found active supporters, such as Orlando Díaz Fernández and Benjamín Jaime Chocán, who helped him in dispelling the farmers’ mistrust based on earlier intents with co-operative models, which had all ended in deception and failure after decades of effort. Important new ideas were now needed: reducing forest depredation, eliminating the wide-spread use of slash-and-burn agriculture, respecting primary and old-growth forest, introducing ecologically sustainable agriculture, and long term education and instruction with emphasis on quality.

To this end, a team was put together to promote the organisation of local growers’committees, and then to enable them to create a strong associative organisation. An extension service for
sustainable production practices was implemented. Certification, and an efficient link to exportation possibilities was also promoted.

After two years’ hard work, PRONATUR was established in 1998 as a consulting and commercial link, with functional, administrative and financial independence, dedicated exclusively to sustainable organic agriculture. At the same time, 21 local groups or comités, with 304 growers, merged to create the Asociación de Productores Ecológicos, APROECO. It was then agreed to join both enterprises so as to be able to make use of synergies, and advance at a quicker pace. The result was the creation of a project alliance: PRONATUR/APROECO.

In 1998 PRONATUR/APROECO achieved certification of its coffee production by IMO-CH and BIO-Suisse, and started exporting to European markets. The confidence of buyers was reflected by a tripling of its export sales volume in 2000.

Adding to its other certifications, PRONATUR got part of the production area certified for “Bird Friendly” coffee, by the Migratory Bird Center (MBC) of the Smithsonian Institute, in 2001.

2002 sees a widening of organisational horizons to encompass three departamentos in northern Peru: San Martín (valle Alto Mayo), Amazonas (distrito of Ocallí) and Lambayeque (distrito of Motupe). In the latter, growers produce mangoes and beans ((legumes)). Today, 873 growers are grouped in 39 comités locales (CL), in three áreas geográficas de producción ecológica (AGPE), geographical sustainable-production areas. The NOP accreditation has also been certified by way of OCIA in April 2002.

The production aspect and technical assistance of the project is conscientiously handled by a multi-disciplinary team, made up at the moment of 11 dedicated people: three agricultural engineers, three agricultural technicians, one sociologist, one gender equity promoter, and three young men, sons of local growers, who have had 3 years training (theoretical and hands-on), enabling them to contribute significantly to the team’s success in the field. In addition, each comité has local technical promoters: these are growers who lend their plots for extension demonstrations and up-grading procedures, with the understanding to then transmit their newly acquired knowledge to other members of the community. This enhances the efficiency and replicability of sustainable technology.

Starting this year (2002), besides the regular training programmes and extension assistance, a 9-month special course titled “Sustainable Organic Agriculture and Rural Development” is being offered to interested and active women and men in the local comités often located many hours strenuous walking from the nearest car-track; imparted partly by distance, partly face-to-face, it is enthusiastically being taken by 59 growers.

First results are promising: felling of forest trees has been greatly reduced in the regions under PRONATUR/APROECO’s influence. Compost is made and used, refuse is collected, contamination avoided. Better procedures of wet-processing of coffee have been implemented, resulting in a raise in coffee quality. The organisation’s basis has been strengthened, and during the last four years all the certified growers of organic coffee have received the benefits of better price levels and differentials; this has resulted in significant improvements of socio-economical conditions in the project’s regional ambit.
To date, the project’s direct influence extends over 2,840 ha shade coffee; 84 ha planted to mangoes and other fruit; 46 ha beans and other legumes for export. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a regional impact in the area of AGPE I: over 50,000 ha of Amazon highland-rainforest belongs to ethnic communities and growers associated to the project and committed to following its aims.

For the rural area of AGPE III, an agreement was reached in 2000 with a small foundation (perubalsam e.V.) active in the region, to construct, equip and supervise two schools for pre-school children. These schools can serve as models for other settlements in the project. In addition to a programme of school breakfasts with protein-rich foods in these schools, this year saw the start of an ambitious project to get the club de madres (women’s club) in the comités involved in a modern programme of organic vegetable gardening, aimed at complementing and improving the nutritional value of their accustomed daily diet.

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J. Bernhard, O. Diaz, A. Perisutti

**Only the best beans for the best organic coffee**

PRONATUR obtains all of its organic coffee, bean for bean the best in northern Peru, directly from small plots located in remote areas in the highland production area. Some of these are farmed by recently established migrant families from the higher, impoverished Andean regions, others by local people, and some by small groups of Aguaruna and Huambisa ethnic descent, original natives of this Amazon region who are slowly and progressively becoming socially and economically integrated.

The growing area lies in the Altomayo region, on both banks of the Mayo river, and on the eastern slopes of the mighty Marañón at an altitude of 1,300 to 2,000 m above sea level. These rivers wind their way through the fertile, high lying rain forest of the upper reaches of the Amazon basin in Peru, famous for its biodiversity.

**Quality and environment**

Each small production unit is taken through a process of ecologically sound agricultural upgrading, monitored by PRONATUR. The continuous presence of our extension team, made up of agronomists specialized in agroecology, sociologists and technicians, all of them dedicated to developing sustainable agroecosystems, is helping to introduce new concepts of efficiency, product quality and environmental responsibility in the area.

Testing and development of bio-cides / biological controls (Neem, Ageniaspis sp. etc) is currently also being carried out at the "Cerro Chalpón" production unit.

**Efficient management: key to a just and sustainable project**

In 1995, after considering the inherent possibilities for development in the region, the present general manager of PRONATUR decided to organize groups of coffee growers in the Altomayo area.
An efficient supporting team of specialists was created and quickly gained the confidence of local farmers. 1996 saw the foundation of the "Asociación de Productores Agroecológicos" (APROECO).

Personal commitment, daily hands-on hard work, and socially acceptable business ethics of the PRONATUR team enables us to now offer organic shade-grown coffee without the need of intermediaries, and to guarantee a really superior final quality due to the application of better methods in the critical phases of harvesting and processing.

Our organisation has succeeded in improving and assuring incomes in the associated communities through efficient and transparent methods of production and marketing, involving all concerned. Fair trade precepts continue to be our permanent guidelines.

Growers as caretakers

To date, APROECO has 932 members – small farmers and their families who have taken up the challenge of growing organic shade-coffee to IFOAM standards. The association is divided into 3 geographical sectors, each one of them containing up to 7 "comités". This federalistic structure allows each "socio comunal" his legitimate and active say in decision-taking. PRONATUR/APROECO’s activity is spread over the whole of Northeastern Peru coordinating efforts from three ecological production regions:

- Alto Mayo (San Martin Department)
- Cerro Chalpón (Lambayeque Department)
- Ocallí (Amazonas Department)

Made aware of the urgent necessity for medium and long-term planning in the use of natural resources and to assure income on a broader base, the farmers associated to diversify their production and to introduce sustainable and organic practices. Alternative and associated crops are: mandioca, bananas, beans, peanuts, granadillas and mangos.

With simple techniques involving mulch and compost, judicial pruning etc. to avoid leaching of soils and rapid aging of plants, they are overcoming the deficiencies of traditional slash-and-burn agriculture. The extraordinary natural variety (last Smithsonian count: 26 species) of old-growth shade trees forming an extensive canopy is also extremely important for migratory birds who winter in this region.

An example easily followed

The environmental conditions in the geographic area of the project – dense vegetation, high relative humidity, mature soils only recently being used for agricultural purposes – make the simple technology of organic production in this case easily understandable and applicable by all the coffee growers of the area in question, and of all the rest of the Altomayo. This gives added importance to a project such as this, being implemented now for the first time in the region: negative ancestral practices of slash-and-burn, involving felling and burning of all trees are now replaced by partial felling and no burning at all. By not burning, levels of air pollution are kept low; and partial felling allows quick new growth, which due to its higher carbon intake contributes to maintain a high de-carbonization rate in contaminated air. This results in a high and continuous canopy which greatly enhances the regions for birdlife and
bird-watching, and so also opens up perspectives for ecotourism as a source of further income.

**PRONATUR Management Team**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Bernhard R.</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
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<td>Lourdes Oroso G.</td>
<td>Financial Manager</td>
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<td>Orlando Díaz F.</td>
<td>Proyect Manager</td>
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<td>Benjamín Jaime Ch.</td>
<td>General Delegate</td>
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<td>Alfonso Alcántara Ch.</td>
<td>Plant Manager</td>
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<td>Carmencita Meza R.</td>
<td>Social Assistant</td>
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<td>Juan Carlos Dávila C.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>Antero Flores M.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>Carlos Cardozo R.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>Manacés Campos A.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>César Montalván Ch.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ciro Díaz V.</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>Lidia Mas</td>
<td>Agronomist</td>
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<td>Lourdes Villegas</td>
<td>Biologist</td>
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**Approved/Certified by:**

**IMO-CH** (Institut fuer Marktoekologie Schweiz) Switzerland
Membership and Certification since 1996

**NATURLAND e.V.**, Germany
Membership and Certification since 1997

**OCIA** (Organic Crop Improvement Association) USA
Membership and Certification since 1997

**BIOSUISSE**, Switzerland
Knospe Label and Certification since 1998

**MBC, Migratory Bird Center, Smithsonian Institute** USA
Birdwatcher Friendly & Shadegrown ® Certification since 2001

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