Imagine walking for hours alongside a mule deep into the rainforest to cut down a tree, chop it into blocks, load it on the mule and then walk back again. It may seem unthinkable; however it is the reality for the forest workers of COATLAHL. They take pride in protecting their forest areas and looking after the local communities’ interests while producing first class products for the Western Market. At COATLAHL, everything is done in collaboration – even their business is run as a cooperative. Why: because the community benefits most that way and every group member gets an even share.

COATLAHL is a FSC® certified cooperative of community groups in Honduras. The cooperative is dedicated to the protection and management of rainforests in the regions of Atlantida and Yoro and to the involvement of local community groups in the operation. The certified forest area covers more than 20,000 hectares and COATLAHL has a group certificate that consists of 18 members.

The cooperative operates in forest management and processing of products. Timber from small forest community groups is either sold as raw timber by COATLAHL or processed further into a diverse range of products. Mostly, the wood species are lesser known tropical timber species, and thereby COATLAHL helps lower the pressure on the forests and improves the biodiversity.

COATLAHL functions as both a coordination unit for the communities working under their wings and as an actual production company. COATLAHL’s own production site mainly produces kitchen utensils such as cutting boards, trays, trivets and kitchen paper holders and furniture such as stools and folding tables. The communities in the group sell their products through COATLAHL and COATLAHL provides the marketing and sales support for the communities.
Attempts at driving market demand

COATLAHL’s main objective of getting FSC certification has been threefold: to improve forest management, to improve their public image and to improve their sales of timber and timber products in national and international markets.

The workers at COATLAHL’s processing units are experienced when it comes to developing products according to designs provided by interested buyers and takes pride in getting them done on time.

With help from Forests of the World, a Danish NGO, COATLAHL managed to obtain the first contract to export FSC certified products in 2004. The first buyer of COATLAHL’s FSC certified products was the Danish retailer Coop Denmark, who up to today is COATLAHL’s partner. COATLAHL estimates that they sell 2,500 units of kitchen utensils annually to Coop Denmark but the trade agreement between them is project based and hence does not always represent a secure income for the cooperative.

FACTS

Certificate Holder
COATLAHL (Cooperativa de Servicios Agroforestales, Colon, Atlantida, Honduras, Limitada)

Certificate details
RA-COC-000410

Size of certified area
20,164 hectares

Products
Sawn timber
Cutting boards, trays and other kitchen utensils
Furniture such as stool and folding table

Tree species
Aguacatillo (Ocotea spp.)
Areno (Ilex spp.)
Barrenillo (Mortoniodendrum anisophyllum)
Cedrillo (Huertea cubensis)
Cedro Piojo (Cedrela fissilis)
Celillon (Pouteria izabalensis)
Coloradito (Gordenia brandgeei)
Cumbillo (Terminalia amazonia)
Huesito (Macrohaseltia macroterantha)
Marapolán (Guarea grandiflora)
Nogal (Juglans olanchana)
Paleto (Dialium guianense)
Pepenance (Birsonimia spicata)
Piojo (Tapirira guianensis)
Redondo (Magnolia yoroconte)
Rosita (Hieronyma alichorneoides)
San Juan Rojo (Vochysia guianensis)
Santa María (Calophyllum brasiliense)
Vaca (Sloanea ligulata)
Varillo (Symphonia globulifera)
Zapoyollillo (Pouteria spp.)
Presently, the production capacity of the cooperative exceeds the demand of its customers. COATLAHL therefore, continues to work with FSC Honduras to drive demand of their certified sawn timber and wooden products in the national as well as international markets. Using the Small and Community Label Option (SCLO) on their products since 2013 is one way that COATLAHL hopes will continue to improve their market access, and they are currently looking for buyers of their products that carry this unique label.

New improved equipment purchased

COATLAHL is continuously innovating and improving the work methods and procedures in the cooperative – and they always do it in ways that correlate with responsible forest management. The cooperative is presently a beneficiary of the FSC Smallholder Fund. The fund has among other things been spent on buying new sawing and timber drying equipment. Already, COATLAHL exchanged the chains in their chainsaws with a more durable material as to reduce costs on sawing timber. Training on how to use the new equipment parts has also been carried out for the workers.

Furthermore, the Smallholder Fund support has been used for forest protection and forest management initiatives such as implementation of monitoring methodologies.

The cooperative has even managed to better social conditions in the region’s communities with the help of donations from Coop Denmark that has funded improvements of educational and health facilities in the remote area and donated equipment and materials to these institutions. COATLAHL functions as a driver in every part of the cooperative’s area: nature, environment and people.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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