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Producer Portfolio

COOPERATIVA INTEGRAL AGRÍCOLA CHIRREPEC, R.L. IN GUATAMALA



the Cooperativa Integral Agrícola Chirrepec has been producing a high quality black tea called Chirrepeco tea. More recently, they have expanded their business activities through their FSC-certified pine plantation. With this expansion, they now offer high quality round wood as well as other agroforestry services. The cooperative is embracing both the old and the new: their modern forestry operation goes hand in hand with the ancient traditions of harvesting, drying and processing chirrepeco tea, skills that were handed down to the cooperative's members from their Mayan ancestors.

From tea to pines in Guatemala

The Federation of Unions of Verapaz (FEDECOVERA) is an organization that acts as the group manager for 38 cooperatives in Mexico, working in alliance with them to ensure their livelihoods. These cooperatives benefit over 65,000 people, mainly from the Q'eqchi' and Poqomchi' ethnic groups that descend from the ancient Mayan culture. Of these cooperatives, 29 are engaged in forestry activities, while many also practice agricultural activities such as the production of coffee (*Coffea arabica*), tea (*Camellia* spp.) and cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomun*), as well as ranching and the subsistence farming of basic grains.

Cooperativa Integral Agrícola Chirrepec

In 1995, economic problems forced the cooperatives of FEDECOVERA to look for alternative sources of income. Two were permitted by the government to establish around 4,000 hectares of pine plantation. One of these is the Cooperativa Integral Agrícola Chirrepec, which has obtained FSC certification for their part of the plantation. Since the late 19th century,

FSC certification has created new opportunities for Chirrepec's members. These include created more jobs in the community, but it has also led to an increased sense of job security and a feeling of pride – they help to take care of the environment around them.





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Challenges

The biggest challenge for the Chirrepec cooperative is that it is only possible to harvest forest products from January and April or May. During the rest of the year, the region's weather does not permit the transporting of wood and other products from the forest; their harvest time is therefore very limited.

Another challenge is that buyers in local markets are not always interested in the fact that the wood is FSC certified. This is why the Chirrepec cooperative is looking to expand their customer base beyond the region, to places where consumers appreciate the efforts they make to take care of the environment and the local population.



FACTS

Certificate Holder

Federation of Cooperatives of the Verapaces, RL (Integral Agricultural Cooperative Chirrepec, RL)

Certificate code

RA-FM / COC-004240

Size of certified area

160.86 hectares

Tree species

Pinus maximinoi

FSC-certified products sold per year:

- Round wood 1500 m³ (regional and national buyers)

Approved to yield

4000 m³ annually over the next five years

CONTACT INFORMATION

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