

Exemplary sustainable forestation project launched in Colombia

The forestry project was one of the first to be registered by the UN “Clean Development Mechanism” programme (CDM) for environmentally compatible developments. From 2012, Faber-Castell is expected to become the world’s first private corporation authorized to deal in CO₂ certificates from managed forests.

Stein, 9 December 2011. In the north of Colombia, in the El Magdalena region where the land has been spoiled by excessive animal husbandry, 67 farmers are currently planting and looking after 1561 hectares of woodland as a source of timber for Faber-Castell. They provided part of their land that had previously been used mainly for grazing cattle; they now get an assured monthly income in return for taking care of the trees. The species planted is *Gmelina arborea*, commonly known as “Melina”, a quick-growing deciduous tree that originally came from Asia and is particularly suitable for making pencils. The trunks attain a girth of 20 to 25 cm after seven years; after felling the farmers receive 30% of the proceeds from the timber.

It is planned to extend the area of woodland to 3000 hectares (30 sq.km) by 2014. The Faber-Castell forestry project is part of a large-scale restructuring programme in the municipalities along the Rio Magdalena that have been seriously affected by overgrazing and soil erosion.

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A unique reforestation project, as confirmed by Jean-Guénolé Cornet, a forest and climate expert at the Office Nationale des Forêts (ONF), a French state-owned concern whose international subsidiary ONFI has been attempting since 2001 to halt the progressive deforestation in Colombia. “The municipalities along the Rio Magdalena were looking for a way out of the traditionally predominant cattle raising and its associated soil erosion, that regularly leads to flooding and crop failures”, he said. “In all probability, Faber-Castell will be the first private company in the world that will shortly receive a certificate from the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) for its CDM project.” The certification will entitle it to deal in emission certificates, as foreseen by the Kyoto protocol to reduce worldwide emissions of carbon dioxide. Those are currently estimated by experts to be 33.5 thousand million tons of CO₂ annually, which if continued in the long term will lead to global warming of at least 6 degrees Celsius – with disastrous consequences for the Earth.

The climate conference in Durban that ends today (9 December) is debating the necessary measures by industrialized and developing countries to protect the climate, but also the role of industry in reducing emissions.

Faber-Castell has long exhibited a positive balance sheet in that respect. In the early 1980s, the world's largest manufacturer of wood-cased pencils took steps to assure a supply of environmentally compatible timber and initiated the reforestation of 10,000 hectares of pine forest in the state of Minas Gerais in the south-east of Brazil. The company-owned woodland and associated sawmill created some 500 jobs in a region that had previously also been largely given over to cattle grazing. The forests have been granted the FM (forest management) seal of quality by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC); they absorb many times the amount of carbon dioxide that the company generates in all its 14 production sites world-wide. At the same time, the woods are home to numerous plant and animal species, some of them threatened with extinction.

For Count Anton Wolfgang von Faber-Castell, the eighth generation of his family to head the company, the new forestation project in Colombia is exemplary not just from an ecological point of view. "I am very pleased that we can offer the farmers long-term prospects and create jobs in a region marked by severe unemployment", he says.

Besides producing high-quality products, Faber-Castell has a long tradition of social and ecological responsibility. A successful strategy, as it turns out: in the last fiscal year (2010/11), it achieved a group turnover of 540 million euros, 19% more than the previous year.

Further information:

Sandra Suppa
Corporate Communications
Faber-Castell AG
Tel.: +49 911 9965-5532