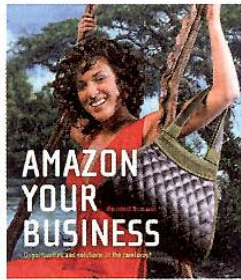


Ode TO POSSIBILITIES



MEINDERT BROUWER
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BOOK

Signs of hope from the Amazon

FOR DECADES, WE HAVE BEEN BARRAGED WITH so many horror stories about the Amazon—vast tracts deforested, native peoples decimated, rare species destroyed—that it all feels futile. It seems this ecological treasure—a river basin the size of Europe with 10 percent of the world's biodiversity, full of plants that might yield new medicines and essential in itself for regulating the global climate—is doomed.

But what's rarely mentioned is that 80 percent of the Amazon region is still intact. In fact, there is a chance for economic and social development in the Amazon to happen in a sustainable way. Meindert Brouwer, a Dutch conservationist, believes the rich ecosystems of the Amazon basin can spawn sustainable industries that prove once and for all that these forests are more profitable in their natural state than chopped down to raise beef or soy beans.

His book, *Amazon Your Business*, which is published simultaneously in English, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese, is full of inspiring stories about entrepreneurs and activists setting the stage for an Amazon revival. Here's just a sampling of new products coming out of the rainforest:

- The Venezuelan co-op Ceacopev helps more than 20,000 indigenous artisans and farmers develop and market profitable products ranging

from macadamia nuts, tamarind and honey to raw materials used in furniture-making to handicrafts like necklaces and ceramics.

- In Guyana's Iwokrama rainforest—home to the world's largest cat (jaguar), world's largest snake (anaconda), world's largest eagle (harpy eagle) and world's largest rodent (capybara)—the Iwokrama organization is incubating new native people's businesses based on ecotourism, sustainable lumber, tropical fish for aquariums, crabwood oil and other sustainable enterprises.

- In Colombia's Chocó region, home to many descendents of slaves brought from Africa by the Spanish, a new initiative trains local people to mine gold with shovels and pans, instead of dynamite and cyanide, and markets this "Oro Verde" ("green gold") globally.

Brouwer believes the timing for these new rainforest-preservation businesses could not be better. Not only is there a boom in green and fair-trade products, he writes, but, "Market trends in Europe and the United States reveal that consumers appreciate natural, authentic products, goods and services they are willing to pay more for. The intangible quality of a product is gaining weight in people's purchasing decisions as they value 'the story behind the product.'"—JAY WALLJASPER

FIND OUT MORE: AMAZONYOURBUSINESS.NL



NEW BUSINESS FROM THE AMAZON, FROM LEFT: IIBA (BOWLS), GUAYAPI (DRINK), TREETAP (RUBBER SHOULDER-BAG), REPSA (GOURMET CHOCOLATE), ORO VERDE (RINGS OF GOLD MINED SUSTAINABLY)