

# Let us Amazon our business



Photo © Gerard Tili Photography, The Netherlands

For **MEINDERT BROUWER**, author of *Amazon Your Business*, the message to entrepreneurs is “make money with sustainable products from the Amazon. Consumers want them. At the same time you contribute to the protection of the Amazon and you increase the income of local people in the forest. This is an offer you cannot refuse”. His message to politicians and governments is “facilitate market access for sustainable biodiversity products; this is an effective way to help realize Millennium Development Goals”.

**D**emonstrating the economic value of sustainably managed forests outside protected areas is of key importance to safeguard the Amazon.

Saving the Amazon forest, first of all, means that large areas should be strictly protected, prohibiting any sort of ‘modern’ economical activity. Strictly protected areas, however, need buffer zones to keep them from the danger of encroaching, unregulated human activities. The management of buffer

zones is therefore very important. If we can turn things on their head and make the sustainable and certified management of forests an acceptable alternative that has equal – or better still – more value than clearing the forest and stripping it of its biodiversity, then we may just succeed in stopping deforestation, one step at a time. Sustainable forest management using FSC principles and criteria is one of the tools to accomplish this.

Saving the Amazon forests on the one hand, and promoting significant, sustainable economic development for local communities on the other, means unsustainable logging can and must be pushed to the sidelines. In its place, sustainable, innovative, sophisticated and certified mainstream products will take centre stage.

### **High-quality consumer goods**

The Amazon is a supplier of countless high-quality natural ingredients and other biodiversity products that can be

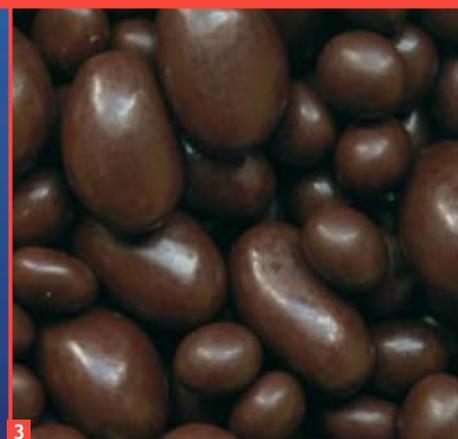
used in the food, beverage and cosmetics industries.

The first generation of sustainable and certified mainstream quality consumer goods has emerged in the Amazon: among them are energy drinks, snacks, wild gourmet chocolate, food dressings, food supplements, body care products, essences, cosmetics, aromatic oils, medicines, even kitchenware, furniture, shoes and fashionable rubber bags. And *Oro Verde*, or Green Gold, obtained in a responsible, sustainable way from tropical forests in Colombia, is just one example of how new standards are being set by Amazon products to which the rest of the world will aspire.

Ecological commodities, like the wilderness expanses, water and air, are still generally considered ‘free goods’. However, this notion is changing. We are seeing a trend where stakeholders, like towns, companies and governments are beginning to pay for the ecosystem services they use.



A selection of sustainable Amazon-products: 1/ liba wooden bowls (Brazil); 2/ Rubber bag, by Treetap® Wild Rubber (Brazil); 3/ Rainforest Exquisite Products S.A. (REPSA) – wild gourmet chocolate (Bolivia)





## Trends

Today, market trends in Europe and the United States of America reveal that consumers appreciate natural, authentic products; goods and services they are able and 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'. As conscientious consumers, they want to buy products that have had little impact on the environment, whose processes respect human rights, and that generate fair benefits for workers at the beginning of the supply chain.

This is one reason behind the growth we are seeing in international markets of sustainable quality products from the Amazon. Numerous international trends underscore the direction that is being taken towards sustainability, including:

- Consumer demand for authenticity in the products they use.
- Increasing global calls to eradicate poverty.
- Increasing pressure to protect and conserve nature.
- New concerns among corporate leaders about the deterioration of natural resources.
- A growing emphasis on transparency throughout the international business world.
- The mounting influence of ideas for corporate social responsibility.
- An increasing number of multinationals and large commercial supermarket chains selling sustainable products in growing numbers.

## A call to action

All of us can contribute to take this further. Entrepreneurs, investors, politicians, civil servants, consumers - all of us have a part to play. And, with renewed focus, you and I can bring about this change.

Let us Amazon our business!



# AMAZON YOUR BUSINESS

*Amazon Your Business* is the first guide to sustainable Amazon products from the forests and rivers in all the Amazon countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname. Ministers of Amazon countries, local villagers, entrepreneurs, consultants, leaders of international organisations and NGOs share their views and experiences of the development and marketing of sustainable products and payments for environmental services in the Amazon.

***Make money with sustainable products from the Amazon. Consumers want them. At the same time you contribute to the protection of the Amazon and you increase the income of local people in the forest. This is an offer you cannot refuse***

### Amazon Your Business side event at COP-9

22 May 2008, 6.15pm\*

hosted by Meindert Brouwer Communications

DISCOVER many sustainable Amazon products

TASTE and ENJOY wild chocolate from the jungle in Bolivia and Açai energy drinks from Brazil

MEET Amazon experts

\* Tentative, see final list of side events nearer the date

*Meindert Brouwer is an independent communication consultant from the Netherlands. He specializes in developing and implementing communication and marketing concepts for nature conservation, sustainable development and development cooperation. He started his career as a freelance journalist and has been employed by KPMG and WWF among others.*

*Amazon Your Business is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch.*

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