

Producing in the forest increases conservation opportunities

Forest conservation initiatives make it possible to generate jobs, income and fair trade in social and biodiversity chains



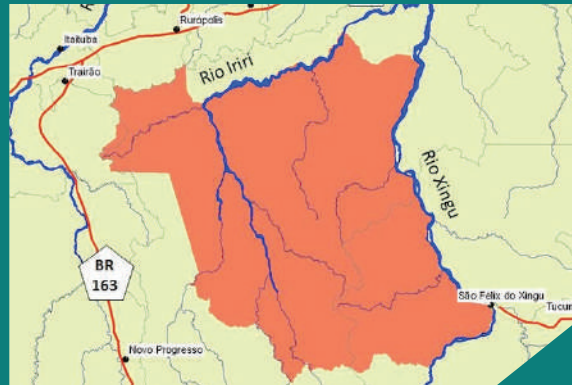
Located between the Xingu, Iriri and Tapajós rivers, Terra do Meio is one of the largest preserved areas of the Amazon Forest. This cradle of biodiversity in Pará is home to conservation units, extractive reserves, ecological stations, Xingu Indigenous Park, and traditional and riverside peoples who are preserving knowledge, cultures and ancestry. Over the course of 10 years, several initiatives supported by Fundo Vale have combined conservation and environmental preservation strategies with the region's economic vocations, involving local production and marketing processes, giving extractive, agricultural and beneficiary communities not only a living, but a good quality of life, while forming "organic barriers" to uncontrolled exploitation.

Due to the wealth of natural resources it contains, Terra do Meio is subjected to intense economic pressure and constant threats of deforestation, land grabbing, mining, illegal logging and extensive livestock ranching. In the past, the region has experienced conflicts between preservation and development – a false dilemma that culminates not only in degradation, but also in violence against the peoples of the forest and defenders of human rights and the environment.

Since indigenous lands were demarcated and the Mosaic of Conservation Units was established in the 2000s, it has been possible for local communities to experience fairer and greener ways of life. Fundo Vale believes that the Xingu Corridor has an array of opportunities for transformation and the promotion of social-impact businesses, without the need to weaken preservation and conservation practices.

Terra do Meio

- Located between the Xingu, Iriiri and Tapajós rivers
- More than 8 million hectares
- Home to many animal species, such as jaguars, alligators, monkeys and anteaters
- The biggest remaining stocks of mahogany are found in this region and adjacent indigenous lands.
- Around 20,000 people in 125 communities live in the rural area of Porto de Móz, on the right bank of the Xingu, living off hunting, fishing, family farming, and the extraction and sale of forest products.



Fonte: NEPO/Unicamp

From conservation strategies to the development of production chains

Fundo Vale has invested in Terra do Meio since 2010, the year when it began operating, as Fundo Vale has also worked to strengthen local leaders and organizations through training, recognition and payments for regional social and environmental services, promoting resilience in light of economic and political conditions.

From this medium to long-term investment, different proposals have emerged with a similar focus: fostering a multi-product chain, overcoming distribution barriers, and enabling access to fair markets and forms of commercialization. Among the projects implemented, and which continue to be a source of income generation for communities in Terra do Meio and the surrounding areas, we wish to highlight three cases: the structuring of the Xingu Seed Network, the Warehouse Network, and Origins of Brazil Certification. These initiatives were run in partnership with the Social and Environmental Institute (ISA) and the Institute for Forest and Agricultural Management and Certification (Imaflora).

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Xingu Seed Network



Baru, ipe, copaiba, angelim-de-saia, cumaru and mamoninhas – these are some of the seeds mapped and collected in large quantities by the collectors of the Xingu Seed Network, made up of men, women and young people who live in indigenous villages, agrarian reform settlements, quilombos, villages and towns in Mato Grosso and Pará. They barter and take orders for the seeds of trees and other native plants in the Xingu, Araguaia and Teles Pires regions. Researchers, government bodies and civil society organizations are also part of the network.

The project arose in 2007 to meet two needs. On the one hand, farmers and landowners, faced with the risk of seeing their springs dry up, needed good quality seeds to reforest water sources. On the other hand, communities had precious knowledge that was ready to be converted into income for families.

ISA's role was to promote and advise the initiative, organizing the network of collectors, which has existed for 13 years, helping to prepare the business plan and then setting it up legally. The Xingu Seed Network, supported by Fundo Vale, has been operating autonomously since 2014 as a social enterprise.

The project represents a strong contribution to the region's environmental restoration and to the supply of work and income alternatives involving the provision of ecosystem services directly linked to the containment of climate change.

“ISA was one of Fundo Vale's first partner organizations. For a long time, our initiatives have addressed different dimensions, through broad-based projects, and it was very strategic to obtain support in this area. It is important to find stakeholders that believe in long-term, major investments, to turn things around and reach a level beyond the scope of individual projects, delivering wider-ranging changes, which is what we believe in.”

Rodrigo Junqueira
Executive secretary, ISA

- 560 collectors working to collect and sow seeds
- 23 Brazilian municipalities, including 21 in Mato Grosso and two in Pará (Altamira and Brasil Novo)

- R\$4 million of income generated
- 245 metric tons of seeds
- 200 native species

Warehouse Network

Selling their products at a fair price has always been a challenge for communities. In the past, the only way to sell their output was through middlemen. In 2011, commercial warehouses and babassu, nut and rubber processing plants began to be structured in Riozinho do Anfrísio Extractive Reserve, and then in the Iriri and Xingu extractive reserves. Called Terra do Meio Warehouses, these commercial facilities provide a link between large buyers and communities. Contracts, volumes and prices are defined at annual meetings with riverside dwellers and native peoples in a completely transparent way.



The administrator of each warehouse is chosen by the community. Organizations such as Fundo Vale were instrumental in ISA's structuring of this network, providing technical advice, training and working capital so that the warehouses could pay for families' output, in cash or with other items. In addition to natural products, oils, seeds and flour produced from chestnuts, babassu and copaiba, and other products involving social and biodiversity, many of which are certified, are sold.

The warehouses also help strengthen the community. They disseminate information on land management, including monitoring of protected areas, and education and health initiatives. "The Warehouse Network combines philanthropy with social enterprise, generating major impacts. It creates demand-driven institutions. It has worked because it respects how families act socially and economically in the region, not because of what white people in the city think they have to change," says Rodrigo Junqueira. "The Amazon has some special characteristics and we have to measure the success of these initiatives using other metrics. The next step is to understand how the positive externalities generated can be computed in the prices of products, made by people who provide enormous social and environmental services for everyone," he adds. The Warehouse Network also has its own brand, "Vem do Xingu."

- **27 warehouses in indigenous lands and extractive reserves**

- **8 multi-product mini-processing plants**

- **44 storage rooms**

- **9 rubber storage rooms and 153 rubber-tapping roads reopened**

- **R\$3.75 million of products sold between 2009 and 2018**

- **7 contracts signed with companies**

Origins Brazil Certification


As well as bringing the Xingu region's products to the shelves in large cities, it is important to make it clear to consumers and society which items are from a sustainable source, upholding fair trade and promoting the "standing forest economy." A certification scheme was the natural way to generate identification, as well as traceability, guaranteed origin, chain transparency and accessible information. Consumers merely have to point their phone's camera at a QR code.



Conceived by ISA and Imaflora, with support from Fundo Vale, the “Origens do Brasil®” (“Origins of Brazil”) certification meets the needs of the traditional peoples of the Amazon, NGOs and companies involved in social and biodiversity production chains to transmit their values.

The Origens do Brasil® network’s governance is collective. Producers collaboratively add information to the platform, such as production locations and volumes, marketing information and indicators that help manage the risks of the production chain and provide transparency for those who buy the products. By accessing the QR code, everyone can see that the social business network identified by the certification forms corridors in protected areas, and that the social and cultural heritage of traditional, indigenous, riverside and quilombola peoples is also preserved. In addition to Terra do Meio, there are regional management committees for tracking products in northern Pará and in the Rio Negro region.

In 2019, the initiative received a United Nations International Innovation Award for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, recognizing innovations in transforming food systems, reducing global hunger and promoting food security through family farming.



“Fundo Vale has been a very important partner for Imaflora. We received support and had the freedom to prototype and test ideas. The project turned out to be viable and later we were again supported through a pilot test. Origens do Brasil® was born in this way and it later won a United Nations award. The Amazon Fund accelerated the cycle and showed the importance and complementarity of different profiles of financiers in the different phases of a project. This financing flexibility that we had at the beginning was fundamental in bringing about solutions and innovations that are being applied today on a large scale to strengthen and expand the standing forest economy in the Amazon.”

Patricia Cota Gomes

Coordinator of Origens do Brasil® and deputy executive secretary of Imaflora