



CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program Sustainable Cacao Production and Biodiversity Protection



Humane Society International (HSI)

HSI has been conducting projects under the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation Program in Central America and the Dominican Republic for over eight years. HSI's projects seek to engage many different stakeholders in a collaborative effort to improve animal welfare, conserve natural resources and increase livelihoods. HSI recently wrapped up a program in Costa Rica and Nicaragua that successfully blended all three elements: the Sustainable Cacao Production and Biodiversity Protection program.

Increase productivity and improve quality of cacao

Working with two cooperatives in Costa Rica (APPTA) and Nicaragua (PAC), HSI directly reached 450 small-scale producers with the cacao program. By employing better techniques for growing, harvesting and fermenting cacao, learned in HSI's workshops, producers saw their cacao yields increase from 80-188%, and the majority of producers were able to sell their cacao at increased prices ranging from 25-35% more than in prior years.



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Improve the quality and genetics of cacao trees

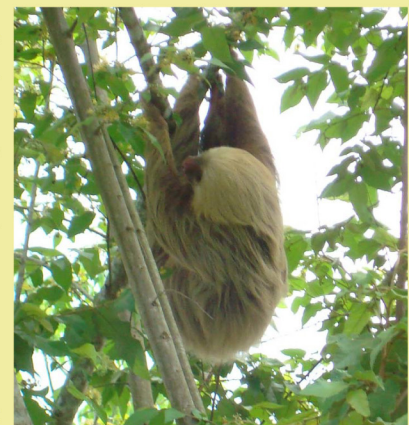
The long term productivity of the farms depends upon the strength of the cacao trees. To that end, HSI led micro-grafting workshops to teach the techniques used to combine plants to make healthier trees, genetically enhanced to be disease-resistant. HSI distributed over 30,000 micro-grafted trees over the course of the program, which will ensure sustainability of cacao producers and the cooperatives.

Prepare producers and their farms to begin an environmentally-friendly certification process

By the end of the program, 400 producers had completed the organic certification process. This included intensive training and infrastructure development, as well as the development of educational materials to aid producers in the future.

Protect existing wildlife and improve their habitat

Cacao farms in these cooperatives exist as part of the forests around them, and play hosts to animals such as toucans, howler monkeys and sloths. The producers and their families are their guardians. HSI created an environmental education curriculum for the schools attended by these children, training over 70 teachers and 3,300 schoolchildren. HSI also donated fruit trees to the farm to provide alternative food sources for all the animals living on the farms.



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Improve cooperative management

The cooperatives received training and equipment to grow their businesses, and made contacts with twenty-six international companies at industry fairs in the U.S. and Europe, in order to get the most competitive prices for their newly-certified cacao.