

# WE ARE THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE



*The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices, and consumer behavior.*

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## A MILESTONE YEAR

**We knew at the outset that 2017 would be a milestone year.** After all, it was our 30th anniversary—an opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished over a remarkable three-decade span and inspire our partners and staff as we greet new challenges and opportunities ahead.

But 2017 turned out to be more momentous than we'd imagined: In June, the Rainforest Alliance leadership signed a letter of intent to merge with UTZ, a Netherlands-based international program and label for sustainable farming. We officially completed the merger at the beginning of 2018.

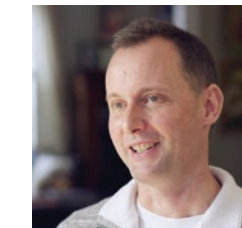
We initiated this unprecedented merger to scale up and accelerate our efforts to address today's most urgent challenges: climate change, deforestation, food insecurity, and social inequity. While both the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ have already driven significant transformations across commodity sectors and landscapes, the imperative to evolve, innovate, and scale up is clear. Together, we will be in a far stronger position to rejuvenate agricultural landscapes and conserve forests; foster sustainable livelihoods and build climate resilience across vulnerable regions; and transform business practices, drive supply-chain innovation, and engage consumers in positive change.

From Guatemala and Ghana, to Indonesia and beyond, we will carry out this work in the world's major forest frontiers and production

landscapes. The merger will directly affect our sustainable agriculture work—by creating a stronger, more impactful sustainability certification system—and it will ultimately strengthen the Rainforest Alliance's mission delivery in vulnerable regions and production landscapes globally.

At the heart of everything we do is our commitment to the farmers, workers, forest communities, and indigenous people we're working with to build a more sustainable future. They are the life force of our mission.

In the following pages, you will meet some members of our family and learn about their incredible achievements over the past year. They, along with the rest of us in the Rainforest Alliance family, thank you for being such an invaluable part of our alliance. Your dedication, partnership, guidance, and generous support are vital to improving our work on the ground. We look forward to our continued collaboration.



*Nigel Sizer*  
**Nigel Sizer**  
*President\**



*Daniel R. Katz*  
**Daniel R. Katz**  
*Board Chair*

*\*Nigel Sizer transitioned to his new role as Chief Program Officer in January 2018, upon completion of our merger with UTZ.*



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW CEO

Upon completion of the merger in January 2018, **Han de Groot**, the former executive director of UTZ, became CEO of the new Rainforest Alliance. Han has dedicated his career to sustainable development, overseeing the rapid growth of UTZ since 2010, leading Oxfam Novib's work in Eastern and Southern Africa, and working for the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. He is now based in the New York office.

# WE ARE THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

*Our alliance reaches far and wide across the globe. In the following pages, we profile members of our extended family who bring our mission to life in critical tropical hot spots. Their work to transform agriculture and conserve high-value forests delivers tangible climate benefits to the rest of the world.*



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# REIKO ENOMOTO

*Our globe-trotting training manager brings an artist's approach to sustainability education.*



Worldwide



**After traveling by plane, 4x4, boat, and foot** for three days to reach a remote cocoa-farming village in Madagascar, Rainforest Alliance agricultural trainer Reiko Enomoto pondered the puzzle she must consider at the outset of every project: how to teach farmers about the complexities of sustainable farming in an engaging, memorable way. She learned that most of the farmers in this particular village were completely illiterate, and the area is so remote that she wanted to leave behind a solid, non-textual training tool to be used in subsequent years. Her “aha” moment came when she learned that the village leader turns on a generator every Saturday night to power the community’s single television for its regular village movie night.

Reiko quickly enlisted the help of the villagers to produce a Rainforest Alliance movie series, devoting each of its 16 episodes to one aspect of the sustainability standard used for Rainforest Alliance certification. Reiko

took charge of the videography and invited our Madagascar national coordinator, who speaks both Malagasy and French, to direct the farmers-turned-actors. The team completed shooting and editing in just two weeks and premiered the first episode at the weekly movie night to great excitement—including plenty of affectionate laughter among villagers upon seeing their fellow farmers in their new, on-screen roles. The weekly movie night was devoted to subsequent episodes over the next few months—reinforcing important sustainability practices, not just to farmers, but also to their wives, children, and neighbors.

This ingenuity is Reiko's hallmark, and it has defined how she has tackled the challenge presented to her when she first joined the Rainforest Alliance staff in 2009: to elevate the quality of our training programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Given the sheer scale of our agriculture work, Reiko has developed an engaging, “no-lecture” training methodology, complete with linguistically and culturally appropriate materials, for other trainers to use across more than 20 countries.

Reiko applies a bespoke approach to every region she visits. She spends the first several days staying with farmers and watching how they work. She consults with local farmers and trainers to decide on suitable, frugal solutions to their challenges (a used chicken cage or an old metal barrel can be repurposed for storage organizers, for example). Once she determines the precise sustainability improvements that are needed in that particular area, she develops a set of visual training materials and interactive methodologies that local trainers and farmers continue to use long after she has gone.

*“If training was as fun as watching a salsa dancer, everyone would watch it. If it was as fun as listening to piano music composed on the spot, no one would fall asleep.”*



The materials she has created over the years are now part of a training toolkit with more than 500 assets, from videos and lively animations, to illustrated posters and guides. And this toolkit continues to grow and adapt to changing times; the most recent addition is an online training course with 21 video sessions in five languages, available for download on our new mobile farmer app. All told, hundreds of thousands of farmers have received Rainforest Alliance training that is based on Reiko's materials and methodology, which boast the flair of this once-professional salsa dancer and piano composer who speaks 11 languages (five of them fluently).

There is a simple, powerful conviction at the heart of Reiko's work: that learning can and should be fun. "If training was as fun as watching a salsa dancer, everyone would watch it," she said. "If it was as fun as listening to piano music composed on the spot, no one would fall asleep."



## EDWIN VÁSQUEZ

*An indigenous leader is forging a new partnership with the Rainforest Alliance to cultivate sustainable forest economies across the Amazon.*



Perú

“As indigenous people, we make use of our natural resources—but we do it sustainably, without laying waste to our Amazon.”



In November 2017, a delegation of indigenous and rural leaders traveled throughout Europe under the banner #GUARDIANSTHEFOREST, meeting with officials, environmental NGOs, and youth groups in several cities. They ended their tour in Bonn, Germany, with a clear message for the world leaders gathered there for the UN climate conference: the leadership of indigenous people is critical to the success of the Paris Climate Agreement.

“As indigenous people, we make use of our natural resources—but we do it sustainably, without laying waste to our Amazon,” said Edwin Vásquez, the general coordinator of COICA\*, a federation of indigenous Amazon communities (and Rainforest Alliance partner) that participated in the bus tour. “For example, we know how to harvest the fruits of plants that grow in the wild—camu-camu, cocoa, Brazil nuts—as well as timber, without disrupting nature’s balance. Indigenous people, or the majority

of them, still live from their culture and their traditions.”

Communities organized around these forest-friendly economic activities have proven to be powerful defenders against the ever-present threats of illegal logging and industrial mining. To this end, COICA and the Rainforest Alliance have entered into a landmark partnership that leverages indigenous expertise and leadership networks to scale up a collaborative model of sustainable economic development that the Rainforest Alliance developed in partnership with forest communities in Guatemala and the Madre de Dios region of the Peruvian Amazon. The efficacy of this model is supported by a scientific study released by RAISG\*\* on the eve of the the November 2017 Bonn Climate Conference. The study analyzes 15 years’ worth of data and concluded that deforestation rates are 80 percent lower in indigenous territories and conservation units than outside those areas.

As indigenous groups across Latin America and Asia regain rights to their ancestral lands, linking their sustainable enterprises to the global marketplace is key, said Edwin, who is a Huitoto from the Loreto region of the Peruvian Amazon. This is one of the principal aims of COICA’s collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance. “Many of our communities don’t have

\* La Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica

\*\* Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socioenvironmental Information, a consortium of civil society groups across the Amazon



adequate information about the market, so they’re easy prey for middlemen—they end up practically giving away their products. But if we have information about markets, not only at the international level but also at the local and national level, that will allow us to circumvent these intermediaries and sell our products directly,” said Edwin.

The Rainforest Alliance has a long track record of success in working with indigenous communities in the Amazon Basin to create sustainable livelihoods. In the Tres Islas community in Perú’s Madre de Dios region, for example, support from the Rainforest Alliance led to a 480 percent increase in per-board foot income

for sustainably harvested timber sold there; a three-fold increase in the price that Brazil nut harvesters receive from their buyer; the launch of the community’s own brand of gourmet Brazil nut products; and access to financing for sustainability improvements. These impacts have all contributed to a marked decline in deforestation in Tres Islas, an area that had previously suffered one of the highest rates in the Amazon.

Roberto Espinoza of AIDSESP, Perú’s federation of indigenous people (and a member of COICA), sees the indigenous struggle for self-determination as one that benefits everyone. “The environmental crisis is very grave.

That’s why the indigenous struggle is so important: where there is indigenous resistance, there is resistance in defense of the life of the planet.”

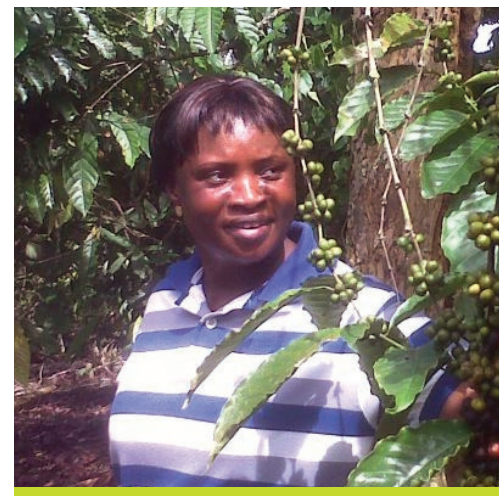
Indeed, cultivating sustainable indigenous economies creates benefits far beyond the Amazon, said Edwin. “What we’re proposing as an indigenous network is that we are able to live as we’ve always lived—from our traditions—and that we can create an indigenous economy, living sustainably from our land, as we always have—not just for our survival, but for everyone’s.”



Côte d'Ivoire

## MELANIE BAYO

*A sustainable agriculture partner has dedicated her life to improving cocoa farming in a region vulnerable to climate change.*



**In Côte d'Ivoire**, the world's number one cocoa-producing country, the farm-forest boundary is where complex macro- and micro-economic forces collide. While the rush to produce cocoa, an important cash crop that accounts for nearly 30 percent of the country's GDP, has spurred economic growth for a nation recovering from civil war, it has also served as the impetus for deforestation by a thousand small cuts. Among the country's 800,000 cocoa farmers who struggle with drought, changing growing seasons, aging trees, poor soil quality, and pests and diseases, farm expansion is widely seen as the most direct way to increase yields and income. Between 1975 and 2013, Côte d'Ivoire lost 60 percent of its once-dense tropical forests. One study found that in seven of its protected areas, forests have undergone a nearly 90 percent conversion to cocoa.

Agronomist Melanie Bayo has worked at the crossroads of agriculture and deforestation

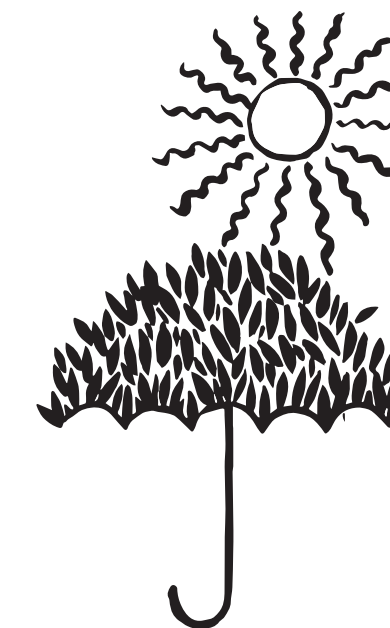
for more than a decade. After several years as the first accredited Sustainable Agriculture Network auditor in the country (and the first accredited woman auditor in all of Africa), she left auditing to concentrate on training farmers and is now a key Rainforest Alliance implementation partner. Today, she conducts climate-smart sustainable agriculture training for cocoa farmers on behalf of the Rainforest Alliance, working with smallholders to boost the resilience and productivity of existing cropland, plant shade trees, and reduce hunting and poaching in the nearby protected national forest. She also manages key Rainforest Alliance landscape-conservation initiatives to improve farmer livelihoods and stop forest encroachment in the Taï National Park region.

A major part of Melanie's job is to design training that changes the core beliefs of farmers vis-à-vis their cultivation methods. And in general, she said, the farmers she has trained have been eager to learn and willing to change. But there are a few points in the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard\* that she had difficulty in conveying at first.

"Some farmers would have timber permits and earn extra money from selling the trees they cut," she said. But Melanie and her team worked hard to show farmers the benefits of standing trees, including higher-quality cocoa, more organic compost, reduced soil erosion, better moisture retention, and a more stable micro-climate. Over the years, the farming

\* Formerly the Sustainable Agriculture Network Standard

*"It's not difficult to bring everyone in the same place for discussion. It's working for sustainability, working for social stability, helping farmers."*



communities Melanie and her team worked with have planted 10,000 shade trees.

Melanie said that farmers also initially resisted the encouragement to stop hunting forest animals to supplement their diets under difficult living conditions—until the ebola crisis flared in neighboring countries. “Once we made the connection between bushmeat and ebola, we had no problems,” Melanie said.

In addition to conducting trainings to farmers all over Côte d’Ivoire, running a sustainable agriculture organization, and raising triplets, Melanie is the founding director of CEFCA\*, the Rainforest Alliance’s key sustainable agriculture partner in West Africa. In that capacity, she served as an important voice in the recent revision of the sustainable agriculture standard used for Rainforest Alliance certification, working with Ivorian farmers, government officials, and other stakeholders to collect feedback and incorporate it into the revision.

Reaching consensus among such a varied group of stakeholders might seem intimidating to some, but Melanie approaches the task with an aplomb perhaps only known to mothers of triplets. “It’s not difficult to bring everyone in the same place for discussion. It’s working for sustainability, working for social stability, helping farmers.”

\* Centre d’Études, Formation, Conseils et Audits



## GIRI KADURUGAMUWA

*Our Sri Lanka field partner is on a relentless mission to stop forest encroachment.*



Sri Lanka





**Sri Lanka, a country devastated by the 2004 tsunami,** has taken significant steps in recent years to fight climate change with sustainable agriculture. In the face of formidable threats—deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution from toxic agrochemicals—the government and private sector have turned to the Rainforest Alliance to help safeguard the future of Ceylon tea, which accounts for 19 percent of the global tea supply. Getting the nation’s 450,000 smallholder tea farmers, who grow 73 percent of the nation’s export crop, to adopt sustainable farming methods is a high priority for the government, conservationists, and industry groups alike.

Training such a vast number of farmers in sustainable farming methods and persuading them to stop using agrochemicals they’ve depended on for decades would seem a formidable mission to even the most seasoned field expert. Yet tea-industry veteran Giri Kadurugamuwa,

who heads the Rainforest Alliance’s ground operations in Sri Lanka, has already trained more than 30,000 tea farmers since 2012; he is quite unfazed by the additional 60,000 smallholder farmers slated for training in the near future.

“I want to get these smallholders to be responsible farmers who do good agricultural practices,” said Giri, whose own organization, the Alliance for Sustainable Land Management, is a valued Rainforest Alliance partner. “In our trainings, we tell farmers that by managing the weeds [with herbicide-free methods], you can greatly reduce pesticide use and increase productivity. They can stop forest encroachment and even expand the forest cover. That’s my goal, and when I see their faces, I am very happy.”

Giri’s approach to training is at once scientifically informed and socially strategic. He laid the foundations for our work in Sri Lanka by first training the managers of successful tea estates in the Adam’s Peak highlands. He converted several managers into true believers who now sing the praises of integrated weed management: improved soil health, drought resistance, higher yields, and cost savings achieved by phasing out chemical herbicides and fertilizers. Those same managers now co-host Giri’s trainings for the smallholder farmers who supply tea to the estates, taking special measures (serving tea with Sri Lankan sweets, for example) to convey to the farmers that they are valued partners.

A natural-born educator, Giri becomes especially animated in the presence of farmers. He commences every training with a brief lecture emphasizing the critical role farmers play in conserving forests and biodiversity. For smallholder trainings, he then presents a plethora

“[Farmers] can stop forest encroachment and even expand the forest cover. That’s my goal, and when I see their faces, I am very happy.”



of positive impact data supporting our sustainability methods—emphasizing the financial benefits of long-term soil health. And then he gets the farmers out into the tea fields for a hands-on, interactive demonstration to show them how to implement the methods.

“My weed-management cost has been cut down drastically, and I have noticed my soil becoming black in the entire estate,” said smallholder farmer Saman Udayakumara, who has applied climate-smart methods from Giri’s training for two years. “This land is very rocky, and there were times we stopped work due to prolonged droughts. Today it’s just the opposite, we were the only estate to continue plucking this year during the drought. We can see healthy tea

bushes now, a better spread of branches, and more crop as a result. I have started educating the adjacent farms in the village. My earnest request is to spread this practice among all the smallholders.”

The urgent threat climate change poses to Sri Lanka’s people is certainly one of Giri’s central motivations. So too, however, is healing the destruction wrought by British colonials upon this once-lushly forested island. In 1984, he enlisted a small group of farmers to dig wide, shallow wells (about 26 ft./8 m in diameter) for each other in his home province of Uva, which has suffered a prolonged and severe water crisis since the British Empire ordered its soldiers to destroy all its reservoirs—as well as chop down

every fruit-bearing tree and kill all men aged 18 and over—in retaliation for the Uva–Wellassa Uprising of 1817–1818. After successfully alleviating the farmers’ water problems with this method, an additional 1,800 wells were created with the support of a government subsidy scheme and international funding.

There is a simple axiom that guides Giri through his professional life and keeps him focused in the face of massive challenges. “We must leave a better world for the future generations to come,” Giri said. “That is the responsibility of every human being.”

## CARMELINA MARTÍNEZ

A young member of a forest community took part in a Rainforest Alliance training initiative designed to reverse the trend of rural-to-urban migration and cultivate the next generation of conservationists.



México



Carmelina Martínez Hernández grew up within a stone's throw of one of the world's most magnificent forests, in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in Campeche, México—a UNESCO World Heritage site. Yet the 18-year-old student knew little about the ecosystem on which her community's economy depended—and little more about the Calakmul *ejido* in which she grew up.

Ejidos, communally owned tracts of land often used for sustainable forestry businesses, are key to forest conservation efforts in southern México. But like Carmelina, most young *ejido* residents lack a solid understanding of their cooperative's inner workings—and more importantly, of the employment opportunities the *ejidos* can offer to the next generation. As a result, young *ejido* residents have been migrating to other parts of the country to seek work, taking with them the youthful energy and innovative spirit needed to maintain and strengthen the forest enterprises that sustain the community.

For the last year Carmelina, along with a core group of 20 young people from local *ejidos*, participated in a Rainforest Alliance education initiative to reverse that trend. They have taken part in more than 200 hours of community forestry workshops, meeting experts in the field and learning about various opportunities—from traditional forestry jobs to potential niche employment in areas that appeal to young adults, like technology and social media.

Carmelina was often first in line to interview experts with her notebook in hand. "I met many, many experts, from engineers to scientists to farmers to beekeepers," she said. "It taught me that we can all be experts—but the most



important thing to know is what path they took in order to get to where they are."

Carmelina and her cohort also visited the field many times, walking through the forest, measuring trees to assess their carbon-capture potential, and conducting scientific studies—calculating the average number of seeds in a mahogany tree, for example, or employing different methodologies for measuring trees. Getting to know these ecologically precious forests was poignant for her. On one excursion, the group spotted a king vulture, an impressively huge bird that can grow to be 32 inches (81 cm) tall. Yet Carmelina said she was even more moved by the mere act of walking through the verdant, hushed forest—a first for her as a town-dweller.

One of the sites Carmelina and her group visited was *Ejido Caoba*, which sustainably manages 167,500 acres (about 67,800 ha) in Quintana Roo. This year, the Rainforest Alliance and local

"I want to know what projects my *ejido* has going, what resources it has, and what I can do for it."





partner UNDP/CONAFOR\* helped facilitate a mahogany sale that changed the ejido's entire economic outlook. We linked the ejido to an international buyer that paid three times what local buyers had been paying per unit. The increased revenue—US \$173,000, a significant bump for a community of this size—motivated the ejido to purchase sorely needed harvesting equipment, marking a major shift to community ownership of the means of production and a self-sustaining business model. The sale has also had a ripple effect throughout the region: nearby ejidos have begun to receive higher prices for their mahogany, all because of the market signal sent by Ejido Caoba's success, and three large ejidos nearby revived their

stalled sustainability certification efforts. Between the three ejidos, almost 234,000 acres (94,600 ha) of forest are now being managed according to the strict conservation regulations of the Forest Stewardship Council.

From a conservation standpoint, well-organized ejidos provide a powerful defense against the pressures that drive deforestation: poverty, ambiguous land rights, and a lack of community engagement. As Ejido Caoba and other groups with whom we work improve their business practices, they strengthen their position as defenders of the forests that are so central to their livelihoods.

To stay strong over the long term, however,

ejidos must engage young people like Carmelina and give them good reasons to stay in their communities. Today, thanks to the Rainforest Alliance's forestry education program, she sees a future for herself in Calakmul. "Because of everything we experienced in this workshop—better said, in this family—I have been able to understand who I am and what I want in the near future," she said. "I want to know what projects my ejido has going, what resources it has, and what I can do for it."

\* United Nations Development Programme/Comisión Nacional Forestal (National Forestry Commission of México)



## NADÈGE NZOYEM

*Our Central Africa manager knows that people are the key to forest conservation.*



Cameroon



#### When Nadège Nzoyem was a little girl

growing up in western Cameroon, she loved listening to her uncle, a renowned forest engineer and agronomy teacher who regaled her with stories from the field. When it came time for Nadège to choose a career path for herself, she had little doubt about what she wanted to do—even though forestry was, and still is, a male-dominated field. “I want to be like you,” she told her uncle.

Today, Nadège is a nationally recognized expert in community forestry who currently oversees the Rainforest Alliance’s work with rural communities in Central Africa. In Cameroon, she has strengthened conservation efforts across 12 community forests that cover about 74,000 acres (30,000 ha) and are home to some 10,000 people. Over the past five years, as these communities have taken control of forest harvesting, they have doubled their timber income.

Those who know Nadège say that one of her greatest strengths is her keen understanding of

the human side of conservation. She knows that in order to conserve the ecologically precious forests of the Congo Basin—a still largely intact expanse of tropical rainforest second only to the Amazon in size—people in the region must be able to earn a decent living through sustainable activities. That can be a complex undertaking.

“Communities here often depend on more than one commodity or sector for their survival,” she says. “In Cameroon, for example, they extract timber, cultivate cocoa and other crops, and harvest non-timber forest products, such as nuts and seeds.” That’s why Nadège works to share both farming and forestry strategies that boost the villagers’ earning potential and climate resilience while protecting forests, wildlife, waterways, and soils.

The Rainforest Alliance developed this integrated conservation approach in collaboration with



## Nzoyem’s strength is understanding the human side of conservation—rural people must be able to earn a decent living through sustainable activities.

forest communities across the tropics—always with a focus on improving sustainable economic opportunities that incentivize natural resource conservation. It’s a remarkably successful model: In the forest concessions of Guatemala’s Maya Biosphere Reserve, for example, communities we have been working with for 20 years have built thriving forest-based economies—and as a result, the deforestation rate has plummeted to nearly zero.

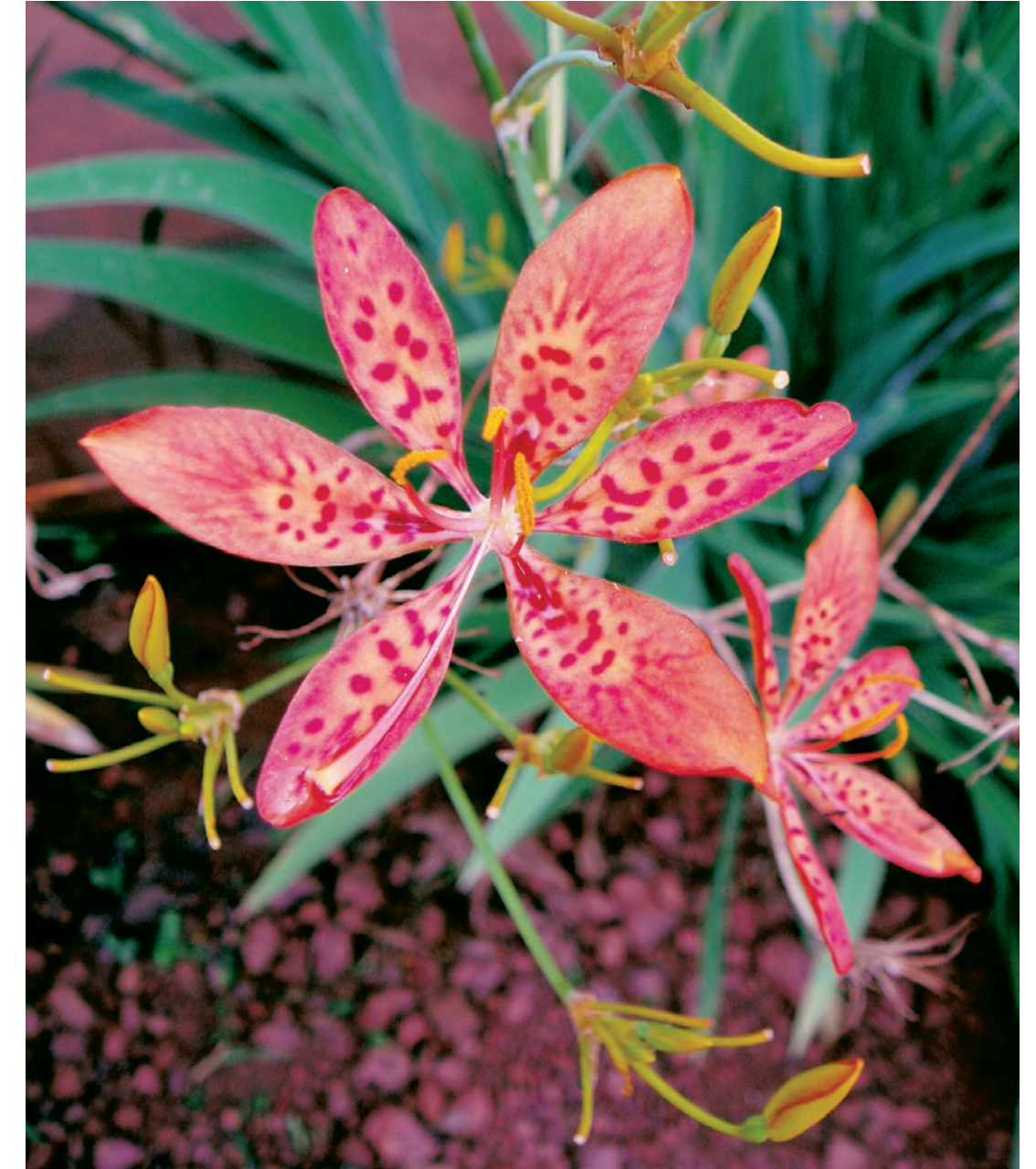
In Cameroon, thanks in large part to Nadège’s leadership, forest communities are reaping financial rewards from this approach, too. The Rainforest Alliance focuses on two clusters of community forests that border protected areas in the country’s southern region—one that’s adjacent to the Campo Ma’an National Park and another that’s near the Dja Biosphere Reserve. In the Dja, Nadège recently held trainings for young people

in eight community forests on sustainable timber harvesting and mobile sawmilling—activities that help keep profits in the communities and reinforce the value of healthy forests.

Nadège has a special passion for empowering women. She organized a training for women from five different communities so that they could learn to process the fruit of the njangsang tree, as well as maintain the machines that extract its seeds, which are widely used in cooking. Proper upkeep of the equipment leads to better and more efficient extraction of the seeds, which can then be sold locally, giving the women a measure of economic independence.

Corinne Moser, the Rainforest Alliance’s senior manager for the region, said Nadège has earned a sterling reputation in the forest communities for her work ethic and integrity. “They respect her because she keeps her word. People know that a commitment by Nadège is followed by action.”

Nadège spends a good portion of her time in the office, but she loves going out into the field—even when it means dealing with a skeptical man. She recounted one forestry training in which “one man became irritated, saying that he already knew how to fell a tree,” she recalled. “But after the training was over, he thanked us. ‘I thought I knew everything,’ he said, ‘But now I see that things are changing, and we can always learn something new.’” Nadège was delighted that he came around. She added with a laugh, “I was also glad I didn’t spend four hours traveling there for nothing!”

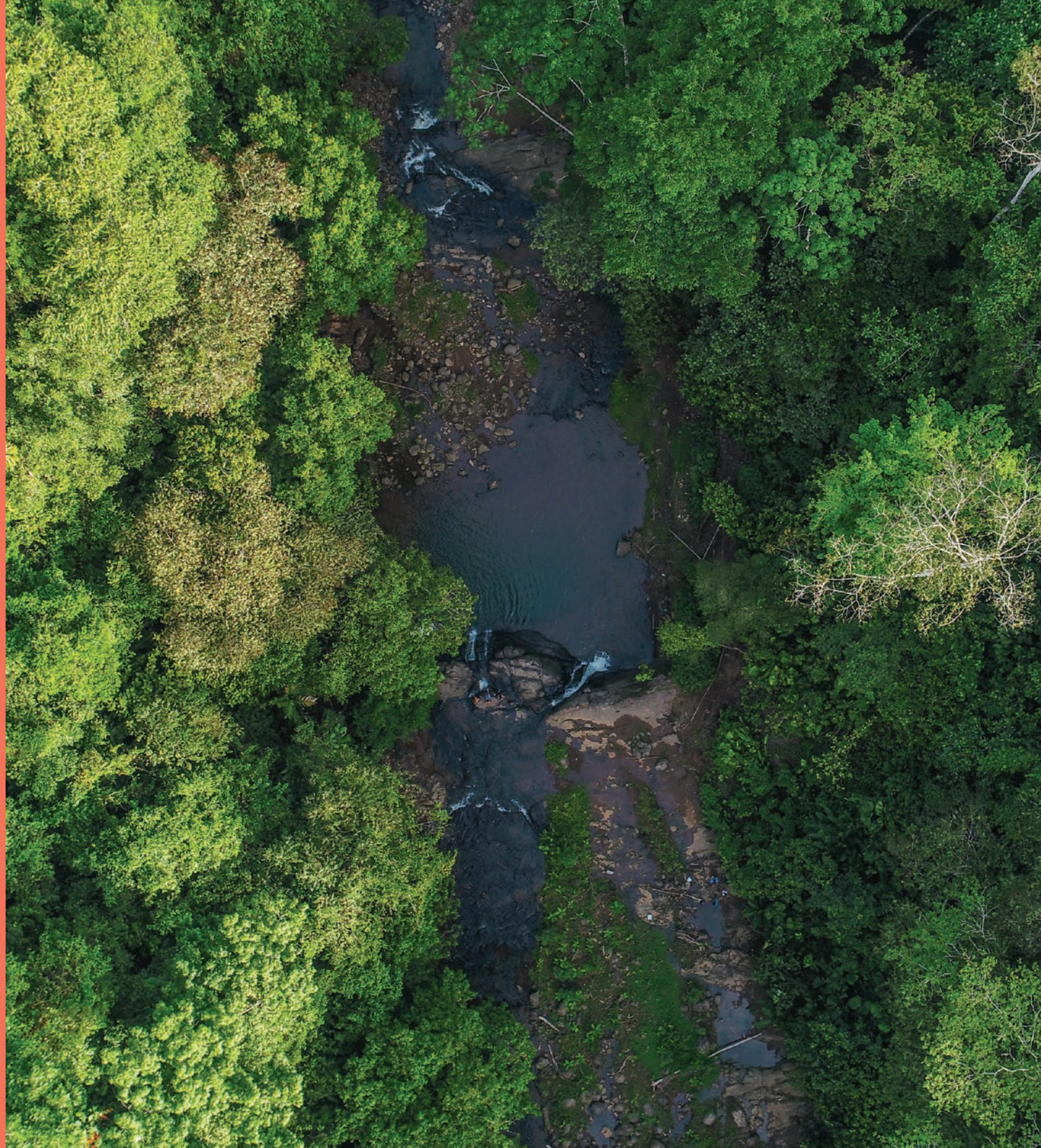


# ÁLVARO ALVARADO

*A farm manager ditched the American dream for a wildly successful conservation experiment.*



Costa Rica



**Twenty years ago**, Álvaro Alvarado Montealto left his hometown in Rivas, Nicaragua, where he had just finished serving as mayor, to chase the American dream. On his way to the United States, he went to visit his relatives in Bribri, the capital city of Talamanca canton in Costa Rica, near the Panamá border. The region is home to Costa Rica’s largest population of indigenous people and some of its most important forests.

Álvaro never made it to the United States. In fact, he never left Bribri.

On his uncle’s recommendation, he visited the local banana farm, Platanera Río Sixaola—one of the first two Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farms in the world—and immediately secured a job as a field worker. “I found a home here,” he said, surveying the verdant expanse nestled between the Gandoca Manzanillo Refuge, which contains the only intact mangrove swamp on

the Atlantic coast, and La Amistad International Park, a World Heritage site that protects the largest area of undisturbed highland watersheds and forests in southern Central America.

“I loved the place and loved what the farm was doing,” said Álvaro. He dedicated his life to his new home, working his way up from the field to become the sustainability manager at the 680-acre (275 ha) Platanera Río Sixaola. The farm, founded by German immigrant Volker Ribniger in 1989, has become an internationally renowned model of sustainability.

“We are located in a privileged place, so we are doing everything we can to conserve it for future generations. That means that our main business here isn’t growing bananas; our main business is producing biodiversity, fresh air, and stronger soils,” said Álvaro, 53. With the energy of a teenager and the encyclopedic knowledge of a scientist, he explained the farm’s exhaustive sustainability practices to protect soil health, local waterways, and wildlife.

Field workers employ selective manual weeding, rather than using toxic herbicides, allowing ground cover to nourish the soil and help it retain moisture. “Soils love the ground cover. You can find much life in here,” said Álvaro, sinking his hands into the dirt to expose the many insects underneath. “Soils are the main assets we have as farmers, and we can’t afford to destroy them.” The farm even produces its own organic bio-ferments and vermicompost.

Álvaro’s pride and joy: the 30,000 native trees planted throughout the farm, among the banana plants. Río Sixaola is already 100 percent carbon-neutral, and its staff is now building

**“Our main business here isn’t growing bananas; our main business is producing biodiversity, fresh air, and stronger soils.”**





a huge biological corridor to connect the plantation with its 230-acre (93 ha) secondary forests. In addition, a melina wood forest provides wood for shipping pallets, and forest buffer zones protect local waterways and neighboring forests. The goal is to have a total of 70,000 trees that provide refuge and food to local fauna, including 72 different native and endangered animal species he monitors with hidden cameras.

Álvaro rattled off a dizzying list of conservation projects he supervises with his infectious enthusiasm: bat “hotels,” the solar energy that powers 100 percent of farm operations, biodegradable bags to cover the banana bunches, a natural pesticide made with chili and garlic to replace chemical pesticides on all but the most badly infected plants, a water-monitoring project for local streams, an environmental education program at the local school, an apiary, and a biotech laboratory to grow beneficial fungi and nitrogen-fixing bacteria for the crops.

“We want to show the world that you can grow bananas while conserving and even restoring forests. And you can also take care of your workers, your community, your people. It costs us a lot of money but buyers and consumers know what they are getting and supporting when buying our bananas,” he said.



## FRANSISKA DEWI

*As our Indonesia field coordinator trains farmers in climate resilience, she studies the way they live in harmony with nature.*



Sulawesi, Indonesia

“I moved from Bali to Sulawesi to do this job, and I basically give my life to it. But it doesn’t feel like work because I love what I’m doing.”

Ever since she was a teenager, Gusti Ayu Fransiska Dewi has been singularly focused on climate change resilience and environmental health. She won a spot to study environmental issues with an NGO in her native Bali, Indonesia, and went on to obtain a bachelor’s degree in environmental science and an M.A. in environmental and community land planning at the State University of New York, Syracuse. But even with years of rigorous study under her belt, Fransiska said she has learned the most from the cocoa farmers she works with as a Rainforest Alliance field coordinator in Sulawesi, Indonesia.

“They are a living example of how to help both the Earth and the community. I truly learn so much from them,” she said. “They take only what they need, rather than pushing to achieve optimum production at the expense of local ecosystems. It’s an indigenous way of thinking.”

As a field coordinator focused on climate, Fransiska trains the cocoa farmers in climate-smart agricultural methods that build their farms’ resilience to drought, shorter rainy seasons, and severe weather events.



Studies suggest that Indonesia’s climate, which has already warmed significantly, will continue to become more extreme in the coming years—with water shortages likely to affect South Sulawesi (a province of the island of Sulawesi, where Fransiska often works). Drought can weaken cocoa trees, thereby making them susceptible to pests and diseases that are already affecting new regions as global temperatures climb. Farming techniques that work in harmony with nature are especially critical on the southern tip of Sulawesi, one of the Earth’s biodiversity hotspots—and that is why the Rainforest Alliance is doing intensive climate resilience training in the region.

The Rainforest Alliance has been working in Indonesia since the late 1990s, first through forestry certification (assisting large-scale industrial firms to make their timber harvesting practices more sustainable), and more recently, in agriculture, one of the primary drivers of deforestation in the region. Over the past several

years, we have expanded our work in Southeast Asia in response to urgent conservation challenges.

Today 457,000 acres (185,000 ha) of farmland across the region are currently Rainforest Alliance Certified™, with 75 percent of that land managed by smallholders. That makes training in best agricultural practices vitally important. As part of the project that Fransiska leads, cocoa farmers learn that commonly used synthetic fertilizers contribute to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change; as an alternative, they use organic farm waste for composting. Likewise, they use mahogany leaves and other medicinal forest plants to naturally combat pests and diseases. Other climate-smart strategies include planting cover crops to help improve soil health and retain moisture, as well as digging trenches to funnel away excess rainwater.

While Fransiska is extremely serious about sharing climate resilience techniques, she characterizes her interactions with farmers and their families as joyful. “We always have a lot of laughs because of our misunderstandings—there are a lot of differences in languages and customs across Indonesia. And many farmers love to sing! It’s so fun to listen to them.” Families often invite her to stay with them at the end of a long work day. “They treat me as a daughter, which I find flattering.”

It’s all-consuming work, but Fransiska doesn’t mind. “I moved from Bali to Sulawesi to do this job,” Fransiska said, “And I basically give my life to it. But it doesn’t feel like work because I love what I’m doing.”



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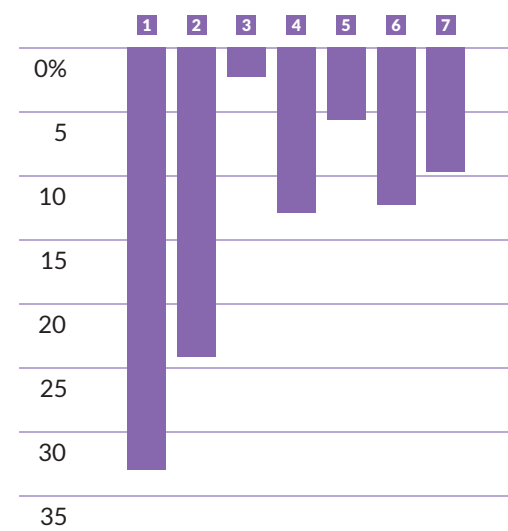
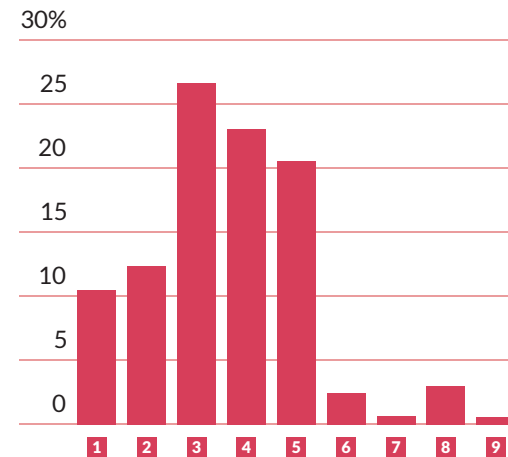
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3 Government Grants & Contracts	10,760,400	11,935,089
4 Certification Fees	9,309,778	9,977,677
5 Participation Agreement Revenue	8,305,692	8,334,894
6 Special Events – Net	1,022,887	932,611
7 Investment Income	279,980	90,194
8 In-Kind Contributions	1,197,827	1,183,981
9 Other	229,925	320,529

**Total Revenue & Support** **\$40,343,043** **\$40,091,860**

## EXPENSES

1 Landscapes & Livelihoods	\$13,567,553	\$14,921,531
2 RA-Cert	9,949,947	10,899,976
3 Evaluation & Research	941,868	861,274
4 Markets Transformation	5,322,667	5,594,132
5 Communications	2,331,923	3,182,597

**Total Program Services** **\$32,113,958** **\$35,459,510**

6 Management & General	5,057,423	4,289,718
7 Fundraising	3,994,906	5,105,142

**Total Expenses** **\$41,166,287** **\$44,854,370**

## ASSETS

<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>(\$823,244)</b>	<b>(\$4,762,510)</b>
<b>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$8,172,242</b>	<b>\$12,934,752</b>
<b>Net Assets, End of Year</b>	<b>\$7,348,998</b>	<b>\$8,172,242</b>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*The Ambassadors Circle develops relationships with talented individuals from many industries who can actively support the Rainforest Alliance's mission in unique ways.*

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