

Private Business Action for Biodiversity

Good agricultural, collection and sourcing practices for the Brazilian carnauba sector

Situation

The Caatinga biome, located in northeastern Brazil, is home to a unique flora and fauna characterizing seasonally dry tropical forests. One distinctive plant found there, is the carnauba palm tree, which produces a natural wax found in food, cosmetics, polishing or other industrial or consumer goods.

Environmental and social challenges have come to light in some of the carnauba wax extraction areas in northeast Brazil, including degradation of local biodiversity, deforestation (of the native carnauba palm trees), persistent drought, rapid expansion of invasive species, as well as poor working conditions and low pay.

Objective

The “Private Business Action for Biodiversity” project pursues to identify and analyse promising mechanisms and instruments for promoting biodiversity-friendly production and commercialization and to test pilot approaches in three partner countries – Brazil, India and Mexico. The project aims to learn from the pilot implementation to further develop the mechanism and instruments where required and to systematize the experiences gained in a way that enables both the private and public actors to use them. The results will be discussed on the national and international level.

In Brazil, the project supports the adaptation of internationally recognized biodiversity standards for the carnauba

sector and the development of Good Agricultural and Collection Practices with the objective to ensure a more responsible production that respects people’s rights and preserves biodiversity.

Biodiversity is the diversity of life, comprising the wealth of species, genes and ecosystems on Earth. It provides the basis for functioning ecosystems, which in turn deliver services such as fertile soils, clear water, pollination or climate regulation. The loss of biodiversity is progressing faster than ever before, and it is increasingly jeopardizing human livelihoods. Businesses can play an important role in combatting the causes of biodiversity loss and a promising approach is to promote biodiversity-friendly production and commercialization.

Approach

The project has helped to establish the initiative “Sustainable livelihoods, Carnauba production and preservation of biodiversity in northeast Brazil”, or in short “*Initiative for Responsible Carnauba*” to complement existing efforts of the Brazilian Government (Environmental Ministry, Labour Ministry), and the Sustainable Carnauba project by the Brazilian wax industry and the NGO Associação Caatinga. Our initiative supports the efforts of local groups by catalysing engagement among buying companies of high quality Carnauba grades in Europe and elsewhere.

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Find out more about the Responsible Carnauba Initiative, plus the updated members list on: www.ethicalbiotrade.org/initiative-for-responsible-carnauba

To date, we have developed an action plan focusing on good harvesting practices, traceability and transparency of Carnauba wax origins, and shared learning and training. We will test new approaches first, and then implement particularly promising ones. We plan to involve as many suppliers and industry players as possible, as well as social interest groups. This includes wax processors in Brazil, and other important players who affect working conditions.

As part of the initiative, the Private Business Action for Biodiversity project supports the local NGO Associação Caatinga in developing a Good Agricultural and Collection Practices Manual for the carnauba sector. Furthermore, we collaborate with UEBT to check whether harvesting conditions of the participating Carnauba wax suppliers comply with the UEBT Ethical BioTrade Stan-

dard. The standard contains principles that address human rights, including all International Labour Organisation (ILO) core conventions (minimum age for work, forced labour, etc.) and also adequate working conditions, as well as other principles such as biodiversity conservation and local economic development.



Contribution to CBD and 2030 Agenda



The project contributes to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 12 to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and SDG 15 to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.

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