

Q1 2020

Alto Mayo Conservation Initiative
Impact Report

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Q1 2020 Summary

Diversification and expansion of green economic development continues to deliver durable conservation and community resilience in the Alto Mayo Protected Forest.

8,000

forest seedlings planted among the protected area

New company engaged to promote dragon fruit under a long-term agreement with producers

6th

organic certification and harvesting loan processes initiated to support Protected Area coffee cooperative for the 2020 coffee season





Nearly 8,000 forest seedlings planted in the Alto Mayo Protected Area

The principal driver of deforestation in the Alto Mayo has been the unsustainable production of coffee by over 1,000 families who illegally settled, mainly in the 1980s, within the project area. The project's principal emphasis has been to engage these families through voluntary conservation agreements, and to provide dedicated training, technical support, and market linkages in order to develop effective ecological farming practices, improve coffee quality and productivity, and significantly increase the income of the families living in and at the edge of the project area.

Implementing shade coffee is a key element of the activities adopted by the subscribers of the conservation agreements. Shade is critical to improving quality coffee, and can generate positive socioeconomic and ecological outcomes when done well, as has been demonstrated in other cloud forest regions of Peru. In Q1, 130 families planted nearly 8,000 forest seedlings to shade their coffee plantations. Species were selected to provide ecological connectivity to the forest, habitat for birds and other species, and those which help produce high quality coffee.

The Association of Andean Ecosystems (ECOAN) is the main implementing partner for most of the project's technical work at field level, and has been a key element of the project's long term success. They led this activity over the past quarter.



Highlights



New company engaged to promote dragon fruit

Traditionally, coffee has been the only legal source of income for settlers in the Alto Mayo; men would often leave the farm for 6 months to seek work elsewhere, with the rest staying to conduct mainly illegal activities in the forest. Then in the 2010s, the coffee disease La Roya devastated much of the coffee crop in the area. This led the project to explore diversification of cropping systems with productive, low maintenance, high value crops suitable for agroforestry systems. Among the diversification options, the project has focused particularly on a local varietal of dragon fruit.

After ECOAN developed a robust method for propagating and cultivating this varietal, the project has distributed planting materials and provided training over the past years, with significant uptake by families in the area. Now the project, in partnership with the Promotion Office for Sustainable Private Investment (OPIPS), has engaged with a new Peruvian enterprise to build long-term agreements with the project's dragon fruit producers, which is anticipated to generate an additional \$200,000 in income for 2020 – a substantial sum for the participating families.

OPIPS is part of the Regional Government of San Martin and was jointly created by Conservation International (CI) and the regional government as part of CI Peru's Sustainable Landscape approach for the wider region. This institutional innovation is one of many examples of how the Alto Mayo REDD+ project has driven a transformation among all stakeholders in the area, bringing the concept of market-driven conservation to life with effective results.



Protected area Cooperative prepares for its 6th organic certification

Another example of institutional innovation is Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples Bosque del Alto Mayo (Coopbam), the cooperative that was established to pool and market the coffee of the farmers within the Alto Mayo Protected Area. The co-op is a key step for ensuring that the high quality, sustainable coffee being produced receives a premium in the market, enabling the farmers of the Alto Mayo to create linkages to specialty markets. Through these specialty markets, farmers receive much higher incomes -- a direct linkage between conservation and prosperity. A total of 463 coffee growers are currently in the cooperative, which is organic- and Fair Trade-certified.

Coopbam is now preparing for its 6th organic certification, and applying for a \$300,000 loan for the 2020 season. Since Coopbam's inception CI has been providing grants and technical assistance to enhance its capacity. Now in 2020, Coopbam is leading the organic certification process on its own, the culmination of these efforts and a key indicator of durable, long term transformation of the livelihoods of the protected area coffee-growing families.





Resilience against COVID

COVID-19 has drastically reduced field activities and, at the same time, is pushing the project to be more creative and innovative.

The team is taking the opportunity presented by the reduced field activity to assess the project's long term environmental and community impact, which is stimulating a robust dialogue around high-priority improvement areas to be addressed as soon as the lockdown is over.

The lockdown is, as with many of Everland's other projects, demonstrating how essential the project is to the community's resilience and well-being. In this case, the project is helping to ensure that health care and food are well-supplied within the protected area, which lacks formal services of any kind because settlement within the protected area is in fact illegal.

In addition, rangers from Peru's National Protected Area Service (SERNANP) are jointly working with the communities to help prevent COVID spread and support vulnerable people. This again highlights the profound institutional transformations that have taken place in the Alto Mayo: Formerly at odds with the community and seen as an enemy of their existence in the protected area, now SERNANP is a crucial supporter of the community, providing key services in support of their health and livelihood.



Challenges



5th verification of the Alto Mayo REDD+ Project

More than ever, financing the management of the protected area is vital for people's health and avoidance of illegal activities. The project expects its 5th verification to be complete in early 2021.

The project is undertaking this verification in order to generate resources to help finance the Protected Area, and to input additional financial resources in support of the project's socioeconomic platform.



Developing new q-graders for the Coopbam Cooperative

“Q-graders” are responsible for helping to quality-grade coffee against the defined standards of the international specialty markets, and providing feedback to coffee growers on how they can improve production and post-harvesting practices to achieve the highest market requirements. Coopbam’s coffee lab and resident Q-grader have had a transformative impact on the protected area cooperative’s ability to produce increasing quantities of high-quality coffee, and obtain greater premiums in the specialty markets.

This program has helped to substantially improve management practices, increase coffee quality, and boost farmer income, and is a less-visible but critical component of the project’s conservation through “green economies” strategy. This is increasingly critical for the project: As climate change puts increasing pressure to take coffee production to highland areas such as the Alto Mayo, strengthening farmer income through high productivity, quality, and specialty markets becomes an essential conservation strategy.

It is expected that high quality / high value coffee niches for Coopbam will grow in future years, and to address this future demand, the project is investing to build Q-grading skills among Co-op members. The project is developing a special coffee cuppers training to identify talent among Coopbam members; selected members will be trained to achieve Q-Grader certification.

This program also illustrates how green economic growth, in this case created by growth in high-quality coffee niche markets, generates new, specialized, high value local job opportunities.



Impact Over Time



Forest Impacts



Deforestation reduced by **75%**

Adoption of ecological farming practices by **1,033** families has eliminated agrochemicals and significantly improved productivity

187 improved cooking stoves have been built, reducing **52%** of firewood use



Impact Over Time

Wildlife Impacts



Stable protection of **1,000 unique species**, including rare birds, amphibians, the giant armadillo, and other endemic plants and animals of global importance

Zero incidents of orchid trafficking registered (2018-19), vs. 120 registered between 2008-18



Impact Over Time

Community Impacts



Conservation agreements signed by **1,033 families** in the protected area

120 formal jobs created by the project (2016-18), with 20 additional jobs created by the protected area coffee cooperative

\$3M in revenue earned by protected area coffee cooperative since 2016



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