



Press Release

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Sugar Cane Producers extend a hand to the environment supported by WWF

Sugar Cane producers from Honduras and WWF, the global conservation organization, have agreed to join efforts in the search of Better Management Practices which will favor, in the long term, their production processes, the nearby communities and the area's natural resources.

La Lima, Cortés, Honduras- December 6th, 2006. The coordination of group work strategies aimed to benefit the environment, the communities, and to develop a sustainable economy is the main goal of officializing the Memo of Understanding, MOU, between WWF and major sugar cane producers.

The Honduran Foundation for Agriculture Research (FHIA) was the meeting point for WWF and AZUNOSA representatives, to officially undertake the task of identifying, reducing and mitigating the environmental impact that the pesticide use has on the Mesoamerican Reef, MAR.

The signing of this MOU, sets the grounds for these associations to consolidate their interest in moving towards the implementation of Better Management Practices. This process will begin by working towards common goals such as: identifying good and bad pesticide use practices, constructing inventories on the types and applications of these substances, and to determine the specific impacts these might have on the interacting elements in sugar cane plantations.

Once the evaluation and identification stage is completed, the organizations will proceed to plan and develop pesticide use reduction strategies and to implement better agricultural methodologies which are more efficient for productivity and environmental protection.

"This agreement is of grand importance for WWF since AZUNOSA is one of the major sugarcane producer within Northern Honduras, who at the end of the program will be implementing Better Management Practices in their plantations and processing plants, this would translate into a great benefit for the Mesoamerican Reef ecoregion and the nearby communities that profit from this activity," said José Vásquez Agriculture Official for WWF Central America.

Joint work with AZUNOSA will be carried out from to two main angles:

1. The execution of a biologic control system for certain pests that affect sugar cane crops.
2. The reduction of pesticide use through the implementation of a pesticide impact monitoring system (PEAS). The use of this system will mean the industry is moving one



step forward towards the standardization of measuring levels, control practices and reduction of the negative effects pesticides may have on the parts involved in the sugar cane production and consumption processes.

AZUNOSA's General Manager, engineer Mario Hernández, said that *“our company, a subsidiary of Cervecería Hondureña S.A., begins this program with a lot of enthusiasm and committed to obtaining results in a short period of time. The most effective and responsible way of doing business is by contributing to the society in which we operate, creating job opportunities, taxes for public services, and protecting the environment. Working with WWF will be a beneficial experience for Honduras and for our region.”*

The MOU is an unrestricted agreement within which each participating organization can work independently or with other related NGOs without contracting any economical obligations. This particular MOU's goal is to strengthen working relations with sugar cane producers in order to preserve the biologic community, to maintain mountain water springs that flow into the reef clean and to coordinate education and conservation activities with neighboring communities.

With support from The Summit Foundation, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The United Nations Foundation (UNF), Crop Life Latin America, and the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), WWF develops the “Better Management Practices (BMP) Program”. The program's objective is to achieve and effective and efficient use of the natural resources from the agriculture industry which includes products such as sugar cane, banana, pineapple, citrus, amongst others, this would result in a positive health change of the MAR.

This initiative is part of the conservation and sustainable development strategies carried out by the ICRAN-Mesoamerican Reef Alliance (ICRAN-MAR), a project aimed at bringing major stakeholders together in reef conservation, engaging them in activities that promote better management of the Mesoamerican Reef around three key components: Watershed Management, Sustainable Fisheries and Sustainable Tourism.

The BMP program includes collective work with transnational companies and smaller producer associations based in the MAR area to search for new useful and cost-effective ways to sustain productivity and reduce any possible negative impacts that the use of pesticides has on their products, plants, water, soil, workers, nearby communities and the environment.

“The social aspect of this project is relevant as well since the most affected populations are plantation's workers and families who live in near communities. If they reduce the use of pesticides they'll be less exposed to these products and consequently, their health effects will be greatly reduced. The reduction of pesticide bioaccumulation in marine species will affect positively their commerce and consumption, and will approach the industry to a responsible and sustainable use of the natural resources”, Vásquez noted.



WWF hopes to include more companies and independent producers in this project; pineapple, Oil palm, and citrus producers from the MAR area are expected to add-on to the initiative and implement Better Management Practices in their production processes soon.

Notes to Editor:

1. The Internacional Coral Reef Action Network Alliance for the Mesoamerican Reef ICRAN (ICRAN-MAR). Aims at minimizing the impacts on the Mesoamerican reef barrier through the adoption of better sustainable practices in specific areas such as tourism, fisheries and watershed management. This initiative, initially designed for three years has a multifaceted focus that recognizes the strong relation between those three components and their impact on the reef's health. Financed by the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the project joins important conservation expert institutions, who coordinate different activities aimed at promoting the creation and strengthening of local capacities, the development of decision making tools, the adoption of better practices and the construction of strategic alliances with private companies."
2. WWF, the global conservation organization. Is one of the largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations in the world. WWF was founded in 1961 and is known by it's Panda logo. WWF is supported by more than 5 million people and it's global network works in more than 100 countries.

To learn more about WWF visit: www.wwfca.org

For more information:

Cinthy Flores Mora

Communications Officer

WWF Central America/ Costa Rica

cflores@wwfca.org

Tel: +506 234 8434