

Friends of the Earth – Brazilian Amazonia

Activity Report - Fiscal Year 2002-2003

September 2003

General Considerations

This activity report covers the fiscal year from September 1, 2002 and August 31, 2003 and is accompanied by the financial report for the same period.

The organization began the fiscal year of 2002-2003 within a strong growth phase, continuing the trend of the last three years. Staff reached 36 persons during the period from September – December 2002. There was also intense involvement in external processes, for example, during the presidential election phase, when two candidates made it to the run-off elections, both repeatedly sought out our organization regarding the formulation of their programs. Press exposure, both regional and national, continues to be significant. The period was characterized by a number of successful, innovative projects, as shall be described below.

During the period, the organization managed to complete an important implementation plan in the area of Information Technology, which entered into its strategic phase from October 2002 to March 2003, and which has radically transformed operations, both in administrative terms as well as regarding information management.

Information and Dialogue in Amazonian Society

This area has remained a trademark of the organization and a singular characteristic of its activities, with broad recognition from decision-makers and substantial liaison with centers for formulation and implementation of public policies, particularly in the Congress and relevant ministries. Special mention goes to the organization's participation in discussions on tax reform and the Multi-Year Plan for investments 2004-2007, through an invitation by the President of the Republic to the organization's director, to sit on two commissions of the Social and Economic Development Council that discussed the issue. Ours was the only presence of environmentalists in these two discussions, fundamental to the nation.

The Amazonia database underwent significant modifications, becoming the largest *online* information source on the region. The *Amazonia* website increased its average number of hits in the first half of the year by roughly 30%, maintaining a volume of some 12,000 individual visits per week, successively. The Debate on Public Policies was enhanced and

reformulated, beginning in March 2003, and is now in its twentieth edition. The Notícias da Amazônia newsletter had a significant increase in circulation, both in the English as well as Portuguese editions.

Moreover, work recommenced on soybean frontier advance in Amazonia, after the study conducted in 1999, making contacts with European importers who shall be the object of further discussion on import criteria in early 2004. Lastly, a study was launched on legislation for forest concessions on public lands, as a means of contributing towards governmental decision-making in this area.

Forest Fire: Chronic Emergency

The major results of the project and lessons learned are documented in a specific publication.

In late 2002, work on pasture management was particularly successful, in terms of participation of farmers in Acre, as well as “firebreaks”, social initiatives in settlements in Pará. Furthermore, agroforestry systems initiatives grew in communities in Mato Grosso, both in the northern and northeastern parts of the state. It must also be mentioned that a number of times the Ministry of the Environment assumed the task of providing institutional follow-up to the project’s methodology, but as yet have failed to take concrete action. Nevertheless, local NGOs and certain local governments did follow-up on similar activities in several regions, creating conditions for future sustainability of the project.

Sustainable Businesses Service Counter

The project began in September 2002, after a long preparation phase and was a follow up to isolated activities conducted during the two years prior to its launch. This has undoubtedly been the major novelty and challenge to the organization this fiscal year; working with new collaborators whose profile it had not previously had experience. The start-up phase of the project was quite difficult, due to its ambitiousness and the major constraints of local stakeholders with whom it intends to interact, both in terms of beneficiaries as well as partners. After redefining procedures – which resulted in it being difficult to find enterprises eligible for support – the project began to ramp up over the last few months of the fiscal year, with interesting perspectives for the year 2003-2004. The enterprise and product database was expanded and updated. Support agreements were put in place with four enterprises, two in the state of Amazonas, one in Acre and one in Rondônia, and the perspective is to enter into four more on the short term, two in Amapá and two in Pará.

Eco-Finances

Over the year, this project undertook some of the most important and significant activities since its creation. A point worthy of mention was the challenging task of training all of the over 800 branches of the Banco Real – ABN Amro in Brazil, an unprecedented development in the relationship between the financial sector and environmentalist organizations throughout the world. Moreover, important training events took place on environmental management in financial institutions, with partnerships with FGV-EASP, ABAMEC, IFC, etc. and on climate change (with the Climate Observatory, an NGO network that the organization helped create and manage). *Meio Circulante* continued in circulation in printed and soft-copy format and the eco-finances website is being updated regularly. A post-graduate course was completed at FGV-EASP and its outputs produced the project for a book to be published in the period, 2003-2004.

Sustainable Consumption of Forest Products

These activities continued throughout the year, both by means of the *Certified Forest Products Buyers Group* as well as joint initiatives within the scope of the *Alliance* with IMAZON and Imaflora.

The Buyers Group held its annual meeting in October 2002, coinciding with its first round of business. Its Board took office in November, which adopted a work plan and sustainability policy for the group. Also, a president and two vice-presidents were elected. The Group participated in several events and maintained collaboration with groups from other countries, through the *Global Forest and Trade Network*.

The Alliance conducted a number of joint initiatives, with special mention to the launching of the book *Acertando o Alvo II (Hitting the Target II)* and a large event in Belém on forest certification in Amazonia. Also, the first certified shop of Latin America was opened in São Paulo.

Radio Amazonia

Installation in the network of rural settlements in northeastern Mato Grosso, one of the largest in existence, was completed in 2002, with 33 stations in three municipalities in the northeast of the state. After the installation, alternatives are under study regarding follow-up or transformation of the project for the year 2003-2004.