

# Cooperativa Chico Mendes Modena

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## Abstract

*The Cooperative "Chico Mendes Modena" is realizing activities in the development cooperation fields, Biological and Fairtrade. Specifically, since 15 years we work in Amazonia, with a Project of "self supporting development" and defense of the environment and biodiversity, in collaboration and coordination with the local populations, producing and exporting together the Amazonian Nuts.*

*Our "Project of Amazonian Nuts" started in the second part of the 80s, as a result of the meeting and the partnership between the "associative and cooperative" realities in the Italian Region Emilia and the Movement of the "People of the Forest," led in that period by the "native" leader Chico Mendes.*

*Chico Mendes organized the natural rubber harvesters (the "seringueiros") that were becoming poor by the damage to the environment and were being forced to leave the natural rubber economy. In the late 1980s the Cooperatives of Extracting Harvesters of Amazonia understood that the only way they could get through this was to turn to the "self supporting" harvest of some other natural products of the forest, the Amazonian Nuts, and fight to create the Natural Forest Reserves in Amazonia.*

## Materials and methods

*The highest plant of the forest, the "Castanheira" (Bertholletia Excelsa) is a "social plant"; it protects the forest, but to keep living it needs the environment where it grows to keep the characteristics of an uncontaminated and intact forest. If somebody cuts or thins out by fire the Amazonian forest, the production of the Nuts suddenly stops, and the plant slowly dies.*

*Amazonian populations, who know it very well, have defended the Amazonian Nut tree for a long time. Protecting those plants, they protect the forest, and as a result can protect themselves, too.*

*The fruit, naturally biological, looks like a coconut with 24 very hard segments inside, each one containing a nourishing and tasty seed with extraordinary nutritional and health characteristics. A nut contains as much as 17% protein, unsaturated lipids, vitamins, and minerals. Moreover, the nuts contain Omega 6 lipids, the Coenzyme Q10, and most importantly Selenium (the Amazonian Nut is really the product has the highest percent of selenium in nature, with a form of the essential "amino acid" that is highly absorbable - the Seleniomethionina. It repairs cell and is considered one of the most effective natural antioxidants).*

## Results and conclusions

*We are present most of the year with our technicians in the harvesting area to support the Amazonian cooperatives in the difficult ways of growing and adapting to the European quality standards. For a few years, only organic Amazonian Nuts brilliantly overcame all of the quality controls for the import into the European Community.*

*We support the harvest season with financial deposits, staff training, and health prevention projects for the peasant families, as well as covering of the costs of organic (according to the IFOAM Norms and Iso 65 CE) and FLO certifications (fair trade).*

*Being that the Amazonian Nut is the only resource of the whole area (60,000 square kilometers, as big as Switzerland!), and that cultivating the Nut provides a unique alternative to deforestation and emigration, the work of the Amazonian Cooperatives (COINACAPA-Bolivia-, CAPEB and CAEX-Brasil) and the trade of organic Amazonian Nuts enables over a thousand families to continue contributing to the preservation of the biggest forest of the world.*