



Rainforestation Farming – A Combination of Climate Protection, Poverty Reduction, and the Conservation of Biodiversity

The Challenge Many parts of the islands in Southeast Asia are characterized by steep mountains. Already 50 or 60 years ago, large areas for example on the Philippines were clear-cut. After this overexploitation, wide coco monocultures were established. But as these trees now gradually lose their crop and the price for coco products has sunk on the global market, the coconut palms are felled. Like this, a big danger of erosion arises, and this danger is further increased by typhoons. These storms occur more and more frequently due to the climate change and are more intense in comparison to the last years. The fragile soil of the slopes which is often only covered with hardgrass gets washed away. There are already many cases in which mud and debris avalanches engulfed complete villages. Thousands of people lost their lives, and land became infertile.

Forest clearance and a lack of erosion control have long-range consequences:

- Great potential for the renaturation and creation of varied secondary forests as green lungs against the climate change remains unused
- Many people lose their home and have to migrate into large cities, where in the majority of cases they are exposed to impoverishment
- Erosion leads to sedimentation in the sensitive coral reefs along the coast which destroys the nursery for many seafish as well as the basis of life of those who depend on fishing. In order to ensure coast dwellers' sustainable fishing also in the future, the erosion-prone slopes have to be stabilised.
- Many endangered plants and animals lose their habitat. Fascinating diversity gets lost.

The Project Environmental precautions together with the people, not against them, are the basis of the Rainforestation Farming. Elements of environmental farming are combined with the use of natural silvicultures, rainforest areas which have been clear-cut are not considered as lost forever, but are seen as an opportunity for secondary nature. But action must be carried out quickly, because the damages due to erosion constantly increase. Therefore, different local and appropriate foreign trees and bushes are planted on formerly clear-cut areas. This mixed cropping includes fruit trees, fiber crops, rattan, and bamboo, depending on the respective area.

- The areas are designed as permanent forests which bind carbon dioxide and thus contribute to climate protection. Through sustainable cultivation, peasants have a regular income.
- Steep slopes are stabilised and endangered species again find a habitat.
- After only a few years the peasants' income is eight or ten times higher than what they have earned with the environmentally unfriendly monocultures.
- The migration into cities is stopped and the people have new perspectives for their future.
- Areas which have been considered irrecoverable turn into green lungs which contribute to climate protection.



Achievements

- Model areas in the Philippines are used for research and education and serve as an impulse for a further diffusion of the Rainforestation Farming.
- On several neighbouring islands, Rainforestation Farming is introduced as a valuable contribution to a sustainable development, too.
- In collaboration with the Visayas State University and the Baybay Rainforestation Foundation, NatureLife-International could train multipliers for the education of rainforest farmers.
- Chances are high to implement the Rainforestation Farming in other regions in southeast Asia, too. There are already first contacts to the region of Yunnan in China.
- With the help of various scholarships, doctoral candidates and diplomats from the Philippines could come to the University of Hohenheim in Germany to learn about the scientific basis of tropical ecology. German students, in return, went to the Philippines to get background knowledge on sustainable development, the protection of biodiversity, and environmentally friendly cultivation.

Literature

Göltenboth, Fr. & Hutter, C.-P. (2004): „New options for land rehabilitation and landscape ecology in Southeast Asia by ‘rainforestation farming’“. in: *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 12 (2004).

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