



Collaborating with 14 communities, in the Siekpai, Cofan, Shuar and Kichwa nations across Amazonian Ecuador, Yakum is working to plant 100,000 trees, during 2022, representing over 150 vital, ancestral fruit, nut, palm, hardwood, medicinal, and handcraft species in what we call “Food Forests” to provide food security, forest conservation, cultural reinforcement and income. Our core field reforestation staff is made of six indigenous men and women, and supported by community coordinators, and Yakum works in a community “minga” style where everyone in the community participates and everyone benefits from the production later on. We discuss our tree mix beforehand, establish nurseries, and when the plants are ready we plant on both community commons areas and on family chakras or home gardens.

The communities and families are responsible for the maintenance of these new permanent Food Forests. The diverse planting areas are beautiful areas for children to play in and to learn about the cultural traditions surrounding each plant from their parents as they work together on their home gardens. Due to an unstable economy developing a biodiverse home garden helps guarantee parents have enough food for their families and extra to provide when visitors arrive.

Many of the species of food plants we use, are “superfoods” due to their super high nutritional content and is multiple uses. For example the Chonta Palm fruits contain 10 times as much vitamin A as carrots, used for preparing a traditional chichi drink, and cooked and eaten as a delicious food. Chonta also provides a palm heart, a very useful and beautiful black wood. At its base, lives a prized larva which is considered to be a delicacy in local diets. Guayusa is a tasty local energy drink which includes caffeine and theobromine-as does cacao-and is now sold widely in the US and Europe. The Inga Itta provides a nice fruit, edible seeds high in protein, wood for cooking fires, and improves soils through high levels of leaf litter drop and fixes plant nutrients to regenerate soils which improves local production of everything else we plant.

We have formed and are supporting the development of entrepreneurial women’s and young people’s groups. With the young people we have formed a mapping team in the Siekopai Remolino community, an ecotourism group with Cofan young people in the Dureno community. In the Siekopai community of Sachawaysa we supported the start-up of Sachakuyrana young people’s group which helps with reforestation and the associated monitoring of that work. They recently won a grant to purchase their own 1 hectare or 2.5 acre area to develop more reforestation work, a fish production project, and to grow mushrooms for sale. This pro-active group will extend their knowledge, lead a new five community reforestation initiative with young people’s groups in surrounding communities. To have a greater impact, they would like to organize young people in many communities for conservation initiatives across the Ecuadorian Amazon. As young people are good at learning technology, they have been helpful to teach the use of GPS units and other useful technology to elder community members.

Women have traditionally been the heart and soul of species rich traditional home gardens in the Amazon, and are core to our tree planting work. We are supporting women’s groups who are planting ancestral plants for traditional handcraft production, developing community eco-tourism, processing and canning local foods, and engaged in their territorial defense.

Yakum also recently helped David and Blanca Yumbo who are partially blind to plant over 600 trees on a new family home garden.

Our dream is to plant 3,000,000 trees over the Ecuadorian Amazon between now and 2030.