



PRECIOUS WOODS

SWISS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD FOR PRECIOUS WOODS

On May 30, 2010, the Swiss Environmental Foundation hosted its annual award ceremony at the Grand Casino Luzern in Lucerne, Switzerland. Awarding its corporate prize to Precious Woods, the Foundation chose to honor the Swiss pioneer in tropical forest management. With sustainability as its maxim, Precious Woods has been developing ground-breaking ideas that made the company a global leader and forerunner—in an industry, no less, that is usually best known for overexploiting nature.

[Download the eulogy \(PDF in German only\)](#)

Precious Woods is basing its entrepreneurial acts on three pillars, incorporating sustainability into the economic, social and environmental domains. As a result, the company does more than simply generating economic added value: It also helps to preserve tropical forests and to improve the lives of the local population. And we have been accomplishing this feat for nearly two decades now.

In the meantime, the former tropical timber pioneer has turned into a global player that employs about 2,000 people and has subsidiaries in Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Gabon, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Additional stockholdings in other countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo are well on track.

Offering a varied range of products

The core business of Precious Woods is trading in tropical hardwoods, all certified by the label of the world-renowned Forest Stewardship Council whose strict rules are rigorously being implemented throughout the company. In other words, we meet high ecological and social standards, making sure that all of our wood products remain fully traceable from the tree to the end client. However, the company's success is also built on a product range that goes beyond that offered by the traditional forestry and timber industries.

In addition to manufacturing and selling tropical timber, Precious Woods processes and markets related wood and nonwood products. For example, we are using biomass fuel to generate power, which reduces our carbon footprint and allows us to sell emission certificates.



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Precious Woods also treads new paths utilizing timber wastes: In cooperation with partner companies, some timber wastes are used to extract organic scents for the perfume industry.

Protecting biodiversity by sparing forest management

In Brazil and Gabon, Precious Woods ensures long-term preservation of existing tropical forests by sustainable and sparing forest management. Furthermore, we are afforesting former pastures gone barren in Central America. In order to allow a stable forest ecosystem to develop, we use various tree species to do so—including rare species that are an important food source for a range of wild animals.

Protecting tropical forests is particularly important from an ecological point of view, since they are biodiversity hot spots, as has been emphasized by Intercooperation representative Dr. Jürgen Blaser in his eulogy. Close to two thirds of the world's plant and animal species live in tropical forests, depending on an intact forest ecosystem for survival.

However, people also increasingly appreciate all that biodiversity provides for human survival, summed up under the heading of “ecosystem services”. Tropical forests play a pivotal role in this area, influencing the world's water balance, acting as major carbon sinks, and supplying oxygen, food, freshwater, remedies and raw materials.

Extending sustainability to the social domain

Precious Woods not only cares about preserving biodiversity, but also about making allowances for the needs of local village communities. We are frequently operating in economically disadvantaged regions of the world, where we create jobs that give worthy life perspectives to a large number of families. All workers receive fair wages, insurance, job training and continued education.

Their families benefit from accommodations, power and water supply as well as access to education and medical care. Among others, Precious Woods has initiated programs against illiteracy, environmental awareness campaigns and information projects promoting AIDS prevention.

Swiss Environmental Foundation (in German only): www.umwelt-stiftung.ch