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## Cashew Growers from Brazil Take the Fair Trade Road to Sell Overseas

Contributed by Geovana Pagel  
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Brazil's Center of Cashew Farmer Cooperatives in the northeastern state of Piauí (Cocajupi), created in 2005 to strengthen family farming in the micro-region of Picos, is preparing a strategy to conquer its first clients abroad.

The path chosen by the group in order to grow and become visible to international buyers was certification in foreign trade, which should be issued in eight months.

"We are also awaiting accreditation with the Ministry of Agriculture and setting up the last details regarding the standardization of our products and packages," explains Ruy Brito, executive advisor to the board of directors at Cocajupi.

Consisting of nine cooperatives and 485 members, the organization expects to certify around 70% of farmers and reach demanding markets such as countries in the European Union, the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

"With regard to opportunities in Europe and the United States, we have been prospected by the Bank of Brazil Foundation and the World Bank. We have also been contacted by a Brazilian businessman who is interested in exporting to Dubai," he says.

"We are investing in fair trade certification, which pays up to 50% more than the conventional market, so as to strengthen our products and better structure the communities," he explains. According to him, Brazilian consumers are also increasingly concerned with the origin of products and the type of organization involved in the process.

According to Brito, the cooperative complex counts on nine mini-factories for cashew nut processing and one central for screening, classification and commercialization of production.

"All of them are equipped and ready to operate, with an installed capacity of 2,000 tons of cashew per year, including vehicles for product transport logistics between the cooperatives," he explains. Each mini-factory generates 30 direct jobs, plus another 40 positions at the center.

Expansion in the domestic market took place in 2008 after participation in fairs such as the Piauísampa, held in São Paulo in early June. The group also participated in Fenabreve, the National Fair for Family Farming, held in September in Rio de Janeiro, and in Biofach Latin America, held in October in São Paulo.

Presently, cashew nuts processed by Cocajupi are sold to wholesalers and retailers in the states of São Paulo, Goiânia, Porto Velho, Macapá, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Paraíba.

According to Brito, Cocajupi operates in the segments of production, industrialization and commercialization of cashew nuts to organize and strengthen the production chain. The goal of the organization is to enable the incorporation of profit to the gains of family farmers, whereas before it used to go to intermediaries and cashew industries.

Other goals are strengthening the cashew nut processing industry, improving the quality standard of products, adopting more efficient technologies and appropriate processing methods for purchasing raw material. The standardization of production, increase in productivity, training and the raising of farmers' income across all links in the production chain are other goals of Cocajupi.

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