



Bringing Guayusa to the World Market

Pro-poor Private Sector Expands Economic Opportunities for Vulnerable Farmers in Rural Ecuador



Inauguration of the world's first guayusa factory in Archidona, Napo Province



RunaTarpuna representatives with local farmers

PRODEL and its follow-on PRODEL II are cooperative agreements under the FIELD-Support LWA. They were designed to improve livelihoods for families in the northern and southern border regions of Ecuador by supporting the expansion of private enterprises that have the greatest potential to rapidly generate income and employment. Find out more about PRODEL and FIELD-Support at www.kdid.org/projects/field-support/prodel

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In an ancient tradition, indigenous Amazonian families drink guayusa from gourds around a communal fire and to share dreams, music and myths. Indigenous farmers say this tradition is essential to what makes them “Runa”—fully living human beings. In 2009, three students teamed up with communities of indigenous farmers from Ecuador’s Northern Amazon Region to share the guayusa (*why-you-suh*) drink and ritual with the rest of the world.

The resulting enterprise, RunaTarpuna or Runa, was established as a business that respects cultural traditions, supports small farmers, and helps the Amazon rainforest thrive. In 2010, Runa partnered with USAID’s PRODEL program in Ecuador to expand its production, improve product quality, and reinforce its entrance into the world market. Runa inaugurated the world’s first guayusa factory that year which is now fully operational with all of its permits in place, 100% organic-certified by a private European agency BCS, and three full-time workers. Runa has also advanced designs for a new carbon negative guayusa factory that will produce ten times more market-ready guayusa than the current installations, and will receive production from the additional hectares to be planted with PRODEL support. Runa’s commitment to supporting local farmers is evident at every stage of its production and marketing process.



runa
AMAZON GUAYUSA

“(Our partnership with Runa) is something that will allow us to work and create a source of employment on our own land. We will have a permanent job as farmers.” Guayusa grower in Napo Province

With technical assistance from PRODEL in production and sales, corporate image development, participation in trade fairs and events, tools, nurseries, and organic production improvements, Runa is actively harvesting from 150 farmers and recently helped them achieve USDA organic certification for their guayusa production. Runa also formed the first guayusa farmer association in Ecuador in order to build local organizational capacity and develop Fair Trade programs. The additional 1,000 farmers that Runa will assist through PRODEL will all be incorporated into this Napo Farmers’ Association and will receive assistance in increasing guayusa quality and productivity, as well as priority access to social premium funds¹ and support for organizational strengthening. PRODEL has supported Runa’s participation in trade shows such as the Fancy Food Show in New York, where Runa launched its boxed line of bagged teas with creative designs and unique flavors that caught the attention of several important distributors, including US-based Whole Foods grocery chain.

RunaTarpuna—one of 28 lead firms being assisted by the PRODEL program in Ecuador—is an important example of how USAID’s PRODEL program is helping promising enterprises scale up and position themselves for success. By investing significant thought, energy, and resources into both ends of the business model: participating firms improve their own profitability and long-term sustainability, while smallholder farmers in some of the country’s most vulnerable regions can reap the benefits of greater economic stability and income-generating capacity.

¹ Social premium funds are a requirement for Fair Trade Certification. Runa makes an additional 15% payment to the farmer collective on top of the Fair Trade price which can be used by the farmers to implement social or environmental projects of their choosing.