

Co+op Forest Grows

BY NATIONAL CO+OP GROCERS

When we talk about growth at NCG, we're typically talking about how we can improve our positive impacts. One of the ways we are doing that in a literal sense is through

Co+op Forest.

Launched in 2013, the Co+op Forest initiative offsets greenhouse gas emissions associated with NCG's business travel and utilities in each of its main offices. NCG partners with PUR Projet—an international organization preserving ecosystems in disadvantaged communities—to grow the Co+op Forest by working with local farmer cooperatives to plant and maintain native trees in the Peruvian Amazon. Co+op Forest is part of a system of sustainable agroforestry in the region, where local farmers produce fair trade, organic products—some of which are sold in NCG's retail food co-ops.

This year, NCG's Co+op Forest will expand to the Alto Shamboyacu community, which is home to roughly 150 families—mostly organic, fair-trade coffee and chocolate producers who belong to the Oro Verde farmer cooperative. As part of this year's carbon offset purchase through PUR Projet, NCG is compensating the farmers to plant and maintain 1,458 native trees among their crops. These new additions to Co+op Forest will improve crop yields by providing needed shade, create habitat for other native species, and eventually generate income for the community from Forest Stewardship Council-certified timber—all the while sequestering tons of greenhouse gases as the trees mature.



In addition to slowing climate change by planting trees, the local farmer-owned Oro Verde cooperative is addressing another critical sustainability issue—helping to protect the world's pollinators. Oro Verde cooperative works with farmers to revitalize beekeeping, a tradition to the area's indigenous culture that has been largely abandoned in modern times.

NCG will also commit this year to conserving an additional 1,200 acres in the old-growth forest of the San Martin BioCorridor—a lush, mountainous landscape in northwestern Peru that is highly biodiverse—and planting 729 native trees in the deforested Alto Huayabamba region. Both are areas that NCG has supported in past years, bringing the total number of trees that call Co+op Forest home to an estimated 837,000.

Three NCG member co-ops have also made individual contributions to Co+op Forest to meet their own sustainability goals:

- The Common Market (Frederick, Md.)
- Los Alamos Cooperative Market (Los Alamos, N.M.)
- Briar Patch Co-op Community Market (Grass Valley, Calif.)

"We're very happy and honored that NCG has partnered with PUR Projet to create the Co+op Forest," said Mathieu Senard, co-founder and co-CEO of Alter Eco, the fair-trade company that manages PUR Projet. "By protecting roughly 837,000 trees in the Peruvian Amazon, NCG has mitigated 2,000 tons of CO₂ since 2013 and is making a big impact in the lives of the farmers and on the environment." □

Top photo: Caring for seedlings in Alto Shamboyacu.

Right :A family in the Peruvian Amazon community of Alto Shamboyacu.

