

**Nominated for the Public Eye Positive Award 2008
by Rainforest Rescue, Germany:**

CARE Naturkost GmbH & Co.

Headquarters:	Hamburg, Germany
Sector:	Import/export of vegetal raw materials
Turnover:	€ 20 million (2006)
CEO:	Carsten Reich
Owned by:	Carsten Reich (majority owner)
Employees:	11 in Germany and the Philippines (2007)

In Brief

The firm CARE Naturkost is committed to the import and export of organically-produced vegetal raw materials, among them organic palm oil. However the current enormous demand for palm oil for fuel has sent prices spiraling, since corporations involved in agrofuels want to produce large quantities, and quickly, thus putting the organic and socially-responsible cultivation of oil palms under pressure. According to the NGO Rainforest Rescue, it usually happens like this: In order to obtain the necessary land for cultivation, the local population is driven out, sometimes with the collaboration of paramilitaries. Or thousands of hectares of rain forest are subjected to slash-and-burning. Then oil palm monocultures can be planted on the cleared areas, leaving nothing in the way of exporting for high-demand agrofuel.

A company acts responsibly

The German trading company CARE Naturkost is nominated for its consistent commitment to the import and export of vegetal raw materials from organically-controlled cultivation. All of its products are certified according to the guidelines of various organizations such as Bioland, Naturkost e.V. and the organic regulations of the EU. CARE Naturkost works together with companies, development projects and small farmers in Colombia, Brazil, Paraguay and the Philippines, thus supporting environmentally- and socially-responsible organic cultivation as an alternative to burgeoning conventional cultivation methods. And the committed work that the company has done over the years has borne fruit: Since 2000, annual turnover has risen from eight million to 20 million euros. CARE Naturkost forgoes unnecessary shipping by not importing commodities from plants that also grow at European latitudes. Cocoa, coffee beans, assorted grains, legumes, vegetable fats – and palm oil – are just a few of the items in it's range of products.

Results

CARE Naturkost was the first firm to campaign for the organic cultivation of oil palms when palm oil was still principally used for the production of foods, cosmetics and detergents. Roughly 15 years ago, it initiated the organic certification of palm oil in Brazil through the Instituto Biodinâmico. Today, CARE Naturkost is the largest purchaser of organic palm oil in Europe, accounting for four thousand to five thousand tons annually. And the market is growing: In the last few years, an increasing number of food companies have converted to organic plant products. In 2006, The Body Shop was the first global cosmetics company to introduce organically-produced palm oil into its product lines.

Next Steps

Now the auto and fuel industries have also discovered palm oil, threatening its organic cultivation. Since climate change has made citizens and states more aware of environmental issues, palm oil is now being processed into a supposedly ecological alternative fuel. The industrialized countries hope to reach their greenhouse gas reduction goals in part with the help of agrofuels. This is a delusory hope, because the cultivation of palm oil “can cause a wide spectrum of environmental stresses,” according to NZZ Online, including the over-fertilization of soil, the loss of natural habitat and corresponding biodiversity, as well as slash-and-burning of rain forest. According to Munich-based biology professor Florian Siegert, this produces 25 times more carbon dioxide than would be saved by the replacement of conventional fuels with palm oil over the next 20 years. The effect of agtofuels on the climate would therefore be catastrophic. Nonetheless, the merchants happily market their fuel with the misleading prefix “bio” and deceptively imply that it protects the planet.

The future of organically-farmed oil palm plantations is uncertain. Brazil plans to plant 20 million hectares with oil palms by 2020. Meanwhile, NGOs call on governments worldwide to abandon their rush towards agrofuels, which would not only preserve some of the remaining rain forests, but it would also strengthen the position of organic importers like CARE Naturkost. In order to do that, consumers must be informed of the disastrous consequences of the illusory promise of agrofuels.

Further Information:

- www.regenwald.org/international/englisch/