



## Brazil Nut Project: Programa Conservando Castañales

### Brazil Nut Production

Brazil nut trees grow in lowland Amazonian rainforests. These canopy trees grow to 165 feet and have a lifespan of several hundred years. Areas of forest with dense stands of Brazil nut trees are known as *castañaes*. These areas are given as concessions from the Peruvian government to local Brazil nut harvesters, called *castañeros*. These concessions are privately managed conservation areas that allow the Brazil nut harvesters and their families to make an income from the forest. They can be several hundred to a few thousand acres in extent, and provide rights to landholders expressly for the harvesting of nuts. Brazil nut harvesters sell the nuts to local shelling factories, which pack and export the product overseas. This extractive activity provides more than half the yearly income for thousands of families in the Amazon, and Brazil nut concessions have protected more than 1.5 million acres of forest from deforestation.



### Initiatives of the Brazil Nut Project

ACA and its sister organization ACCA have established an active technical extension team, two permanent field study sites, and several demonstration plots in Madre de Dios, Peru. At these sites, the organization has carried out research on basic Brazil nut tree biology, silvicultural practices, impacts of nut extraction, and primary processing. The field team has offered training seminars and workshops to Brazil nut harvesters to improve their collection techniques and build their capacity to create value-added production chains. These activities have been developed in partnership with local co-ops and associations.

### Results of the Brazil Nut Project

Since 1997, our Brazil Nut Project has protected over 1.5 million acres of tropical rainforest and has provided technical support to more than 420 families, which were earning a living as Brazil nut harvesters. The program has offered a number of services, including 1) helping to establish 476 Brazil nut concessions, 2) mapping each concession with GIS, 3) redesigning Brazil nut trails to improve efficiency and minimize environmental impact, 4) helping to obtain voluntary Forest Stewardship Council and organic certifications for 48 concessions, and 5) helping to develop more than 370 sustainable forest management plans, approved by the Peruvian forestry department. These concessions now act as a buffer to deforestation driven by the paving of a new international highway. In addition, the program has collected age, size, productivity, health, and location information for 84,740 individual trees, one of the largest tree distribution databases in existence.



*The Amazon Conservation Association (ACA) and the Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA) work together toward the ecological and social viability of the Amazon Basin through the development of new scientific understanding, sustainable resource management and rational land-use policy.*