



Fair Trade Terminates Termites

Without Gemini Upatissa the members of the Thurusavia small farmers cooperative would have no rubber sheets to sell. For fifteen years Mr Upatissa has been running the small factory in which the rubber milk collected by the small holders is processed into sheets. It's the sheets that are sold to customers who then produce items as varied as soles for sneakers or valves for soccer balls. Mr Upatissa gets a basic salary of Rs. 3000 (less than EUR 20) per month and a cut of the profit from the sheets sold, but there are months in which less rubber milk can be collected and tapping is impossible during the

monsoon.

That's why the Thurusavia rubber society provides a small two-room house for Mr Upatissa, his wife and two school-aged daughters to live in. It suited the family fine until termites turned up and right now anyone can see how the family lives: The termites have gnawed through the wood, leaving huge holes in the walls and rendering the whole construction unstable. The family owns no land and did not have the money to build a house, which left Mr Upatissa few options but to look for another job. Luckily just then two small orders came through that
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1st ,Regular' AGM

The members of the Fair Rubber Association still fit into one of the smallest meeting rooms of the Spenerhaus in Frankfurt, but at least all four commercial members (and three nationalities) were present for the first regular (as opposed to extraordinary) members' meeting since the founding in June 2012.

The Association has managed to deal successfully with all start up issues: Registration, website, ...: All done and dusted. Of particular note was that the accounts finished with a 'black zero', for which a big thank you is due to the members of the board, all of whom have been donating their time.

More important in view of the aims of the Association, however, is the fact that close to 80 tons of natural rubber have been traded in line with the criteria of the Association between July and December, i.e. almost EUR 40,000 in Fair Trade premiums could be transferred to the supplier partners in India and Sri Lanka.

Totally unexpected was the decision by all members to switch (for legal reasons) to a new logo at the latest by 2014: The new logo had originally been envisaged for usage in the USA only (see article below: Two Logos - One Aim). The next 'regular' AGM is scheduled for February 2014.



Two Logos - One Aim

The Fair Rubber Association has not even reached its first anniversary - but its members nevertheless decided to replace the round Fair Rubber logo with a new one.

The reason for this is that, when trying to register the 'founding logo' in the USA, it turned out that this attempt was likely to end up in a legal tangle, resulting in delays and costs. Therefore at the Annual General Meeting in February the members opted to put an end to such a horror scenario (i.e. change to a new logo now), rather than risk an ongoing horror (i.e. two concurrent logos): The new logo will, in the course of 2013, replace the 'old' one. Until then both logos can be used in Europe (and will be displayed on the website), but from 2014 only the new one shall be used.

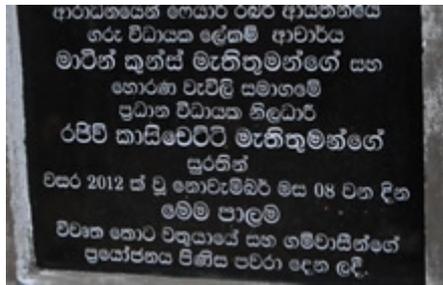


Short cut with Fair Trade



Twelve year old Sinusia has a good reason to smile: she will have a lot less walking now that the bridge, built with Fair Trade money, is ready. Sinusia lives with her parents and about one hundred other families in the isolated Govinna-section of the plantation. To get just about anywhere was either a very long walk or an expensive ride with a motorcycle taxi. But what everyone dreaded most were medical emergencies. An ambulance would have to come on an eleven kilometre long route. With the new bridge the hospital is just three kilometres away, which means getting help is not only a lot quicker, it also is cheaper - less

than a third of the price that had to be paid for the old, long route. And a nearby village benefits too. Twice a year their access to the main road gets flooded, isolating as many as 4000 people. Now they can use the new bridge during the monsoon rains. Generations of workers have been asking for a bridge to be built, the plan was suggested more than 60 years ago. A good start for the Fair Rubber Association: The bridge is the first Fair Trade project since it was founded in 2012. Small wonder the plantation workers decided to celebrate the opening and erect a stone to commemorate the event. It's been a very long wait for a short journey.



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 paid a Fair Trade premium of EUR 1200. The Thurusavia members decided immediately to build a new house for the Upatissa family: two rooms and a kitchen, a third room will follow as soon as the money is available.

It's not just this attitude that distinguishes the Thurusavia small holders. At the end of last year they were nominated as Sri Lanka's best small farmers' association and received a cash prize. They have used the money to build a new drying chamber. The drying now takes just one day instead of five. With the added capacity the group is aiming to grow to one hundred or even 150 members. With the excellent rubber sheets they produce, their willingness to invest in order to grow their business in a sustainable way, ensuring quality while safeguarding the environment and their sense of responsibility and fairness dealing with the Upatissa family makes us, the Fair Rubber Association, proud to be their partners.



Fair Trade Starts in Sapumalkande

The most recent addition to the list of supplier partners of natural rubber is the Sapumalkande plantation, which had to overcome some formidable administrative hurdles before its Fair Trade scheme could get off the ground. However, once ready, the plantation went for it 'in style': Sapumalkande is part of a group of four plantations, and those responsible decided in view of the good demand for Fairly Traded natural rubber to expand the Fair Trade scheme to the three other plantations, too: As far as possible all workers should benefit from the Fair Trade premium payments. A joint body meets on a monthly basis in order to identify project that require funding and in order to monitor their implementation. More news in the next edition of the Rubber News.

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