

I am an organic farmer with over 25 years experience in organic production, in addition to working at CIRANDA in sales and marketing. I visited our organic PalmFruit production in northeast Brazil in mid-November of 2005. The farm is not far from the mouth of the Amazon River, an area that has undergone significant environmental change over the past three hundred years of European settlement. The lands that are planted in organic (and conventional) palm oil trees had been cleared by previous settlers in decades prior to the establishment of the palm production. In tropical areas, this means that most of the stored carbon that had resided in the living forest had been removed. In tropical areas, the temperature and humidity result in the rapid biological decomposition of carbonaceous materials (even without burning). The re-establishment of forest of oil palm, while obviously not as diverse as the original native forest eco-system, is a vast improvement over grass or row crops such as soybeans. Many native species of birds have returned to the area as they now have habitat, and there is an on-going biological monitoring program documenting this.

The organic palm plantation is planted with the trees farther apart than on a conventional palm planting, because the under story plants, a plant related to soybeans that fix nitrogen in the soil, need room to grow to fertilize the organic palm trees. The entire residue from the palm oil processing – the remaining husks and other plant material are also returned and 'sheet composted' under the tree canopy, returning the nutrients to the system. Growing in the shade under the palms are also plants that provide a food source for the palm oil pollinators, and other plants that provide food and habitat for beneficial insects that control pestiferous insects that can damage the palm trees. Other insect controls used include various types of traps using pheromones and scent lures.

We are developing a CD that I can send you that will show visually the organic farming methods described above. Please feel free to call me to discuss these organic farming practices or any other questions you may have.

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