

Effectiveness Evaluation of Sustainable Production Activities Projects of Agglutinating Entities in the Amazon Fund

Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy COOPERACRE

August2023





# EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES PROJECTS OF AGGLUTINATING ENTITIES IN THE AMAZON FUND

This report presents the results of the ex post effectiveness evaluation of the Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project on the theme of Sustainable Productive Activities within the scope of the Amazon Fund/BNDES. The evaluation was carried out by a team formed by independent consultants under the coordination of the German Cooperation for Sustainable Development through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), within the scope of the technical cooperation with BNDES about the Amazon Fund. All opinions expressed herein are the sole responsibility of the authors, not necessarily reflecting the position of GIZ and BNDES. The recommendations presented are neither prescriptive nor mandatory.

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### **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

Amacro Amazonas, Acre, Rondônia

APL Local Productive Arrangement

PPA Permanent Preservation Area

APS Sustainable Production Activities

ATER Technical Assistance and Rural Extension

BNDES Brazilian Development Bank

CAR Rural Environmental Registry

Ceplac Executive Committee of the Cocoa Farming Plan

CNS National Council of Extractive Populations

**Cooperacre** Central Cooperative for Extractive Marketing of Acre

**Embrapa** Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation

ENREDD+ National Strategy for REDD+

FA Amazon Fund

GIZ German Agency for International Cooperation

(Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH)

Ibama Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources

ICMBio Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation

IN Normative Instruction

Inpe National Institute for Space Research

MMA Ministry of the Environment

OCDE Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Oema State Environment Agency

UN United Nations



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#### **PROJECT SHEET**

Project title:	Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy
Responsible entity:	Central Cooperative for Extractive Marketing of Acre (Cooperacre)
Project period:	11/24/2014 to 03/31/2022
Territorial scope:	14 municipalities in the administrative regions of Alto Acre, Baixo Acre and Purus.
Beneficiaries:	Family and extractive smallholder farms in the Administrative Regions of Purus, Baixo Acre and Alto Acre.
Objective:	Contribute to the strengthening of the Brazil nut and fruit pulp chains in the state of Acre by: (i) recovering degraded and/or altered areas located in small farms or family rural possessions; (ii) optimizing the logistics of storage of Brazil nuts and fruit transportation; (iii) improving the processing process of Brazil nuts; (iv) adding value and diversifying products; (v) improving the marketing strategy of products; and (vi) training the affiliate network.
Classification in the Amazon Fund via:	Public Call for Sustainable Productive Projects of the Amazon Fund (2012).
Land Category:	Extractivists and rural producers
Component:	Sustainable Production
Total value of the project:	R\$ 5,190,901.39
Value of the support from the Amazon Fund:	R\$ 4,981,614.66

Source: Form prepared based on the information from the Amazon Fund/BNDES website.

#### 1. PROJECT SUMMARY

The Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project was selected under the Public Call for Sustainable Production Activities (APS) of the Amazon Fund and aimed to strengthen the production chains of Brazil nuts and fruit pulp in Acre. The project was implemented through direct and indirect support actions to its agglutinated entities: associations and cooperatives affiliated to Cooperacre (Figure I)



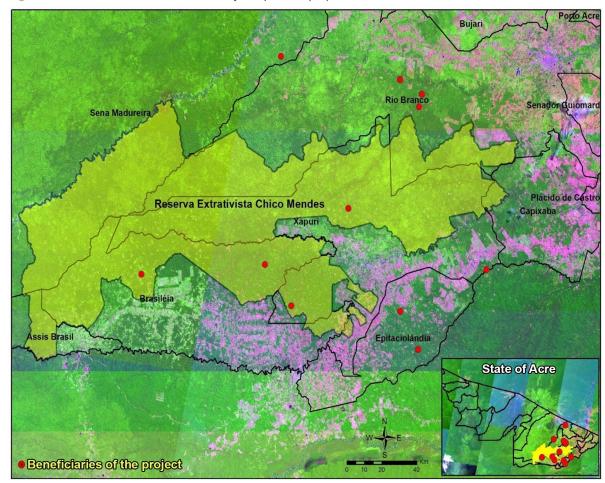


Figure I: Location of initiatives benefited by Cooperacre (AC)

Source: Own elaboration using the QGIS Desktop software 3.22.8.

#### With regard to direct support actions, the following were carried out:

- 1. installation of two community warehouses and acquisition of 1,000 polypropylene boxes to improve the sanitary and physical conditions of fruit transport;
- expansion of the number of cooperatives and agglutinated associations with organic certification of nut production;
- 3. recovery of degraded and/or altered areas on small family farms or rural possessions.

#### The transversal actions included:

- 4. provision of technical monitoring and rural extension services (ATER);
- 5. optimization of Cooperacre's processing structure, through the installation of two new drying ovens and the installation of briquetting machines<sup>1</sup>;

<sup>1.</sup> Equipment that transforms the residual shell of Brazil nuts into high calorific value compacted biomass.



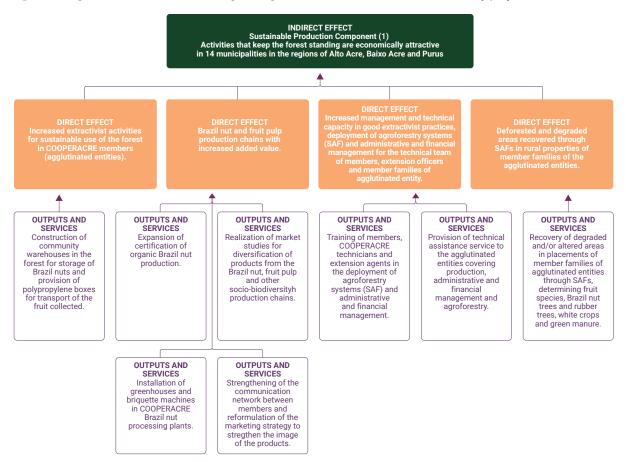
- 6. development of feasibility studies and field research on product diversification;
- 7. training of representatives of the agglutinated organizations, Cooperacre technicians and the ATER team;
- 8. investment in communication and marketing.

#### 2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

In accordance with the procedures of the Amazonian Fund in force at the time of implementation, a logical framework was agreed for *Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy* project, aligned with the structure of the Amazonian Fund's logical framework (Figure II).



Figure II: Logical Framework of the Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project



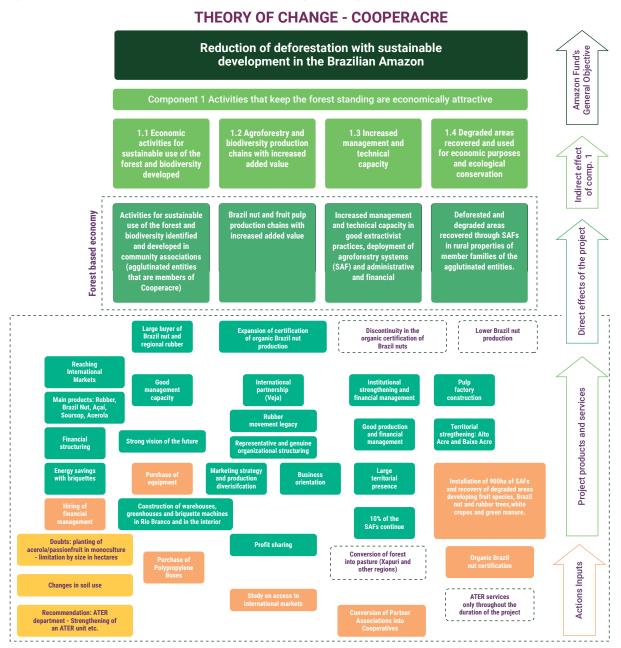
Source: Project page Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy on the Amazon Fund/BNDES website. (2023)

#### 3. THEORY OF CHANGE

The schematic framework that represents the Theory of Change for the Cooperacre project has been constructed taking into account the specific objectives of the Amazon Fund and the direct and indirect impacts of the project. In addition to these key concepts, elements, results and impacts considered fundamental in the analysis and understanding of the project were added. The chart illustrates the relationship between the main results of the project and the impacts at the level of the impacts (or indirect impacts) of the component and, to a greater extent, of the general objectives of the Amazon Fund (Figure III).



Figure III: Schematic representation of Cooperacre's project Theory of Change.



Source: Own elaboration.

#### 4. SPECIFIC METHODOLOGY

For the evaluation of the *Cooperacre* project, exploratory interviews, analysis of secondary data and field mission were carried out. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with managers, technicians and beneficiaries of the *Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy* project.

Field visits were also carried out to the agroindustry, the storage warehouse and the areas of agroforestry systems (SAFs) implemented. The guiding questions are in Appendix VI.



#### Organizational context of Cooperacre

Founded in 2001, the main activities of the Central Cooperative for Extractive Marketing of Acre (Cooperacre) are the commercialization and processing of Brazil nuts and the production of latex, mainly from native rubber plantations in the state of Acre. Over time, it also incorporated the marketing and processing of fruit pulp and, more recently, took over the management of a peach palm heart factory in partnership with the government of the state of Acre.

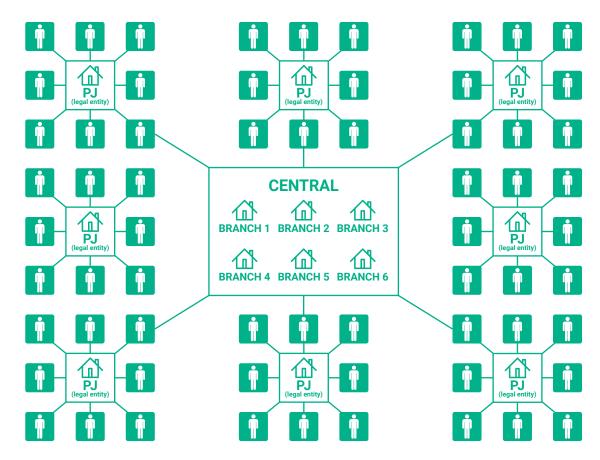
Cooperacre is headquartered in Rio Branco/AC and is affiliated with six other cooperatives located in Xapuri, Senador Guiomard, Brasiléia and Sena Madureira. There are seven processing complexes and two commercial points of sale of products, one in Xapuri and the other in Rio Branco. Apart from the processing plants, Cooperacre also works with dozens of associations, working indirectly, with approximately 2,500 families.

The cooperative coordinates the activities of producers, providing training and ATER and buying production, which benefits and sells in the consumer and institutional markets. Cooperacre also provides administrative and accounting support to the agglutinated entities. The four local productive arrangements (APLs) in which the cooperative works complement the objectives and results achieved through the project.

By acting in a network, the cooperative is directly related to the agglutinated associations, which organize the modes of production, transportation and sale to the processing units under the management of the central cooperative. The scheme in Figure IV details the management model of the cooperative, its members and the relationship with agroextractivist families.



Figure IV: Cooperacre's management structure.



Source: Cooperacre.

Abbreviations: PJ (legal entity); Branch (processing units); Central (Cooperacre's head office).

#### 5. EVALUATION OF RESULTS

**Indirect Effect/General Objective:** Activities that keep the forest standing have economic attractiveness in 14 municipalities in the administrative regions of Alto Acre and Baixo Acre.

**Indicator:** Annual deforestation in the municipalities of the administrative regions of Upper and Lower Acre).

In the state of Acre, deforestation rates over the last ten years have been rising. In 2014, the year when the project Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project began, the state obtained an increase of 348.6 km² of deforested areas. In 2022, the increase was 950.7 km², that is, the annual increase in deforestation was 2.7 times greater, compared to 2014 (Figure V).



1000,0 950.7 891,8 900,0 800,0 706.8 660.7 700,0 600,0 500.0 426.4 366,1 400,0 348,6 288,8 265,2 295,5 270,5 300,0 200,0 100.0 0,0 2007 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Figure V: History of deforestation in the state of Acre (data in km<sup>2</sup>)

Source: Terrabrasilis/Inpe/Prodes, 2022.2

# **Direct Effect 1:** Construction of community warehouses in the forest for the storage of Brazil nuts and provision of polypropylene boxes for the transportation of the collected fruits.

The Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project achieved results beyond expectations, benefiting, through sustainable productive activities and value addition, on average 500 producers (area recovery, organic certification). In accordance with the work plan, the project has built two community warehouses, which are of great importance in the production chain, since they allow the storage of the production during the harvest, for later transport and commercialization. The 1,000 polypropylene boxes purchased are being used for transport (associations x Cooperacre) and fruit packaging. During the field visits, the two storage structures were also identified, as established in the project goals. According to Cooperacre technicians, there are currently 17 of these structures in use by the agglutinated entities. (Table I).

Table I: Indicators of the Direct Effect 1 of the project Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project

Indicators	Goal	Value at the end of the project	Current value
1.1 Number of fresh product storage structures built.	02	02	17
1.2 No. of polypropylene boxes purchased	1,000	1,000	1,000

Source: Effectiveness Evaluation Report (RAE) presented to the Amazon Fund in December 2021.

After the completion of the project, the revenue obtained from the commercialization of Brazil nuts and processed fruits reached the result of R\$34.9 million. Although no goal

<sup>2.</sup> Data available at: http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal\_amazon/rates.



has been set for this result, it is considered an excellent commercial performance, as reported by the cooperative's directors during the field interviews.

#### Direct Effect 2: Expansion of certification of organic production of Brazil nuts

In addition to valuing the product, the nut certification process, expanded based on the *Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy* project, was seen as a representation of the ideals pursued by Cooperacre based on sustainable, economically viable, socially fair and environmentally correct development. (Figure VI)



Figure VI: Brazil nuts being processed at Cooperacre's headquarters (Rio Branco-AC)

Foto: Image captured by Juliana Mello during field mission.

The evaluated project promoted the expansion of the number of certified cooperatives and associations from 7 to 17, also increasing the volume of certified Brazil nuts. In addition, workshops were held for the proper disposal of waste and possible contaminants in the communities.<sup>3</sup>

**Direct Effect 3:** Technical capacity of small agro-extractivists expanded in the implementation of SAFs and good practices for the production and storage of sociobiodiversity products and community leaders in project management, participatory governance and marketing strategies.

According to Cooperacre's management, through newsletters, banners and billboards, extractivists were better informed and updated. The Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project also promoted the training and qualification of technicians

<sup>3.</sup> Confira em: https://www.cooperacre.com/noticia/2-fortalecimento-da-certificacao-organica.



and representatives of associations/cooperatives. In this way, the representatives of the associations/cooperatives will be able to carry out their administrative functions with greater clarity and understanding, always based on the principles of cooperatives. (Chart I)

Chart I: Indicators of Direct Effect 3 of the Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project

Indicators	Goal	Value at the end of the project	Current value
2.4 Number of bulletins, folders, booklets and other communication products developed broken down by species and circulation (quantity).	Bulletins: 9,000 Folders: 10,000 Packaging: 4,500 Posters of good practices: 3,000 Billboards: 08 (Units)	Bulletins 9,000 Folders: 10,000 Packaging 4,500 Posters of good practices: 3,000 Billboards: 08 (Units)	Bulletins 9,000 Folders: 10,000 Packaging 4,500 Posters of good practices: 3,000 Billboards: 08 (Units)
3.1 Number of individuals trained in agroforestry and administrative and financial management.	180	293	293
3.1.2 No. of individuals participating in appropriate waste disposal workshops for organic production certification purposes	115	115	115
3.2 Number of rural families (properties) benefited from technical assistance and rural or agroforestry extension	291	291	291
4.1 Area (ha) of SAFs deployed.	600	602,5	602,5
4.2 No. of properties with SAFs deployed.	291	291	291

Source: Effectiveness Evaluation Report (RAE) presented to the Amazon Fund in December/2021.

602.5 hectares were implemented in the form of SAFs. Consortium plantations of fruit species, Brazil nut and rubber trees, white crop and green manure were made. In total, 291 producers were benefited, distributed in 16 communities (associations). (Figure VII)



Figure VII: SAF implemented in the placement of Mr. Sebastião Aquino, member of CooperXapuri, an agglutinated entity of Cooperacre, Resex Chico Mendes – AC



Photo: Image captured by Artur Sgambatti Monteiro during field mission.

The implementation of SAFs in already deforested areas concentrates agro-extractivist production, increasing production efficiency. Thus, the family can increase income by 2.5 harvests per year, with the sale of products from extractivism and fruits. According to Cooperacre's technical assistance team, increasing the profitability of agro-extractivism reduces the producer's interest in opening up new areas for livestock production. The implementation of SAFs in extractive reserves also strengthens the family structure, as young people are more present on the property to take care of production and are rewarded at the harvest of the product.

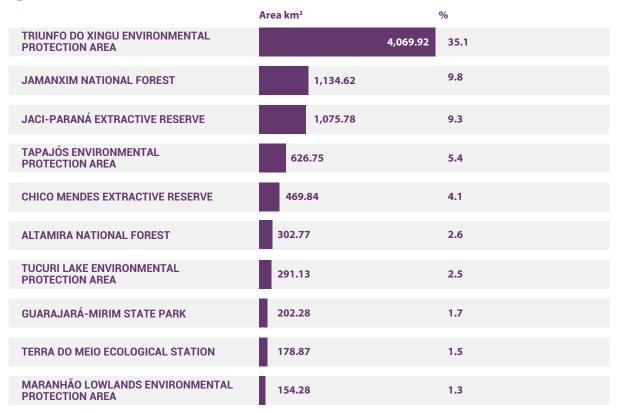
#### 6. OVERALL EVALUATION

#### Regional Scenario

In the 14 municipalities where Cooperacre operates, the situation of deforestation pressure, in the internal evaluation of the cooperative, is one of the major obstacles in relation to the management of APS. The Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve (Resex) is a focal point of the cooperative's activity, being the fifth most deforested conservation unit (CU) currently in the Amazon and which has been taken over by pastures in the last ten years (Figure VIII).



Figure VIII: Increases in accumulated deforestation of the ten CUs located in the Brazilian Amazon



Source: Terrabrasilis/Prodes/Inpe<sup>4</sup>

The lack of support from governments and the weakening of public policies to encourage the maintenance of the standing forest and inspection have systematically modified the landscape in this CU. Although small-scale livestock farming is allowed by the unit's management rules, some families go beyond these limits, attracted by the profitability of the activity to the detriment of practices for the sustainable use of forest resources. Renting pastures within the CU became a profitable alternative for many residents, pressured by cattle ranchers around the reserve. Cooperacre maintains its operations within the reserve, with ATER actions and incentive to the extraction of Brazil nuts, extraction of natural rubber and agroforestry production.

#### Positive Aspects

- Qualification and profitability for all links in the chains supported by Cooperacre with its members;
- Generation of more than 300 direct jobs and more than 1,500 indirect jobs;
- Guarantee of purchase of extractive products, such as Brazil nuts, rubber and açaí, as well as agricultural products, such as fruits for the production of industrialized pulps;

<sup>4.</sup> Data available at: http://terrabrasilis.dpi.inpe.br/app/dashboard/deforestation/biomes/legal\_amazon/increments



- The partnership between the cooperative and its members creates a direct commercial relationship, without intermediaries, with fairer prices and, consequently, an improvement in the income of the APLs operated by the organization.
- The cooperative's organizational structure has the management capacity to receive and apply resources from financiers such as the Amazon Fund.

#### Challenges

- The expansion of fruit pulp production, with the construction of a plant attached to the nut processing industry in Rio Branco, will open space for the expansion of its operations and promote the increase of fruit plantation areas in its region of operation. Cooperacre's challenge is to prioritize the use of already anthropized areas used by its members, without converting forested areas for the cultivation of fruit trees.
- Some species of interest for the productive front of fruit pulp (passion fruit and acerola) do not fit
  the designs of SAFs and will have to be planted in open areas, in monocultures, more demanding of
  nutrients and irrigation.
- The demobilization of the ATER team after the end of the project left about 300 families without technical monitoring. It is recommended that the cooperative evaluates the maintenance of the ATER team, raising funds from other sources or even through its own revenues.
- Competition with livestock activity in the state must be subject to permanent strategic evaluation of the cooperative, so that there is no loss of revenue from the disincentive of members, especially in the expansion and maintenance of SAFs.
- Invest in valuing gender equity, participation and empowerment of women in the management model.

#### 7. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy project was successful in implementing the funds raised from the Amazon Fund. During the field evaluation, the responsible organization - Cooperacre - proved to have the organizational structure and maturity to manage its production units and even expand its operations to regional and national levels.

Cooperacre works proactively, establishing partnerships with commercial actors such as the French company Veja/Vert, partnerships with the state government and federal agencies such as Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento (Conab), Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária (Embrapa) and Universidade Federal do Acre (UFAC), in addition to having experience in obtaining loans from banks such as BNDES and Banco da Amazônia.

The cooperative has extensive experience in managing socio-biodiversity chains, such as Brazil nuts and latex extraction. However, it needs to improve its experience with



the fruit pulp production chain, a very competitive market that is on the rise in Brazil. Furthermore, care should be taken to encourage monocultures of fruit species that do not fit into AFS arrangements, so that there is no pressure to this end on forested areas.

Even with capillarity among the various actors involved in the conversion of degraded areas to AFS systems, it is possible to improve the performance in attracting and expanding producers interested in investing in this production system. To do this, Cooperacre must maintain its ability to provide a trained ATER system capable of meeting current and future needs. Although this goal was achieved in the *Strengthening the Forest Based Sustainable Economy* project, this represents little in terms of territorial extension in the face of the advance of deforestation in the region.

Cooperacre can play a bolder and more influential role as a key player in the broader promotion of the forest-based economy. Even try to recover part of this protagonism, lost by the Government of the State of Acre due to the last state and federal administrations. As an organization with a history of fighting for land tenure and forest conservation initiated by Chico Mendes, the cooperative needs to include this proactivity in its future vision and can achieve broader results.

The current scenario of loss of forest areas converted to livestock should be a continuous target of the cooperative. Through its performance, Cooperacre can play a fundamental role in demonstrating to governments, donors and investors that productive activities that keep the forest standing should be prioritized, and that the forest-based economy is sustainable, profitable and capable of providing a real quality of life for present and future generations.

#### 8. ANALYSIS OF THE OECD EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evidence	Evaluation
Relevance Criterion	
The project promoted the verticalization of production chains and reduced barriers such as transport logistics, storage, processing and marketing of agro-extractivist production. It has also invested in training and administrative management of affiliated organizations, technical assistance and narrowing between partners working with teaching, research and quality control.	Great Relevance
Efficacy Criterion	
The project met all its goals, according to the indicator chart presented to the Amazon Fund.  There was a justification for not serving one of the cooperative's areas of operation - the Purús region - citing logistical problems in accessing producers.	Effective
Efficiency Criterion	
Cooperacre is now the largest processor of Brazil nuts in the country. It has an efficient raw material acquisition system, with four processing plants in operation and a storage structure in place.	
In the case of rubber, the partnership with the French company Veja/Vert offers the extractivists the guarantee of selling at a higher price than the market.	Good
A new fruit pulp processing unit is being implemented, attached to the headquarters of its Brazil nut processing plant in Rio Branco.	efficiency
The cooperative is managing to access the demanding international market, adapting to the required sanitary standards.	



Impact Criterion	
The rate of expansion and consolidation of Cooperacre, as a business model on the scale of agro-extractivism in the State of Acre and the region, shows the ability to occupy spaces in the regional socio-economic scenario, even in unfair competition with the livestock model.	Moderate to strong effect
Sustainability Criterion	
The new aspect of incorporating the concept of the bioeconomy into the scenario of solutions for the future conservation of the Amazon offers Cooperacrea the possibility of consolidation as a sustainable business model, even at the scale that the cooperative is operating today and intends to achieve in the future with its new pulp processing plant.	Medium to high sustainability
The cooperative must continue to act in governance purposes, either from an environmental point of view or from the point of view of social control, equality and gender inclusion.	

### 9. ANALYSIS OF THE CANCUN SAFEGUARDS

Criteria	Complies	Notes
Actions complementary to or consistent with the objectives of national forest programs and other relevant international conventions and agreements.	Yes	Acre has 22 municipalities, and Cooperacre operates in 14 of them, promoting agro-extractivist production in a considerable territorial extension. The model is aligned with the Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon (PPCDAm) at the federal and state levels. The cooperative invests with its members in organic certification and a fair market, reaffirming its commitment to socio-environmental and economic practices that are balanced and consistent with a development model that does not degrade forests and balances the climate at regional and global levels.
Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, with a view to national sovereignty and legislation.	Yes	Cooperacre, together with its agglutinated entities, has partnerships with teaching and research agencies, aiming to improve its SAFs recovery programs, the quality of processing of its products and the reuse of the nut shell for energy purposes, which it maintains with Embrian. It also acts as an intermediary, with government agencies, for the environmental regularization of its members regarding the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) records and obtaining the granting of wells for use in irrigation for fruit production projects.
Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, considering relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.	Yes	Cooperacre strengthens forest production chains, in addition to stimulating the recovery of degraded areas through the implementation of SAFs, also benefiting family farming. Works in settlement projects and conservation units, promoting the conservation of native vegetation cover. It also promotes good land use practices in areas that have already suffered deforestation within the limits established by Brazilian environmental legislation.



Full and effective participation of stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of Decision 1/CP 16.	Yes, but it could be more effecti- ve in impact/re- sult monitoring actions.	The relations of negotiation of agro-extractivist production, between Cooperacre and residents' associations, are being of network cooperation, without intermediaries, which is already a sign of a more balanced and fair relationship model.  No models of support or centralization of action in decision making were identified. However, the management system of this entire network lacks investment or improvement in the component of monitoring results and impacts. No people or instruments were identified within this network focused on storing, analyzing and using the results to improve the current management model.
Actions consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the measures referred to in paragraph 70 of Decision 1/CP 16 are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but rather to promote the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits.	Yes, but it could be more effecti- ve in conserva- tion actions	Cooperacre acted in the recovery of environmental liabilities in the areas of its members, through the implementation of SAFs. It also worked, together with partner institutions, to strengthen the chains of Brazil nut, rubber and fruit pulp, generating income and better quality of life for extractivists. The cooperative operates within Resex Chico Mendes, which is under strong pressure from deforestation. Despite encouraging conservation within the area, absorbing the production of Brazil nuts and latex, it could be active with the government to try to unbridle this process of forest degradation within the CU.
Actions to address the risks of reversals in REDD + results.	N/A	N/A
Actions to reduce the displacement of carbon emissions to other areas.	Yes	600 hectares were recovered through the implementation of SAFs.

### 10. ANALYSIS OF TRANSVERSAL CRITERIA

Poverty Reduction	Evaluation
The project promoted an increase of 2.5 harvests per year per family, increasing income with the sale of products from extractivism and fruits. As the profitability of agro-extractivism increases, the producer's interest in opening new areas for livestock activity decreases.  2,000 families benefited directly and 1,000 indirectly, as well as a series of 25 producer as-	
sociations and cooperatives, strengthening the network of actors in the extractive and family farming sectors. Cooperacre generated more than 300 direct jobs and more than 1,500 indirect jobs, benefiting extractive communities by guaranteeing the purchase of extractive products, paying a fair price for production. There was an environmental improvement as a result of SAFs, increasing the quality of ecosystem services that provide a basis for people's well-being. The implementation of, on average, 2 hectares per SAF per producer strengthened the family structure and stimulated the paid work of young people in production, obtained by harvesting the products.	Yes
Gender Equity	Evaluation
There was little integration of gender issues in the project, with actions aimed at families (which include women), but no specific strategy for women and their performance with the product chains being worked on.	Partially