

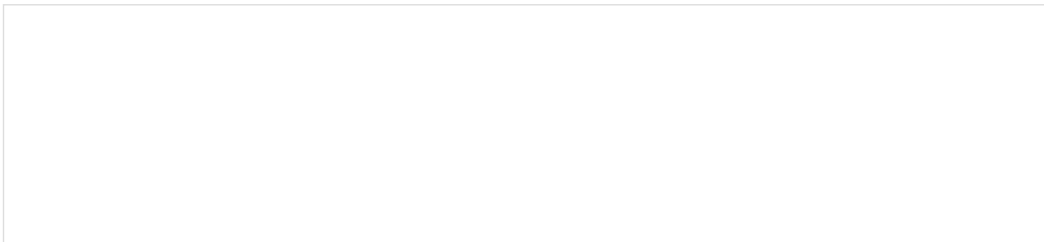
CID SIMÕES AND PAOLA SEGURA, SUSTAINABLE AGRIBUSINESS LEADERS



This 24,000-acre farm relies on the Effective Microorganism (EM) biotechnology developed by Cid and Paola. Courtesy of Cid Simões and Paola Segura

"... inside the forest, there are ornamental tropical plants like orchids, lipstick palms, and heliconias that markets around the world want to buy. Some of these plants can be harvested without creating any impact on the forest at all. Others allow farmers to earn as much on only 1,000 meters as they did by clearing 10,000 meters of pristine forest. And all are sustainable."

Recognizing the devastation caused by traditional agriculture in Brazil, Cid Simões and Paola Segura worked to bring about change—for the people, the community, and the landscape. With creative business practices and their commitment to the planet at the forefront, these National Geographic Explorers and sustainable agribusiness leaders focused on reforestation through sustainable plantings. After shifting their focus to building the health of the soil, Cid and Paola have been able to provide farmers with sustainable agriculture protocols that not only nourish the land, but produce higher-quality crops.





Sustainability and conservation are the guiding factors behind Cid and Paola's work.
Courtesy of Cid Simões and Paola Segura

■ MERGING CONSERVATION AND AGRIBUSINESS

This dynamic husband-wife duo is out to save the rainforests of Brazil from deforestation. What's their secret? Fruit trees and ornamental flowers, and of course, the farmers who plant them. Traditional farming in Bahia, Brazil uses conventional agriculture, which has an impact on the environment. This method of farming depletes the land of nutrients and is stripping Brazil of one of its most important resources—rainforests.

As graduates of EARTH University in Costa Rica, Cid Simões and Paola Segura saw the importance of merging conservation and agribusiness. Before the pair joined forces, the success of Cid's ornamental flower business led to a government program that expanded tropical flower production. His next venture took him to the heart of the Amazon rainforest, where he worked with farmers to sustainably harvest brazil nuts for Häagen-Dazs and produce latex leather for Hermès, a designer in France.

■ FRUIT TREES

Cid applied what he had learned to a new venture—this one with Paola. Together, through education and agribusiness, Cid and Paola worked to restore Brazil's native forests. Instead of following the traditional restoration efforts of planting eucalyptus and pine trees, they looked to a more sustainable source of income—fruit trees. Fruit trees not only require less land than eucalyptus and pine trees, but they feed the soil, and provide a long-term profit source. As perennials, fruit trees continue to bear fruit year-after-year. Three years after planting, farmers are able to harvest the fruit to feed their families and sell in the market for generations to come. This project earned Cid and Paola the title National Geographic Explorers.

For Cid and Paola, education was the key to keep their momentum going. Many of the farmers they worked could not read or write, so teaching the farmers the reasoning behind their methods was important. The explorers followed a tried-and-true approach: they got in the dirt with the farmers and relied on word-of-mouth to encourage other farmers to join their mission.

"We buy the land, do the planting, earn enough money to recover our expenses, and then donate the project to the family we've trained. In return, they must bring five other families on board and teach them... Before we turn it over, we make enough profit to start our next project, so it's all sustainable."



Effective Microorganism (EM) biotechnology in both farming and wastewater treatment has allowed Cid and Paola to expand their agribusiness approach. This farmer is holding chemically treated bananas (on the left) and EM organic bananas (on the right).

Courtesy of Cid Simões and Paola Segura

■ EM: ALTERNATIVE APPLICATIONS

Leaders sometimes need to change their focus in order to keep their business financially sound. After running into political roadblocks and having trouble finding financial support, Cid and Paola put their rainforest work on hold. While they are no longer working hand-in-hand with farmers, they remain motivated by sustainability. This power team has been branching out in other ways to support the environment—this time by delving deeper into the soil.

Through Effective Microorganism (EM) biotechnology, naturally occurring organisms are added to the soil to control pests. Boosting the health of the soil leads to increased crop yields and a significant reduction in pesticide usage. Cid and Paola have partnered with a professional EM research group based in Okinawa, Japan to create sustainable agriculture protocols, which have allowed farmers to decrease herbicide usage by 40%, decrease pesticide usage by 20%, and improve the quality and yield of the crops produced. Cid states, “Mangoes, bananas, grapes, pineapples, soybean, beans, rice, and others that are produced under our protocols contain much fewer agrochemicals, are much juicier and more colorful, and of course are tastier and more nutritious. Farmers are really, really happy.”

Cid and Paola have found that EM technology has beneficial applications in wastewater treatment as well. They are currently involved with two projects that work to decontaminate and recover reservoirs that supply water to over four million people in Brazil. So far, their results have been fantastic.

■ BUILDING BRIDGES

Through their work with farmers in Brazil's rainforest as well as their latest venture with EM technology, Cid Simões and Paola Segura have been working to reconnect people with their native land. In addition, they are building a bridge to link agriculture, business, and conservation. Through it all, Cid explains, “...we kept our roots with the environment and sustainability. We hope that with our successful business, we soon will be able to restart the rainforest project again, but this time with enough resources and much more independence.”