

The Cochabamba Project – Farmer Interview with Don Segundino

My name is Don Rodriguez Segundino Cascia. I was born in Tasna –Retiro in the province of Nor Chichas, Potosi, in the South Central mines, Quechisla. I am the son of a miner. I came to Santa Cruz when I was 18 years, then I went back home. At 19 I settled down in Santa Cruz in order to join one of the settlement areas and to colonize the land. But insofar as education and economy were concerned as well as production, we knew absolutely nothing because we were miners who were used to working with rocks. We were factory workers or boot cleaners or carpenters, but few of us knew about the forest or wood. Together, we came along with axes and machetes to clear the forests, and without knowing how to sow, we planted rice, maize and other things to get food quickly. In that way we got food. Sadly, when I remember it now, we were working against nature, taking all the goodness out of the forest because we were killing our comrade's firewood, our timber, our forest.



The short-term project is to clear all the scrub you see here, to clear it and start planting short-term products such as strawberries, beans, corn, rice, cassava, bananas and pineapple. These products are rich in the short term, firstly as a source of our own food and then after that for sale. On top of those short term crops, we are thinking of continuing to maintain this land and to develop the environment, planting fruit trees in the medium term. Among the fruit trees are lemons, tangerines and oranges. There's also coffee, coconuts and glycerol, which is 17

times more expensive than oranges. Then there is the hibiscus, which is grown in between the trees. And there are gandul beans to feed the chickens, which can be grown among the trees and feed the soil. Finally, stevia is very good for fortifying the plants with organic compost to manage land that has become completely compacted. Then for the long-term there are woods such as mahogany, cuchi and others which mature in about 100 years, and which are also very important for all those timber products in the city.

We want to reach a point where this is all being managed sustainably. Every man, from the moment he starts breeding chickens, starts growing vegetables, starts managing his timber lots is replenishing and replenishing until the day he dies. Then his children are left, and his children pass it on to his grandchildren and they even pass it on to his great grandchildren because the mahogany wood and everything will be for the great grandchildren. For if I



live to 70, maximum 80 years, mahogany trees will mature in a 100 years and this timber will be left for the great-grandchildren. The grandchildren would still be here with the fruit trees and the 20-30 year old timber, and the great-grandchildren would be left with the long-term timber. That's an important statement we want to make.

I want us to have projects. And the projects should be, as I said, in the short term, about providing what we can from the land and then in the medium and long term about nature. Up to this point I've known the ArBolivia project for 4 years and ArBolivia really understands that campesinos have to work, but also have to be sustainable with the support of the project. I need a project to support me until harvest and then after harvest to carry on.



Specifically, ArBolivia supported me by first giving me seedlings. Secondly they paid us half of the cost of making the plot ready for planting. Then they paid us for doing the planting and again for weeding every three months in the first year, twice in the second year and then one last time after that. Then we have to do without for a while for the timber trees to grow. I think 3 years is not enough because you have to live from day to day. The project will have to think about supporting farmers at least 5 years not 3. That is a point that I am trying hard to make. But I'm very happy that in these 5 years I can return to agro-forestry plantation, to have a new forest again and a healthy environment. I am very happy that the children are healthier.

