

A resilient plant for Micani

Cracked earth, dry riverbeds, bare rocks – The landscapes of Micani resemble wastelands after the six months long dry season. Not many plants survive in this climate at an altitude of 6,500-10,000ft (2,000-3,000m). The indigenous tara tree is an exception: After two years the plants don't need additional watering anymore. The trees can then survive the long droughts without harm. Furthermore, tara trees can grow at steep hills. Thus, the plants don't take space that could otherwise be used for food crops. Besides, the trees slow down erosion and thus protect the farmers' basis of life. The legume also adds Nitrogen to the ground, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers on surrounding land.

The tara seeds can be used for processing high-quality leather and manufacturing nutritional supplements. Before harvesting them, the seed pouches are dried by the sun while still hanging on the tree. The seeds are taken out of the seed pouches manually and subsequently processed further. Depending on the altitude, 130-280 plants can grow on one acre. A high demand for the product leads to good prices: With 2.5 acres (330-700 plants) a family can generate enough income for the year.

Family businesses – a way to more gender equality

Rural Bolivia is characterized by strong patriarchal structures: Women only have a say in 2 % of the socially relevant decisions [HSI, 2014]. In building family businesses that grow tara trees and subsequently sell the seeds, we see a way to gradually weaken these patriarchal structures. In our system a family is the smallest production unit. Men and women are equally involved in the tara production and are schooled in entrepreneurship only together. For further processing and selling the tara seeds, the family businesses build community cooperatives, saving transport costs and strengthening their bargaining position.

We also support setting up these community cooperatives: Every tara seedling is subsidized with 0,38\$. The amount payed by the family (0,15\$) goes directly towards the cooperatives.



At a glance



The seeds can be used for processing high-quality leather and manufacturing nutritional supplements

A seedling costs about 0,53 \$



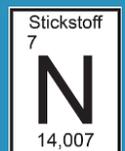
During the first 2 years the plants need 5 liters of water every 10 days

After 3-4 years, the plant yields first fruits



With 2.5 acres (330-700 plants) a family can generate enough income for the year

The tara tree adds Nitrogen to the ground and protects it from erosion, making the surrounding land more fertile



Tara trees live for about 70 years

