

Jupaú Indigenous Producers (Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau)

Introduction

Recent contact and economic autonomy

The Jupaú indigenous people – also known as Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau – were officially contacted for the first time forty years ago¹ in Rondônia State, Brazil. Today they are 400 people, mostly young (15 to 35 years old) since many elders did not survive contact with non-indigenous people. Locally, Jupaú people are famous for their production of cassava flour. Their flour is sought after by the population from towns near the Indigenous Territory Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau because of its unique flavor. Thanks to sales of cassava flour, Jupaú communities have food security and are economically independent.

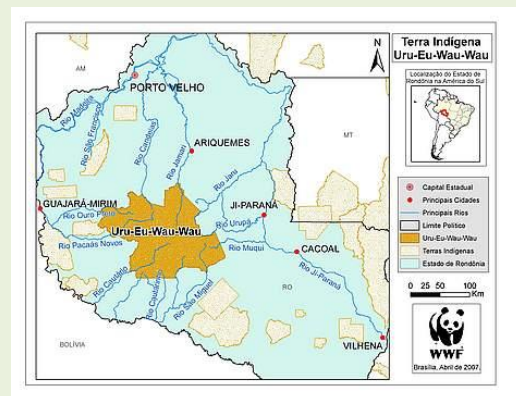
While conventional cassava production can cause deforestation, the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau's is based on sustainable management of the forest and traditional techniques. Jupaú producers currently do not have a cooperative or association to formally organize sales, but hope to create one in the near future. They sell it individually or on a community basis (at the village level).

Production and commercialization of cassava flour, copaiba oil, and Brazil nuts are managed entirely by Jupaú producers. The only external

¹ Official records of contact with Jupaú people date back to 1976, but there are other sources showing indigenous occupation in that region since 1909. Jupaús their self-denomination. Their official name in Brazil is Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau. Source: [Povos Indígenas do Brasil, Instituto Socioambiental](#).

support is provided for the transportation of products. Brazil nut and copaiba oil production in the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau territory also has strong commercial potential, but commercialization of those products has not been sufficiently developed yet.

The Jupaú have benefitted from flexible, culturally appropriate support that is continuing to improve their capacity to engage with markets and maximize the benefits of their cassava production.



Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous Territory

Source: WWF-Brazil

Ongoing training following indigenous dynamics

About three years ago, Jupaú producers began to work on improving their cassava flour production methods. The reasons for this were twofold: to comply with standards required by the National Sanitary Surveillance Agency (Anvisa), and to establish a formal economic activity in order to create formal invoices demanded by local merchants.

Jupaú producers requested the support of the Kanindé Association, a Brazilian NGO focused on indigenous rights and environmental defense. Since then, Kanindé has conducted more than ten courses and workshops in different villages within the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Territory. These activities are part of the general assistance and advocacy projects

implemented by the Kanindé Association. Kanindé's support is based entirely on verbal agreements with Jupaú leaders.

Training courses are focused on structuring and improving the production of cassava flour. Kanindé has a methodology based on indigenous priorities and cultural dynamics. Thus, the process is quite slow compared to non-indigenous group dynamics. If Jupaú people have other priorities that conflict with training workshops – dealing with territory invasions is one such example – Kanindé immediately changes its plans. On average, Kanindé visits the indigenous territory every 20 days.

Challenges

Lack of legal entity

One of the main challenges for Jupaú producers is formally structuring their business. Since they do not have a legal entity, they cannot produce invoices or receipts. In addition, they do not comply with legal standards and don't have their own brand. That is why buyers, which are mainly small shops in the cities, pay a lower price for their products, compared to other cassava flours that meet these legal requirements.

Official authorization required for indigenous peoples

In order to have a legal entity the Jupaú producers must obtain an authorization from the National Indigenous Agency (FUNAI) and from the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA). For two years Kanindé has been trying to help indigenous producers obtain this authorization, referred to as the Declaration of Indigenous Aptitude (or DAP, in Portuguese). Government bureaucracy, a lack of local authority efficiency, and difficulty accessing information have posed as major obstacles in this process. The situation

worsened when the MDA was eliminated in June 2016. Now nobody knows which body will be responsible for issuing the authorization.



Cassava flour in beneficiary unit
Source: Kanindé Association

Building administration capacity

Creating a cooperative is still not viable as the majority of Jupaú producers have insufficient formal education to adapt to contract dynamics. Additionally, producers do not keep records of their production and commerce volume. Kanindé has recently begun to measure the size of cassava fields in order to calculate the amount of flour produced; however, their actual production capacity is unknown. Because of that, it is difficult for them to get credit from the government or better prices for their products.

Logistics

Logistics is another obstacle for Jupaú commercial development. Although the Uru-Eu-Wau-Waun Indigenous Territory is easily accessible by road, the Jupaú people do not have their own cars to transport their products. Up until now, the Kanindé Association or local representatives of FUNAI lend them a car and offer fuel to transport their products to towns nearby. The trip to the nearest urban center takes about two hours by car, and getting to the capital of Rondônia, Porto Velho, six or seven hours, depending on

their village of origin. However, Jupaú producers occasionally take their products to towns on their own motorcycles. This happens mainly in cases of emergency, when they need to buy medicine, for example.

Invasions

The main external problem for Jupaú producers is land invasions. The official status of Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Territory as demarcated indigenous land has never guaranteed its protection from loggers, miners, and non-indigenous farmers. Jupaú people always take the lead on defending their territory. Some organizations, such as Kanindé, assist them in this defense. However, stopping invasions consumes a lot of time, and negatively affects the Jupaú's economic activities and training courses.

Impacts

Income generation

The production of cassava flour ensures not only the Jupaú's subsistence and food security, but also provides extra income to buy durable goods and medicines. In this sense it has contributed to material quality of life within the indigenous territory.

At the same time, cassava flour production keeps their cultural traditions alive. It is based on traditional methods and is very appreciated by Jupaú people. It is also recognized by consumers from outside the indigenous territory because of its flavor. Today, the demand for Jupaú flour in nearby towns exceeds supply.

Environmental Conservation

Cassava flour production contributes to forest conservation of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau territory (1,867,117 hectares). Cassava cultivation areas have always been sustainably managed. Jupaú products are totally organic

and preserve water and soil because they do not require agrochemical inputs that normally damage these resources. Furthermore, because economic autonomy is ensured by cassava flour production, there is significantly less pressure on the Jupaú people to engage in activities that cause deforestation.



Jupaú women processing cassava
Source: Kanindé Association

Future strategies

Access to new markets

Reaching new markets in the capital of Rondônia (Porto Velho) or the city of São Paulo is perceived as a great opportunity to improve prices paid for Jupaú cassava flour. Additionally there is strong potential for production of Brazil nut and copaiba oil inside Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau land. Jupaú producers already have a management plan drawn up with Kanindé's assistance that could help them develop those products. The main challenges to implementing such plans are transportation logistics (lack of a car continuously available to producers) and the absence of experts to search for new markets and make connections with buyers.

Added value

One of the main priorities of Jupaú producers is to increase their capacity for producing and processing in order to get a better price for their products. Currently, the amount paid for a kilogram of cassava flour is about BRL 2.50 (this price can vary depending on the buyer). Jupaú producers are known as good negotiators and always compare the prices paid to other producers. They demand a fair price when selling in the local market.

Other priorities include the continuation of training courses and improvement of the business structure. Securing compliance with legal requirements and obtaining official license is an important goal in order to increase the price of their cassava flour.

Indigenous producers have additional goals such as obtaining a label of origin, developing their own brand, and having better, smaller packages (now the flour is sold in large bags of 60 kg). Kanindé has managed the necessary documentation to obtain the label “Indigenous people of Brazil” issued by FUNAI, which certifies the origin of indigenous production.

Key points

1. With Indigenous groups recently contacted, it is important to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance.
2. Meeting sanitary and business regulations is challenging and reduces the prices paid for their products.
3. Use of their traditional processing techniques creates a unique flavor and market premium.

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*The main source of information was an interview with IvaneideBandeira, director of Kanindé Association.