

The Man-Aung Project

Man-Aung Island is an unexploited paradise on the Western shore of Myanmar, in the Bay of Bengal. With an area of 523 km² it has 50,000 inhabitants, but employment and business opportunities for them are limited. Up to now, coconut farmers and copra makers had an especially hard life. On their remote island, they were not able to compete with prices on the domestic market, due to the high transportation cost. As a result, many of them considered cutting coconut trees to start other farming instead – a move which would have deprived the island of its natural shield against storms and flooding. This is when we came in as Mya Ayer. Our vision of developing Man-Aung into a coconut paradise and as a model for organic agriculture has proved to be a sound business strategy. In our new production facility, we will process up to 60 mt of virgin coconut oil each month. For coconut farmers, this will bring a reliable income at prices far beyond current levels but which are still attractive for us. And people currently working as copra makers will be integrated as agents to deal with the farmers – as our business model is inclusive and respectful.

We engage with the local farmers to improve their production and situation in many respects. Their plots are certified organic with our support and we make sure they can generate further benefits through intercropping. Growing ginger and turmeric with seeds, organic fertilizers and guidance provided by our team brings them additional income. We guarantee offtake of the products and process them in our dehydration facility.

For coconut plantations we introduce a structured approach to planting new trees to replace ageing ones and help the farmers with finance. In our model farm, we test new dwarf varieties which should reduce the time to harvest from 7 to 3 years as well as lessen the risk of accidents for pluckers. A good business model for all parties involved – and with scope for expansion. The island offers sufficient space for further plantations and we will make sure it follows the natural model and is integrated into the landscape and environment.

Fair trade and relations with our suppliers are dear to our heart. Preserving their livelihoods is our guiding principle when it comes to processing as well. In our production, we create 250 jobs and provide training for our staff. We also care for the natural environment. Solar energy will cover 35% of our energy consumption through our PV hybrid system. Groundwater is a precious resource on this island, thus we focus on rainwater conservation to cover water requirements. And a purification plant will safeguard high hygiene standards.

Avoiding waste is another priority. We will use the whole fruit, processing it into different products besides the oil. We will use coconut peat as organic fertilizer and will process coconut husk into coconut fibre instead of it being burnt. This will save about 1,200 t of CO₂ emissions each year – our contribution to tackle climate change in a location which is amongst the most at risk. And coconut shells will end up as coconut charcoal on barbecue grills or in water purification plants.

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MYA AYER GROUP OF COMPANIES

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