

# We Are Selva Maya

## Foreword

During the first half of 2019 there were several global headlines that emphasize the impact of global warming; a single example is that temperature records were broken in several cities around the globe. However, we were able to see firsthand the impacts on our ecosystems through the influx of sargassum along the Caribbean region and the incidences of forest fires in the Selva Maya which were higher compare to previous years.

With greater determination, we must become aware of these realities and act upon them, from the trench in which we find ourselves, to promote the protection and sustainable use of the forest massif that we live in and depend on. We must become active and more involved in combating against the issues before there is no return from the environmental catastrophe that is upon us.

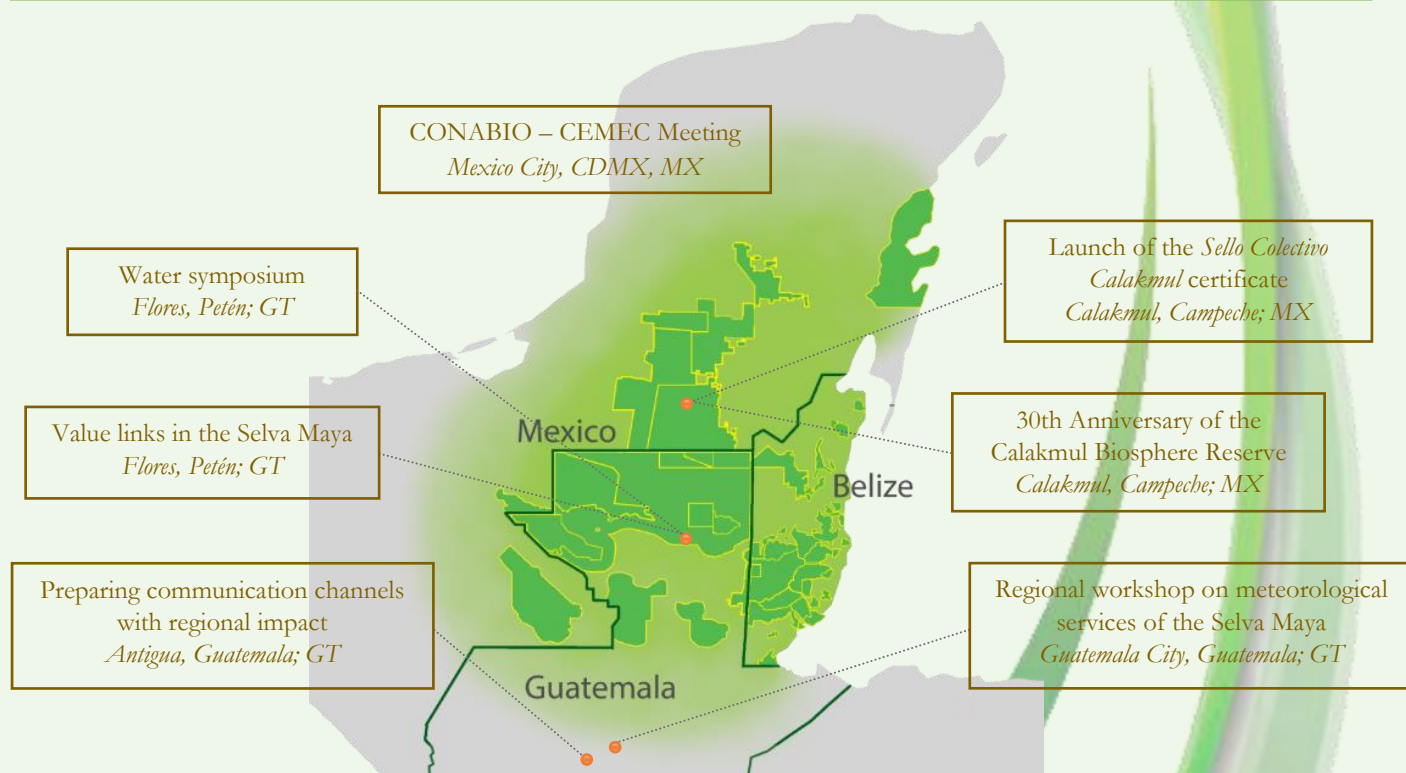
In the fifth edition of our newsletter #WeAreSelvaMaya, we share some activities that took place in the first half of 2019. These activities seek to have a positive impact on the awareness of those involved, and therefore, on our habitat. Additionally, we share some topics of interest like the implementation of a pilot tourism route called *Ecotourism Routes in Calakmul, a sustainable economic alternative* and *Good practices in chewing gum extraction*. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions, in order to enrich our electronic newsletter, which we hope will be a functional and effective communication tool.



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Lisa Steurer, Director, Selva Maya Programme / GIZ

## News



## CONABIO – CEMEC Meeting

Thanks to the mutual interest to collaborate and exchange experiences and technologies between the CONAP Monitoring and Evaluation Center, Guatemala (CEMEC) and technical advisors of the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, Mexico (CONABIO), who participated in a working session in Mexico City on January 22 to establish a process of inter-institutional benefit.

CONABIO shared its experience in managing the MAD-Mex system and presented biodiversity monitoring systems and database integration.

For its part, CEMEC presented progress the progress on *6th Monitoring Report on the Governance of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve*, with the vision to support the decision makers responsible for the managing of this natural reserve in Guatemala. It also showed the status of the *Climate Atlas of the Selva Maya*, which was compiled with climatological data from the three

countries that share this important region. Finally, CEMEC expressed that the SMART system (Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool) has been implemented for five years to support the management of protected areas in Guatemala. The CONABIO team showed particular interest in the knowledge of this system and the construction of data models.



Participants of the CONABIO – CEMEC Meeting

## Regional workshop on meteorological services of the Selva Maya

On February 21, with the support of the Regional Committee of Hydraulic Resources of the Central American Integration System (CRRH-SICA), the first **Regional Workshop on Meteorological Services on the Selva Maya** was held in Guatemala City. The aim was to identify collaboration potentials and data exchange mechanisms for the development of climate / meteorological products of common interest for the countries sharing the Selva Maya.



Work session during the Regional workshop on meteorological services

Representatives of the three countries took part in the workshop. In the case of Guatemala, these are members of the National Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology (INSIVUMEH); the Center for Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Council of Protected Areas region VIII (CEMEC / CONAP) and the NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). On behalf of Mexico, collaborators from the National Meteorological Service (NMS) and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) participated. Belize was represented by members from the National Meteorological Service.

High expectations are placed on the cooperation between the meteorological services of the three countries and the Selva Maya Programme of the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ). The aim is to rescue and exchange historical and current data, which are freely and easily accessible and available in near real time, in order to develop useful products for short, medium and long-term decision-making.

## Value links in the Selva Maya

Since 2012, the Selva Maya Programme, in partnership with the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP), has promoted the strengthening of the value chain of Ramon seed using the *Value Links* methodology.

An outstanding achievement is the creation of the Ramon Seed Committee that was initially form from four community groups and has now nine active community groups. Of these nine groups, five have earned their organic certification and sell valued added product for the suitable manner the Ramon seed is processed.

Recognizing the usefulness of this tool, the *Training of Facilitators in the Value Links Methodology for the Promotion of Value Chains* was carried out. The target group were those responsible for strengthening

sustainable livelihoods in communities located in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala and the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in Mexico. The event took place from April 8 to 10, in Petén, Guatemala.

Actions such as these bring together allies who lead, articulate and coordinate activities to improve the value chains of timber and non-timber products in the Mayan



Forest.

Trained Staff on *Value links* Methodology

## Launch of the *Sello Colectivo Calakmul*



Certified enterprises with the *Sello Colectivo Calakmul*

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve is managed by the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP). With the technical support of the Project Protection and Sustainable Use of the Selva Maya of the GIZ, the certificate *Sello Colectivo Calakmul* (SCC) was launched on May 23, in the context of the 30th Anniversary of this natural protected area.

This award is given to local companies that offer products and/or services that have been developed under sustainability criteria, have **good governance**

practices, activate the **local economy** and act with **environmental co-responsibility**. There are currently four certified companies, one with gold level, two with silver and one with bronze.

CONANP and GIZ had developed this model for more than three years based on principles of social and environmental responsibility, assumed by companies that value the wealth of natural resources in the region and implement sustainable businesses.

Why should these products with the SCC be bought? By buying products or services bearing this label you contribute to the protection and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. This protected area form part of the Selva Maya that is considered to be one of the most important **green lungs** in the world. Similarly, you would be contributing to the fulfillment of the [Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda](#), particularly the Goals: 5. Gender equality, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 12. Responsible consumption and production and 15. Life on land

## Water Symposium in Petén, Guatemala

The *Petén Water Quality Board*, an inter-institutional body with the help of GIZ, seeks to implement programs to preserve water quality held a symposium: **Current situation and perspectives of the Petén Itzá Lake basin**, on May 22 and 23 in Flores, Guatemala, with support from the GIZ. The event was aimed at mayors, NGO, students, government organizations and environmental conservation professionals. Topics covered included biodiversity, water quality, governance, sanitation and exchange of experiences in other lakes in Guatemala.

In addition to scientific presentations, a panel discussion called *What future do we want for the Petén Itzá Lake?* was held. Several institutions participated, including the Municipal Company of Drinking Water and Sewer of Petén (EMAPET), Authority for the Sustainable Management and Development of the Basin of Lake Petén Itzá (AMPI), Guatemalan Tourism Institute (INGUAT), Civil Development Initiative (INCIDE) and National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP). The aim

was to identify immediate actions to adequately manage the basin for the well-being of the region.

At the end of the event, a [media outreach statement](#) was issued to the public. So that everyone, particularly the decision makers, understand and become aware of the problems faced by basin. It highlights the need for immediate actions to take place to control the degradation and pollution of the lake which is a point of very difficult return.



Activities during the Water Symposium

## 30th Anniversary of the Calakmul Biosphere

The Selva Maya is considered one of the most important **green lungs** in the world. Part of it is the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, a Natural Protected Area of 723 thousand hectares, located in southern Campeche, Mexico. Due to its natural and cultural characteristics, it was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a Mixed World Heritage Site, in 2014.

On May 23 it commemorated 30 years of its creation. The celebration included sport, academic and cultural activities, all with the aim of motivating reflection on the survival of this kind of space in a context of global warming, extinction of species, land use change and the increase in solid waste.

During this event, the Selva Maya Programme supported various activities such as a photographic exhibition, a lecture on the importance of birds in the Selva Maya, the launch of the *Sello Colectivo*

*Calakmul* certificate, a scientific colloquium at the Technological University of Calakmul and the inauguration of an ecotourism alternative called "Route of the Crafts", which included a guided tour in the community 20 de Noviembre.



environments, protecting genetic diversity and saving and disseminating the knowledge necessary for sustainable use. We wish this Reserve a long existence!

Let us remember that Natural Protected Areas are created in order to contain the constantly increasing, not always positive intervention of humans in their habitat. Its function is clear and essential in terms of preserving natural

## Preparing communication channels with regional impact

The Selva Maya can be positioned and potentiated by creating a regional communication network that highlights the relevance of this **green lung** and provides timely information to improve decision-making and raise public awareness of the urgency of political influence to promote environmental conservation.

As a contribution to this window of opportunity, meetings were held in June 2019 with the communication areas of the environmental institutions in Belize, Guatemala and Mexico. From Guatemala members of the Ministry of Environment and the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) participated, as well as from Belize, representatives of MAFFESDI and the Forest Department. On behalf of Mexico, collaborators of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP) and the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO).

The objective was to form a Technical Board of Government Communicators and a Network of Independent Communicators and Journalists that promote relevant topics for the region of the Selva Maya in terms of biodiversity conservation and climate change.

These meetings enabled the exchange of experiences on communication strategies between the institutional communication coordinators of the three countries. On the other hand, national communication officers of CONAP were trained in the use of *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)*, *spokesperson and key messages*.

Once the Technical Board and the Communicators Network of the Selva Maya have been integrated, it is expected that communication and collaboration between regional stakeholders will be facilitated. Effective communication channels are also used to attempt to consolidate the Mayan Forest Strategy within the framework of the [2030 Agenda](#) and thus contribute to achieving some Sustainable Development Goals.



Work session among Selva Maya communicators

## Interest topic

### Eco touristic routes in Calakmul, a sustainable economic alternative

As part of the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, the **Route of the Crafts** was inaugurated with an introductory visit to the artisan workshops of three organizations of the community 20 de Noviembre, on 25 May, in Calakmul, Mexico.

The event was attended by the Mayor of Calakmul, the Director of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, the person in charge of the Rectoría of the Technological University of Calakmul (UTC), local tour operators, tourism services providers and sponsoring organizations, as well as other local stakeholders.

This tour is one of the first tourist products developed from various contributions to the community initiatives of craftsmen carrying out non-timber forest activities. On the one hand, tourism students at UTC designed narratives to create an interpretative discourse of the jungle, the Mayan cultural identity and the conjunction of the elements of nature and artisan creation. On the other hand, the strengthened abilities of craftsmen have succeeded in integrating these narratives into their creative manual labor, their history and their culture in a transformative travel experience.

The participating craftsmen organizations were:

- i) *Artesanos Sabios*: visitors will be able to elaborate a wooden handicraft, identifying some forest species and putting into practice carving and waxing techniques
- ii) *Neek Ich Ché*: Craft workshop that recovers seeds, roots, flowers and other elements of nature to create handicrafts, decorative items and jewelry
- iii) *Tuumben Kab*: group of women whose main input is Melipona bee honey with which they produce medicines and beauty products.

The organizations together offer the visitors a tour of the three workshops. So, they can observe, make a craft and finally enjoy the traditional gastronomy of the Mayan families that involved a variety of smells, flavors and sensations that give the visitor a pleasant memory and unforgettable experience.

The Selva Maya Programme has contributed to strengthening production, management and cooperation capacities between craft groups. Likewise, its focus on the certification of its production according to sustainability standards enables them to be an example of the protection of natural resources and, at the same time, to promote management and coordination of sustainable development and territorial planning efforts for the protection of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve.



Left, handicraft of Neek Ich Ché workshop

Up-right, members of Tumben Kab, women that made products with Melipona honey

Down-right, wood handicrafts

© GIZ / Saul George

## Interest topic

### Good practices for chewing gum extraction

The chicozapote or chewing gum (*Manilkara spp.*) is a tropical species original from Mesoamerica. The tree is appreciated for its durable wood, its bark with medicinal qualities, its edible fruits, but above all for its latex, which is used as the basis for the production of chewing gum.

The first gum latex extractions are attributed to the Mayans, whose culture flourished more than two thousand years ago in the southeastern region of Mexico and northern Central America. Commercial exploitation began at the end of the 19th century and was one of the main sources of development and employment for the communities of the Selva Maya in the last century. Chewing gum was the “engine of economic development” in Guatemala and southeastern Mexico, chewing gum is known as **white gold**.

Chewing gum has been an export product, mainly to the United States and Japan. With the invention of synthetic products derived from petroleum as the basis for the production of chewing gum in the 70's, the demand for natural chewing gum declined. With current trends in North American and European markets for natural and healthy products, natural chewing gum has again found international interest.

Despite an impasse in Guatemalan legislation on the extraction and use of chewing gum, there has been progress in the organization of communities. Currently the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP), has achieved commercial links with US companies and also has contact with buyers from Norway, Spain, Germany, as well as national buyers from Coban and Antigua in Guatemala. The nine

community organizations that manage the forest concessions are made up of more than 1,200 members who benefit directly from extracting the gum in their territories. In addition to the families of the partners, it is estimated that some six thousand individuals are indirectly beneficiaries of the extraction process that contribute to the local economy. It is worth mentioning that chewing gum activity outside the concession areas has had a greater socio-economic potential is even greater in Petén and Guatemala.

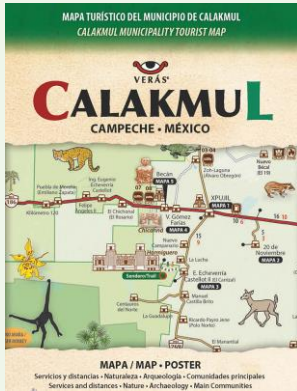
The use of chewing gum presents an economic alternative for forest communities contributing to the conservation of forests, their diverse and unique flora and fauna, and the environmental services they provide, such as carbon and water capture. Therefore, it is appropriate for chewing gum to be used in accordance with the management standards by the competent authority established thus, ensuring the sustainable extraction and the integrated management of community forest concessions while applying good management practices that allow the recovery of the forest. In this sense, the Selva Maya Programme supports the consolidation of sustainable economic alternatives that foster the development of communities within the Natural Protected Areas of the region.

A regional trend among chewing gum producers is the FSC Certificate (Forest Administration Council), a label that recognizes not only the seals as an organic product but also the sustainable management of the forest, which adds value to the product.



Left, a “chiclero” extracting latex in a traditional way  
Center, cooking of latex  
Right, chewing gum latex blocks obtained after the cooking  
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# Publications



## DOCUMENT

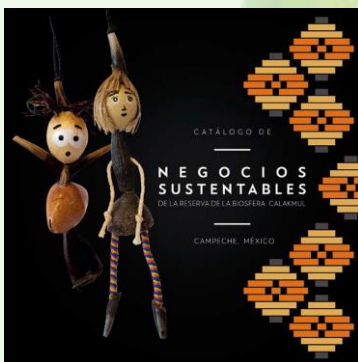
### **Calakmul Municipality Tourist Map**

Guide of products & ecotourist services for lovers of history, culture and nature

Published by: *Calakmul Biosphere Reserve & Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

<http://selvamaya.info/en/4037-2/>



## DOCUMENT (Spanish version)

### **Catálogo de negocios sustentables**

List of suppliers of products & services in the region of Calakmul

Published by: *Calakmul Biosphere Reserve & Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

<http://selvamaya.info/es/catalogo-de-negocios-sustentables-de-la-reserva-de-la-biosfera-calakmul/>



## FLYER (Spanish version)

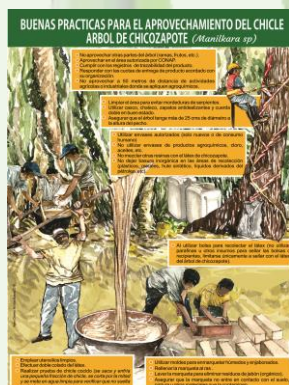
### **Sello Colectivo Calakmul**

Descriptive summary of the *Sello Colectivo Calakmul* certificate and its functioning

Published by: *Calakmul Biosphere Reserve & Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

<http://selvamaya.info/es/triptico-sello-colectivo-calakmul/>



## POSTER (Spanish version)

### **Buenas prácticas para el aprovechamiento del chiclé**

Easy and practical recommendations for the chewing gum producer, in a sustainable way

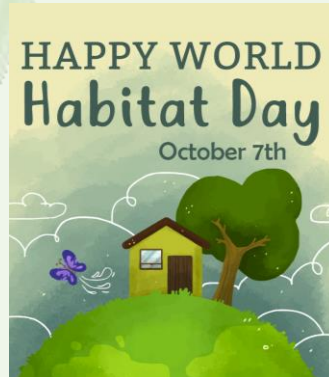
Published by: *CONAP, ACOFOP & Selva Maya Programme / GIZ*

Available on:

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## Important dates & celebrations



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