

### For Release December 17

#### **Ennovent announces the winners of the WWF Switzerland Tropical Forest Challenge**

*December 17, 2012* – Ennovent and WWF Switzerland are pleased to announce the winners of the Tropical Forest Challenge in two categories, company and startup. Launched in May 2012, the WWF Switzerland Tropical Forest Challenge is a global initiative managed by Ennovent on behalf of WWF Switzerland to discover the best for-profit enterprises from around the world that have a positive impact on the conservation of tropical forest biodiversity.

The winners are endorsed by WWF Switzerland as best solution providers and are awarded global visibility, networking and capacity building opportunities from the challenge partners such as, Good Company, Sustainatopia and Thomson Reuters Foundations'. These Challenge rewards are important as many early-stage entrepreneurs face resource gaps – such as networks and training – that inhibit their ability to scale high potential ventures.

Ennovent and WWF Switzerland are thrilled to announce that Runa ([www.runa.org](http://www.runa.org)) was selected as the winner of the company category. The other finalists within this category were EcoPlanet Bamboo, Wildlife Works, Rainforest Expeditions, and CHICZA.

Runa is an innovative Ecuador-based organization creating US markets for guayusa, a rich tasting naturally caffeinated tea sustainably grown by indigenous farmers. With decreasing amounts of land and limited access to markets, prior to Runa's intervention smallholder farmers typically had no other option than to maintain intense agricultural production – further degrading the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest. Since inception in 2009, Runa has generated over \$100,000 of direct income to over 2,000 farming families – representing an impressive average farmer income increase of 30% - and has planted over 200,000 trees.

"Runa is tremendously honoured to be chosen as the Company winner of the WWF Switzerland Tropical Forest Challenge," says Co-Founder Tyler Gage. "We hope that our model can inspire other entrepreneurs to take up sustainable conservation solutions", he adds.

Ennovent and WWF Switzerland are also excited to announce that Planting Empowerment ([www.plantingempowerment.com](http://www.plantingempowerment.com)) has been selected as the winner within the startup category. The finalists in this category were Floresta Group, EcoTech Timber, Maya Mountain Cacao and Eco-Fuel Africa.

Planting Empowerment is focused on developing mixed native species agroforestry projects that provide alternative income streams to slash and burn agriculture for smallholder farmers in Panama – encouraging tropical forest conservation. The company leases plots from small landholders to encourage long-term land tenure and stewardship of natural resources while providing hands-on forestry management skills and traditional classroom knowledge. To date Planting Empowerment has planted more than 27,500 trees and has ensured that farmers are earning 45% more than previous income levels.

Co-Founder of Planting Empowerment, Andrew Parrucci says, "We are excited to have won the startup category. We look forward to developing more sustainable agroforestry projects with small landholders and Indigenous communities in Panama and throughout Latin America as a result of the WWF Switzerland Tropical Forest Challenge."

Impressively, 306 solutions were nominated for the WWF Switzerland Tropical Forest Challenge with over 70 applications being received from Latin America, Africa, South East Asia and beyond. More than 2,300 votes were gathered from the public to choose the most high impact application. Each application was independently assessed by three panels supported by 31 distinguished experts on the criteria of forest biodiversity, development impact as well as on its commercial viability. The top applications in each category were then further evaluated by 11 experts on three jury panels.

WWF Switzerland and Ennovent thanks all nominees, applicants and other partners including ANDE, ASEI, Dalberg, GroAction, IDESAM, Impact Investment Asia, ITTO, Kaospilots Switzerland, Social Earth, The Artha Platform, The Hub, TONIIC and Unreasonable Institute for their support towards the Tropical Forest Challenge.

To learn more about the winners visit: <http://www.ennovent.com/challenges/index/id/8>

#### About WWF Switzerland

WWF Switzerland's mission is to stop the global destruction of the environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. To achieve this mission, WWF stands up for maintaining global biodiversity. WWF is further committed to reducing the use of natural resources to a sustainable level. [www.wwf.ch](http://www.wwf.ch)

#### About Ennovent

Ennovent accelerates innovations creating a sustainable impact on low-income people. We work with a global network of entrepreneurs, investors and experts to discover, finance and scale up the best innovations. We envision sustainable living for people at the base of the economic pyramid. [www.ennovent.com](http://www.ennovent.com)

#### Media Contact:

Jayashree Rukhaiyar  
Online Community Manager, Ennovent  
Email: [jayashree.rukhaiyar@ennovent.com](mailto:jayashree.rukhaiyar@ennovent.com)