



Press release

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## **Westfalia Fruit: helping the climate and Colombian biodiversity with a unique reforestation project**

Westfalia Fruit, a leading multinational supplier of avocados and a range of fresh vegetables and fruit is leading a unique effort in Colombia to care for a nationally protected area on its land in the Sonsón municipality, north-west of the capital Bogotá.

Westfalia has several orchards and an avocado packhouse in the area and one of its orchards, La Loma, is within the Distrito Regional de Manejo Páramo de Vida Maitamá. A landscape called páramo, that unites diverse climatic and ecosystem conditions and contains the Frailejón (*Espeletia sp*), a high mountain palm tree, the Roble (*Quercus humboldtii*) and Pino Colombiano (*Retrophyllum rospigliosii*), all protected tree species.

Since 2021, Westfalia has been working with the local Colombian government, community action committees and local producer associations, to protect the Maitamá páramo and restore ecologically important areas within its production farms as well as wider local ecosystems.

"We've built a 500m<sup>2</sup> tree nursery on the La Loma farm to propagate indigenous tree species of high ecological value. We have now planted more than 7,000 trees and with our nursery capacity at 10-15 thousand seedlings per year, we are on track to plant more than 20,000 trees by 2025. We anticipate that the carbon sequestration per hectare is 35 tons CO<sub>2</sub> each year which also supports our goal of being carbon neutral by 2030." said Francisco Lorza, Technical Director of the project.

The trees produced by the reforestation project are delivered to the local Secretariat of Rural Assistance and Environment, community action committees and Westfalia's orchards, reflecting the company's sustainable approach to business and its commitment to ensuring the conservation and management of natural resources.

The project employs four local community members and around forty volunteers and employees from the farms prepare the soil and undertake planting activities. The local communities involved also receive financial contributions from the municipality for projects that benefit the environment.

But there are challenges, particularly with propagating some indigenous trees. None of the seeds used by the nursery are purchased however some species are difficult to either find in the local forest or reproduce as they require specific conditions for germination. In the past this had led to a decline in some tree species including the Siete Cueros which is now a focus of the project.

"Despite the hurdles that we need to overcome, we are very proud that our work supports local, regional and national policies to promote environmental care and biodiversity. We are developing nature based solutions, which help to restore high mountain ecosystems, create biological corridors and positively manage our carbon footprint, making our production more friendly to the planet," said Edwuar Riaño, Forestry Engineer and Environmental Coordinator of Westfalia Fruit Colombia.



Westfalia in Colombia is now developing a complementary project to protect high mountain local water sources that supply several communities and help to protect biological corridors. The success of the current initiative gives Riaño hope for the future, “when you walk around Sonsón in some areas you can see the trees that have been produced in the nursery and that are now part of our local forests supporting the local birdlife, in particular the Barranquero (*Momotus aequatorialis*). It’s a good feeling,” he concluded.



Westfalia Fruit: helping the climate and Colombian biodiversity with a unique reforestation project.  
(Photo: Westfalia Fruit, PR029)



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## About Westfalia Fruit

The multinational Westfalia Fruit Group is a leading supplier of fresh and processed produce to international markets, offering a diverse range of quality fruit and related products via its vertically integrated supply chain. Founded 75 years ago on guiding environmental, social, governance & sustainability principles. These practices, premised on the legacy of Dr Hans Merensky are at the heart of all that is done by the Group – “To Do Good”, – of which continue to underpin our approach today.

Today, operating in 17 countries spread over 5 continents, the Westfalia Fruit Group prides itself on advancing sustainable agricultural practices and being a responsible corporate citizen within the communities in which it operates.

As a frontrunner in the avocado industry, Westfalia grows, sources, ripens, packs, processes, and markets accredited avocados across the globe throughout the year. Value-added products include avocado oil, low-preservative guacamole, frozen avocado, and dried fruit.

Westfalia grows fruit in all major origins in the Americas and Africa and sources from partner orchards, giving the Group the most diverse avocado-growing footprint in the world. Westfalia’s dynamic and integrated supply chain from research to the consumer benefits all stakeholders. The Group’s research division, Westfalia Technological Services, is the world’s largest privately funded subtropical fruit research unit. Its dedicated team of scientists and technicians focus on varietal development, innovation, and environmental matters, and provides a pivotal role in defining the future of the global avocado industry.

A supplier of choice to retail, wholesale, and food-service customers, Westfalia operates sales offices in the UK, Europe, North America, Latin America, southern Africa, and Asia. Fruit is packed in diverse formats and expertly ripened to deliver optimal eating quality. For more information visit [www.westfaliafruit.com](http://www.westfaliafruit.com).

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### For more information:

Danielle Willems

T: +27 011 076 8358

E: [danielle.willems@westfaliafruit.com](mailto:danielle.willems@westfaliafruit.com)

Maged Ochoa Ferrazzini

T: +31 164 317 012

E: [mochoa@emg-marcom.com](mailto:mochoa@emg-marcom.com)

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Maged Ochoa Ferrazzini ([mochoa@emg-marcom.com](mailto:mochoa@emg-marcom.com), +31 164 317 012)