



The soy story



BRAZIL & CHINA

COOPERATION ECO-SOCIAL FAIR TRADE & FARMERS

Needless to say, De Hobbit uses nothing other than organically certified - i.e. non-genetically modified - soybeans to produce its tempeh and tofu.

Until the Nineties it was the standard practice to source soybeans from countries in the sub tropics, where they thrive. Organic farming takes place mainly in China and Brazil.

Brazil: eco-social fair trade

In 1994 a group of small, family growers in southern Brazil (Parana) made a brave decision. They formed a cooperative, which they called Biorganica. The aim was to join forces as a way of investing in the equipment they needed; to create the structure and commercial standing they required; and to operate independently of the large soy processors and landowners. They are strongly rooted in the "moviemien-to sin terra" (Landless Workers' Movement), an association of farmers who lost their lands as a result of Brazil's harsh economic and social realities. Thanks to their cooperative, these farmers are now in a position to build a better future.

To support the initiative, we got in touch with the farmers. Where possible, we helped them develop a structure of their own. As the monitoring of soybean quality is a joint effort, we learn from each other how the very best quality can be cultivated, in the most advantageous biotope for man and environment. More on this cooperative at www.biorganica.com.br. There are now more than 120 affiliated farmers. Other crops are cultivated besides soybeans, such as tapioca, wheat and so on. The products are distributed in Brazil as well as Europe. In addition to the biological aspect, the products bear the Fairtrade and Eco-social logos. For this privilege we pay the farmers over and above the 'market price'.

The additional income is used for schooling and healthcare. Few years ago was Biorganica's tenth anniversary and De Hobbit was honoured to be there to join the celebrations. It gave us another opportunity to talk to these fine people, who are facing the future with great strength and belief. Indeed, this is in everyone's best interests, because these farmers are safeguarding the health of the Brazilian rainforest.

Thanks to their courage, and their biological methods, they are cultivating their crops with no harm to the rainforest.

And, obviously, it makes us feel good that we are able to play a part in it. By eating a vegetarian diet we can reduce our ecological footprint by a factor of 10. Our biological raw produce helps save the rainforest, the mechanism by which the planet breathes, and our social commitment offers the farmers a better future.

De Hobbit products bearing the Fair Trade label (tofu & silken tofu): these soybeans are from Brazil.

China: farmers' cooperative

Our organic wholesaler began setting up organic cooperatives in Northeast China midway through the twentieth century. Over many years of cooperation this has given rise to partnerships that share our ideals and objectives and are of immense value to us. Our wholesaler is in direct contact with its projects' growers. It is also in the process of setting up a Chinese subsidiary. Direct partnership implies direct communication. In addition to obtaining organic certification it collaborates with several Chinese associations, particularly Naturland. Through this it optimises product quality and supports the principles of fair trade. It has been a FairTrade certified trader and importer since 2010.

In China the soybean was first cultivated during the Shang dynasty (about 1700-1100 BC). The farmers use ecological farming practices, in which there is no place for conventional cultivation methods. It is extremely important to us that the seeds be grown locally. This tells us that they are adapted to the location and will deliver the finest quality. Something which our wholesaler can effectively guarantee.

Another plus: China operates a strict ban on all imports of genetically modified seeds. In other words, we can safely rule out contamination with GM soybeans.

Today our wholesaler is closely involved with 10 projects in China. The soybean projects are run in Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces, and in central Mongolia. The winters are long but the summers are hot and wet, which is ideal for flowering soybean plants. The projects are all certified under the EU legislation and some also satisfy the Biosuisse, Naturland or FairTrade guidelines.

Regular site visits give our wholesaler the opportunity to inspect the farms for itself and to ascertain the quality of the products cultivated.

It follows a strict scheme of analysis:

- 1/ inspection of the seeds purchased in China each year
- 2/ representative sample from each project and after every harvest
- 3/ after processing consignments are analysed for GMOs in accredited labs.

There then follows an analysis of other parameters, such as protein content and the presence of pesticides. Our years of experience in China, the proximity of the growers and the regularity of the visits give us confidence in the quality of our soybeans.

Project information:

The project covers 8 villages.

Tongliao is China's first FairTrade soybean project. The FairTrade bonus gives the people an opportunity to build village wells, extend village primary schools and send their children to secondary schools.

Farmers involved in the project: 39

De Hobbit products containing soybeans grown in China: tofu curry & tofu hazelnut.



GERMANY

PERSONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FARMER

We source the rest of our soybeans from Germany, where, thanks to the microclimate, it is now possible to grow soybeans. Once again, we are building direct and personal relations with the farmers, and this we do through the Bioland cooperative.

Below, a list of the German farmers who satisfy our quality standards:

Peter Waßner
Nackterhof 6, 67311 Nackterhof; DE-ÖKO-006 Bioland

Karlfried Eich
Kirchgasse 1, 67259 Kleinniedesheim; DE-ÖKO-006 Bioland

Ortwin Gallé
Crayenbühlstraße 10, 67295 Bolanden; DE-ÖKO-006 Bioland

Uli Goldschmidt
Enzinger Straße 27; 67551 Worms-Pfeddersheim; DE-ÖKO-039 Bioland

Armin Meitzler
Niederstraße 34, 55288 Spiesheim; DE-ÖKO-006 Bioland

Uli Zerger
Gerbacher Hof
Crayenbühlstraße 4, 67295 Bolanden; DE-ÖKO-006 Bioland



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FREEDOM OF CHOICE
AND CHOOSE FOR
A BETTER WORLD**

