

The Durian Project

The Foundation is spearheading a “Durian Revolution” in Venezuela



Rural, impoverished, tropical Latin America needs new options in sustainable livelihood that can serve as both antidotes to climate change and engines for economic growth. One example is the durian fruit.

The Durian Project is designed to propagate the durian fruit as a commercial crop in Venezuela and eventually other Latin American countries. The Foundation is pioneering durian fruit production in a country with no previous history with durian. We are successfully growing durian and may have the only producing durian trees in the country. We are sponsoring the cultivation and sale of durian to demonstrate its advantages as an environmentally and economically-attractive alternative in the tropics.

- Slash-and-burn (swidden) agriculture is widely practiced by low-income *campesino* farmers and results in widespread deforestation and erosion which can take decades if not longer for recovery.
- Clearing land for pasture (cattle) also results in extensive deforestation and erosion, with long-term environmental consequences.
- Planting trees (in this case, durian) is a clear path to reforestation and healing land erosion.
- Cultivating durian sequesters carbon by transforming land that has *already been deforested* into permanent tree farms populated by enormous durian jungle trees.
- Durian has enormous potential as a cash crop, putting food on the table for local farmers and low-income *campesinos* struggling in a country mired in a socio-economic crisis.
- This is a WIN-WIN environmentally and economically.
- The global demand for durian is growing and the Foundation aims to help Venezuela join the supply side of this beneficial and lucrative fruit.



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Our Durian Project follows IPCC recommendations to focus durian planting on already cleared land, using sustainable organic farming methods. We're planting durian trees in deforested land with the goal of replacing erosive slash-and-burn farming with permanent fruit forests. We encourage local farmers to take previously deforested land and transform it into durian forests using organic farming techniques.

“The best tree to plant (for carbon sequestration) is durian. The durian not only helps sequester carbon dioxide, but also bears valuable fruits.”

Resilience to climate change

Durian's unique resilience to climate-change lies in its predilection for hot climate. *Durian is well-suited for the hotter, wetter climates that lie ahead for our planet.* Our trees in production show that durian can thrive in tropical Latin America, as it does in Southeast Asia.

Economic drivers also make durian attractive at this point in Venezuela's evolution.

For small farmers, durian delivers **dramatically higher incomes** when compared to other crops. These families are economically incented to shift away from the slash-and-burn crops – or deforestation for pastures – on which they previously depended.



2024 progress

The Foundation's second-generation trees are producing attractive yields of fruit growing in both size and predictability. Once established, the trees have proven resistant to pests and diseases. We now seek to spread Durian across several regions of Venezuela and confirm that durian can grow and produce when well cared for.

Number of durian trees planted in ground and under supervision as of December 2024:

- Western Venezuela: 30+
- Eastern Venezuela: 85+

Number of treeplings in our managed tree nurseries as of December 2024.

To be planted in rainy season May-June 2025 depending on available resources and funding:

- Western Venezuela: 156+
- Eastern Venezuela: 100+

Due to the short viability of durian seeds and long time to produce (about 8 years from planting), durian has not yet been widely or commercially introduced in the neotropics. UNTIL NOW!

A durian fruit currently sells in Venezuela for \$20-80 USD (each individual fruit depending on size and location) – the equivalent of more than a full week's pay for a rural worker

A young durian tree can yield **50+** fruit per year

A mature tree can yield **500+** fruit per year



Environmental benefits

Durian forest farms create permanent tree covers that protect and cool the land, hold the soil, sequester carbon, and increase wildlife habitat. Durian tree farming:

- Is a proven antidote to climate change by reclaiming deforested land as new commercially-viable forests – sustainable permaculture with carbon sequestering.
- Is a healthy alternative to pastures (livestock), oil extraction, mining, and slash-and-burn practices, all resulting in deforestation, that currently dominate land practice in Venezuela and other Latin American countries.
- Fosters wildlife habitat, soil retention and improvement, and nesting for birds, bats and other pollinators.
- No known significant damage to air, water, land, soil, forests, animals, etc. as long as pesticides are not used in excess (organic farming).
- Low water footprint, low carbon footprint (0.9 k CO2e to produce 1.0 kilograms of fruit) – <https://www.healabel.com/durian-benefits/>
- Durian poses no threat as an invasive species, being completely dependent on humans for planting. The only other large primates (orangutans) that spread the seeds are not found in the Americas.



Economic benefits

Durian forest farming can help accelerate Venezuela’s recovery from its decades-old socio-economic crisis by introducing and propagating durian as a cash crop with long-term economic potential.

- A single medium–size durian fruit sells for the equivalent of a week of rural labor (\$25 USD).
- Low-income farmers and *campesinos* whom we work with are now planting, nurturing, and harvesting durian as individual contributors. They have proactively embraced durian as a cash crop that generates significant income.
- The Foundation is partnering with well-regarded, long-established Venezuelan Institutions like *Las Escuelas de Fe y Alegria* to develop "durian centers" promoting the cultivation and sale of durian fruit. We are also in discussion with the Rotary Club and other organizations about structured partnership opportunities.

According to one source, [market predictions](#) value the global Durian market at USD \$24.9 billion in 2023, with the global market surpassing USD \$49.9 billion by 2033.

The expanding durian markets in the US, Canada and Latin America are currently supplied by Southeast Asian exports. Durian is all the rage now on the Internet, with dozens of websites featuring tasting tours across Southeast Asia.

The Foundation believes that one day, Venezuela and other Latin American countries can join these suppliers as a reliable source of durian both within the country and as an exported fruit.

About Durian

Originally from Southeast Asia, where it is called the “King of Fruits,” Durian is considered one of the most unique, delicious, and satisfying fruits in the world. It is also one of the most nutritious. Its antioxidants and other healthy plant compounds help reduce risk of cancer, heart disease, and high blood sugar. Nutritionally, one cup (243 grams) of durian pulp delivers 9 grams of Fiber, 4 grams of Protein, and high percentages of Daily Value: Vitamin C 80%, Thiamine 61%, Vitamin B6 38%, Potassium 30%, Riboflavin 29%, Copper 25%, Folate 22%, Magnesium 18%, Niacin 13%.

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/durian-fruit - nutrition>