



## **TIST Voted Best Offsetting Project**

### *SUBSISTENCE FARMERS PROVE THEY CAN BETTER THEIR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND HELP THE PLANET*

TULSA, Oklahoma, U.S.A., 30 June, 2014 – The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program (TIST) has been voted Best Offsetting Project in a global survey conducted by Environmental Finance. This recognition, voted by carbon market industry professionals throughout the world, identified the many benefits that TIST farmers receive from working together to plant trees, and to develop and share local “best practices” that improve their lives.

Environmental Finance is an online news and analysis service established in 1999 to report on sustainable investment, green finance and the people and companies active in environmental markets. TIST is the first offsetting project to be recognized by Environmental Finance.

TIST is an agriculture, tree planting, development and carbon credit program that operates in Kenya, India, Uganda and Tanzania. TIST was developed with and for smallholder and subsistence farmers who plant trees on degraded land to improve their livelihoods and food security. Their actions also address local, regional and global environmental issues such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, adaptation and climate change.

“The real credit for the outstanding results of this program belongs to the farmers of TIST,” said Ben Henneke, co-founder of TIST. “These farmers collect local seeds, make nurseries, plant seedlings, and keep them alive through droughts, floods, and raids by cattle, goats and elephants. TIST farmers are an incredibly inspiring group of people. They are proud of the benefits their trees are having on their lives and on the global environment. This award recognizes the hard work done by more than 70,000 farmers planting trees, sharing information, monitoring results and helping other farmers.”

“Tropical deforestation is one of the largest man-made sources of CO<sub>2</sub>, and smallholder farmers are among those most severely harmed by climate change,” continued Henneke. “For the past 14 years, more and more TIST women and men have taken action to reverse deforestation and to improve their own land and the land in their communities. By carefully measuring the growth of their trees they have created a new ‘Virtual Cash Crop’ – carbon offsets. These carbon credits are sold to companies, organizations and people who want to encourage the TIST farmers’ efforts.”

TIST’s carbon offsets from India, Kenya and Uganda are validated and verified to Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) standards including the “Gold” level. “Sales of these premium quality TIST tonnes now fully support these existing locations and should continue profitably for another 25-30 years,” noted Henneke. “With additional expansion capital, we will continue to replicate this self-sustaining process.”

TIST farmers have demonstrated that using the new agricultural approaches, planting a variety of tree species, using higher efficiency stoves for cooking, and adopting better health practices have a large impact on their family's income and health. Recent studies required for the multiple verifications have shown that the benefits the farmers create far exceed the costs of developing the program.

Henneke added, "We have partnered with USAID Kenya over the last five years to expand TIST in Kenya so that more farmers, especially women and youth, could create more benefits for themselves, improve biodiversity and water quality, and protect forests. USAID's help in Kenya also benefited participants in each of the other countries when new best practices developed in Kenya were shared from farmer to farmer. TIST is showing that improving the local and the global environment creates more income and more opportunities. With more than one billion hectares of degraded land in need of restoration, TIST demonstrates that creating 'Payments for Environmental Services' for farmers in the tropics can rapidly reduce greenhouse gasses and provide time for the technological development of other 'low carbon' approaches to mature and be proven out."

Charlie Williams, vice president of Clean Air Action Corporation (CAAC), commented, "For the past 14 years we have had three primary concerns: First, that the farmers who joined TIST create a better life for themselves through their efforts. Second, that CAAC would create the monitoring systems and processes to accurately and transparently measure their results. And third, that their measured results would create a new source of income for them."

In May of 2011, the TIST program was "First in the World" to complete the VCS and CCB certifications and have now completed that process a total of 14 times. Williams added, "We are pleased to have customers who recognize both the technical excellence and the human benefits that purchasing TIST tonnes provides. Two of those important customers, The Carbon Neutral Company, and Microsoft have also won awards from Environmental Finance. The Carbon Neutral Company was voted 'The Best Offset Retailer' and Microsoft was voted 'Best Corporate Offset Programme.' TIST continues to replicate and expand because there are millions of farmers who want to join. We look forward to accomplishing the financing to meet the needs of those farmers, and to increase the beneficial impact of TIST on global climate change."

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For more information regarding the TIST program ([www.TIST.org](http://www.TIST.org)), or to schedule an interview with program leadership, please contact Trena Workman at +1 918 747-8770 or [trenaworkman@tist.org](mailto:trenaworkman@tist.org).

