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Ecuagenera: Conservation in action

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Ecuador is a small country with remarkable biodiversity across its four regions: Pacific Coast, Andes Mountain Range, Amazon Basin, and Galapagos Islands. Spanning altitudes from 0 to 7,000 meters above sea level, Ecuador protects important ecosystems in 52 national parks, including the renowned Yasuni National Park and Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve. In the past, Ecuador faced a lack of awareness about the significance and wealth of its flora. Environmental protection initiatives and resources were scarce. Unfortunately, the migration of people from the Andean Region led to the destruction of a substantial portion of the Amazon's primary forests, making way for extensive agricultural and cattle farms. This development greatly impacted the Orchidaceae, with many endemic epiphytic orchids now endangered. As Rudolf Schlechter documented in 1921, until 1920 Ecuador had 746 orchid species across 93 genera. Recognising the need for conservation and research, in 1992 the Portilla family established ECUAGENERA Cia Ltda. and in the past two decades has identified over 1,000 new species. Today, Ecuador has more than 4,200 orchid species, with Ecuagenera actively safeguarding over 10,000 native and non-native orchids and other plant varieties. Ecuagenera's comprehensive approach encompasses research, conservation, production, commercialisation, and ecotourism. The company collaborates with scientists worldwide and manages 16 private reserves, covering approximately 2,000 hectares, to protect fragile habitats and reintroduce endangered species. With laboratories for propagation and seed storage, as well as greenhouses in Ecuador, USA, and Germany, Ecuagenera leads the way in orchid conservation. It was the first company in Ecuador to obtain C.I.T.E.S. permits for exporting orchids. Additionally, Ecuagenera has established numerous partnerships with national and international universities and botanical gardens to further conservation efforts.

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