

MEDIA RELEASE

IN COOPERATION WITH THE SDC AND COOP

First refrigerator recycling plant opened in South America

– Swiss expertise and investment make a very special climate-protection project reality

An industrial project in the service of climate protection? It looks paradoxical at first glance, but it is actually a highly innovative, totally unique climate-protection project that will be effective in the long term. The slogan is «Climate Protection by Recycling».

The Zurich-based SENS International climate protection foundation opened the first refrigerator-recycling plant in South America on 10 September 2010. The opening ceremony was attended by around 250 prominent guests from the worlds of Brazilian politics and business, as well as high-ranking representatives of Switzerland such as Jörg Frieden, Vice-Director of the SDC, Ambassador Wilhelm Meier and other consular representatives. The «Swiss Climate Protection Initiative» launched by the foundation promotes sustainable climate-protection projects in newly industrializing countries for the destruction of CFCs, the highly potent greenhouse gases that are so harmful to the ozone layer. An industrial plant as climate protection project initially sounds absurd, but the figures are extremely persuasive: the project generates maximum environmental benefits per Swiss franc invested. 400,000 refrigerators a year are well within its capabilities. That's one refrigerator every 80 seconds, adding up to the equivalent of more than 600,000 tons fewer CO₂ emissions every year.

The CFCs contained in old refrigerators are among the worst climate killers. Although their use and consumption was prohibited by the Montreal Protocol of 1987, this instrument simply failed to make any provision for the disposal of CFCs from old refrigerators. In Brazil alone there are still about 11 million refrigerators in circulation containing CFCs equivalent to virtually 20 million tons of CO₂, all of which would have been allowed to dissipate into the atmosphere without hindrance under former disposal practices. With the environmentally friendly recycling methods employed under the «Swiss Climate Protection Initiative», the greenhouse effect is inhibited, and the climate benefits.

Conducted in collaboration with local project development partner Indústria Fox, the climate protection project is audited for compliance with the «Swiss Charter - Climate Protection by Recycling» to ensure that it meets the highest sustainability standards, which are supported and recommended by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). The «Swiss Charter» is based on the strict requirements that apply to the recycling of electronic equipment in Switzerland and Europe. All its project expertise is based on twenty years' experience of refrigerator recycling in Switzerland.

The CHF 12 million project was funded by investments from the federal government and the private sector. From the viewpoint of development policy the refrigerator-recycling project is of interest to the SDC because it is making a lasting contribution to climate protection and reduces poverty at the same time: that means creating secure and sustainable jobs on the one hand and reducing emissions on the other hand. The SDC's Global Programme Climate Change promotes differentiated, balanced programmes as part of international climate policy. In this respect, the «Swiss Climate Protection Initiative»'s project in Brazil is by way of being a pilot scheme, with the objective of extending the recycling system - based on the Swiss and European model - from Brazil to other countries: other states in South America, as well as newly industrializing countries all over the world, might potentially be next in line.

The CFC recycling project in Cabreúva, Brazil, points the way. Coop is one of the major investors alongside the SDC, putting several million francs into the plant's construction. In the period from 2010 to 2012, Coop will spend over CHF 500,000 a year on Swiss Charter Units (CO₂ certificates), thus giving the recycling project additional support. For three years now, Coop has been making compensation arrangements for all CO₂ emissions caused by its air transport, business travel by air and road, and deliveries by coop@home. WWF projects have been benefiting, and so is now the SENS International «Climate Protection by Recycling» project.

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