

40 years of Remei – 40 years of pioneering work

A philosophical discourse: in conversation with Patrick Hohmann, Remei's founder

In the 1990s, what prompted you to enter what was completely uncharted territory at the time and to become involved in farming organic cotton in India and Tanzania?

I talked to the farmers and realised that they couldn't make ends meet and were getting all the poorer the more pesticides and artificial fertilizers they were using. The spiral of use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides pushed them into indebtedness. As early as then, I was convinced of 'organic', looking for ways to make organic farming possible for the farmers and to support them financially so as to promote their development.

Could you please comment on Remei's milestone in 2008, i.e. full conversion of the offer to organic products.

In 2008, we decided to focus exclusively on 'organic', as we realised we were cannibalising our efforts in organic-yarn trading with the conventional yarn in our offer. We had to force ourselves to sell 'organic' only. It was the only way for 'organic' to stand a chance.

What does it mean to Remei to have launched a digital traceability tool as early as 2013?

That was very easy. From the very beginning, we had aimed at knowing exactly what was produced in our supply chain and where. So we were able to make sure by full transparency that we were walking the talk. Those who speak the truth have nothing to worry about transparency.

The my-trace by Remei traceability tool discloses the transparency available for each piece of textile.

How did Remei's philosophy of all-holder value come about?

I developed the all-holder philosophy over the years. As I was dealing with the social issues of our time, I arrived at a conclusion offering a bit of a counterpoint to the wide-spread concept of



Remei founder Partrick Hohmann today and in the early 1990s with Niranjana Pattni at Remei Tanzania Ltd.

shareholder value and creating value for everyone along the supply chain. The world today is profit-driven. We lack a willingness to bear social responsibility.

In your mind, what does an integrated supply chain mean to the farmers and production partners involved?

In modern-day business, we are no longer willing to commit to relationships. Relationships among humans are being impoverished. People can't find meaning in work anymore as we can be replaced very swiftly. We tend to forget that

40 years of Remei – 40 years of pioneering work

humans produce for humans. Humans want to have tasks to do, they want to produce to meet needs.

It makes a big difference if you tell a farmer that the T-shirt you're wearing was made from cotton they grew. And if you can give them a T-shirt made from their cotton, you will have come full circle. For consumers, it is just as much of an experience to wear a T-shirt produced especially for them. It's an aha moment as humans have produced for them. This goes far beyond the price of the piece.

Against this background, an integrated supply chain is the result of deeper relationships. It creates meaning and fulfilment for everyone involved in the supply chain.

Do you think there's a future for organic cotton?

Absolutely. 'Greening' is a very hot topic. It is about how we deal with the resources available in our world without depleting them. We must learn not only to use what we are given but to contribute to regenerating the richness of our planet and, indeed, to boost it. To this end, we need to strengthen and support all the forces contributing to it. Biodiversity is a wealth promoted by organic farming. Organic cotton is good for both humans and the environment.

What will be important for the future?

I believe it will be about being aware of the zeitgeist, which cannot be driven by material values only. It will have to consider social aspects as well. Every person has to find meaning in their work and be given a chance to develop and contribute to shaping the world.



Simon Hohmann and Marion Röttges having an exchange with farmers and the local team in Tanzania