



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

José Lutzenberger (Brazil)†

(1988)



for his contribution to protecting the natural environment in Brazil and worldwide.

José Lutzenberger

José Lutzenberger, born in 1926, was a Brazilian agronomist who worked for 15 years with a multinational chemical corporation, but left in 1970 to start a vigorous and successful campaign against pesticides and for organic farming. What followed was great progress in Brazil among farmers large and small concerning organic crop management; increasing numbers of them began to use less poisons and turned to more regenerative methods of production. Lutzenberger's work in this field made him an acknowledged expert on soil science and organic fertilisers as well as plant health. Agriculture, however, was only one of his concerns: he is also widely known in Brazil as the father of the environmental movement.

As an agronomist, interested in healthy, clean, sustainable agriculture, Lutzenberger went into sanitary engineering. He also got involved in recycling, being conscious that hundreds of millions of hectares of good agricultural land were being degraded by the destruction of humus and soil life, while on the other hand, in industry, hundreds of millions of tons of precious organic wastes were being destroyed by dumping, contamination or burning. He developed simple, alternative methods for re-use - either as fodder or fertiliser - of the wastes of many industries such as pulp mills, tanneries, slaughterhouses and food processing plants. He also worked in landscaping and gardening.

Lutzenberger's activities in Brazil were combined with a gruelling international speaking schedule that took him regularly to many countries on all continents.

From 1990 to '92 he was Special Secretary for the Environment to the President of Brazil. In this post he was instrumental in the demarcation of Indian territories, especially the land of the Yanomamis, as well as in the decision to abandon the atom bomb and in Brazil's signing of the Antarctic Treaty and the Whale Convention. One of Lutzenberger's main concerns was the preservation of the tropical rainforest of Amazonia as well as other important elements of the biosphere.

In 1995 he received an honorary doctorate from BOKU (Universität für Bodenkultur) at the University of Vienna, Austria, for his scientific work and his cooperation with Austrian farmers.

In all his areas of work Lutzenberger promoted a holistic thinking in science and technology, as well as a new holistic ethics.

Lutzenberger passed away in 2002 at the age of 75.

Quotation

"A healthy civilisation can only be one that harmonises with and integrates into the totality of life, enhancing not demolishing it."

José Lutzenberger

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