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## ENVIROFIT COMBATING SMOKE EMISSION INTOXICATION IN RURAL HOMES

It is estimated that about three billion people worldwide are exposed to smoke from domestic open burners inside households. In developing countries smoke intoxication takes the lives of four million people, six times more than malaria and three times more than tuberculosis and AIDS.

BY EMILIO RIVERO, GENERAL DIRECTOR, ENVIROFIT MÉXICO

As part of its efforts to help curb these risks in Latin America, the US company Envirofit International—a leader in the creation and manufacture of technological breakthroughs in favor of health—chose Mexico as a strategic point for establishing a subsidiary for producing and distributing Ecofogón ecological stoves.

This new unit found multiple favorable conditions for investment and development, and completed the installation of its plant in little over two months: in mid-April of 2015

only the walls of the plant were standing, as were parts of the roof and a strong cement floor. By June 1<sup>st</sup> the construction was complete and the works related to setting up the machinery, acquiring the materials and, most importantly, selecting the human resources that understood the mission to be accomplished began. The in-

auguration was on September 22<sup>nd</sup> with 200 employees, half of which are women. Thus, the start of operations was achieved in a record time of three months.

In Mexico, Envirofit took up the challenge of bringing this solution to endangered rural groups, by raising their awareness regarding their vul-

nerability if they continued to use traditional burners. The establishment of a new factory represents an amazing opportunity for the company to invest in the community, while helping mitigate a serious threat to Mexican families. When families begin to use the Envirofit Ecofogón, they immediately notice the difference: less smoke in the kitchen, more money in their pockets and more time on their hands, because they require less fuel while they cook faster.

### MECHANICS AND STRATEGY

The Ecofogón stoves consist of a series of cavities in the cooking chamber for more efficient use of fuel, with less waste, so that the furnace chimney—that leads to the exterior of the dwelling—emits a minimum amount of

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smoke because other waste materials were reused.

This system was developed after years of research at several US universities, particularly the one in Denver, Colorado. Thus, with its use lethal emissions have decreased up to 90%, and it uses heat more efficiently, reducing the yearly consumption of firewood by 80%.

Although these stoves are low-cost, many families don't have the resources to acquire them. In this sense the company seeks to implement a distribution system in our country through agencies that can implement social programs at any of the three levels of government. Also, nonprofit organizations may also make donations, or grant micro-loans to families in a situation of extreme poverty.

#### FIGHTING A GLOBAL THREAT

The mentioned health hazards only represent a negative aspect of traditional in-house burners. They also seriously affect the environment with massive deforestation, leaving a carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission footprint, wasting hours in collecting firewood and spending up to 38% of their income on fuel when there is no more wood to cut.

In Mexico the threat is imminent for four millions families; that is, about sixteen million people who live in this situation every day, according to data by INEGI. The states with the highest domestic consumption of firewood are Veracruz (27% of its population), Yucatán (33%), Guerrero (42%), Oaxaca (49%), and Chiapas (50%). It is even estimated that annually some 15 thousand people—mainly women and children under the age of five—lose their lives to acute respiratory tract infections, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and



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the so-called carbon monoxide "silent intoxication" while cooking at home.

Against this background, the company is working efficiently at the new plant, which has the capacity to manufacture 30,000 stoves every month, and export 15,000 units monthly to Latin America. The introduction of Ecofogón in Mexico began with its distribution in communities of the Tláhuac and Milpa Alta delegations in Mexico City.

Envirofit International was established in 2003 with the goal of providing different solutions for clean cooking with

a low impact on health and aimed at protecting the environment. In 2007 it centered its attention on manufacturing ecological stoves, with the highest international design and materials. To meet the goal of speed, quality and efficiency in solving these problems, on November 18<sup>th</sup> the company announced the sale of one million units worldwide in seven years, amount to which Mexico contributed with several tens of thousands.

According to United Nations figures, Envirofit has eliminated more than eleven million tons of carbon dioxide

from the atmosphere, besides generating savings of 138 million dollars worldwide in fuel costs. In addition, it has also reduced eighteen million weeks of work collecting firewood.

For the future, the company has established partnerships that will contribute to bringing ecological stoves to a greater number of countries (it currently covers forty), aimed at achieving the sale of five million units in the next five years, which will increase the reported benefits of positively influence in the lives of five million people. **N**

[www.envirofit.org](http://www.envirofit.org)

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