



EARTH University Graduates Selected as 2008 *National Geographic* Emerging Explorers

ATLANTA, February 18, 2008 – Atlanta-based EARTH University Foundation announced today that two EARTH University graduates, Cid Simoes ('98) from Brazil and Paola Segura ('05) from Costa Rica - were selected by *National Geographic* to join the 2008 Class of Emerging Explorers. This recognition is detailed in the February 2008 issue of *National Geographic Magazine* which describes Simoes and Segura as “sustainable agriculture and development experts” and details their efforts to create innovative agribusiness projects that help Brazil’s small farmers prosper while protecting threatened habitats.

Simoes and Segura are the first couple and agriculturalists to be awarded this honor. They are members of a select group of only eleven individuals chosen from the world community as 2008 Emerging Explorers. As part of this recognition, they will visit the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. in April and join other members of the class for week-long festivities that include an induction ceremony and educational seminars.

Simoes and Segura met while attending EARTH University and married shortly thereafter. Since graduation, they have become a dynamic duo and force in the world of sustainable agriculture and agri-business. A few of their most notable projects include work with small family farms to develop a niche market for vegetable oils that helped secure contracts with a Brazilian cosmetic company; coordination of a 300-family Brazil nut farming cooperative; and conservation efforts with the BioBrasil Foundation that helped save more than 75,000 acres of Brazilian forest.

The most recent agribusiness initiative launched by this husband-wife team is offering small farmers options for success previously beyond their reach. Traditionally, farmers in Bahia, Brazil, have used slash-and-burn agriculture, deforesting new land each year for crops. However Simoes explains that, “inside the forest, there are ornamental tropical plants like orchids, lipstick palms, and heliconias that markets around the world want to buy. Once you show farmers that they can plant these flowers using far less land, and earn twice as much, they're ready to do it. Some of these

plants can be harvested without creating any impact on the forest at all. Others allow farmers to earn as much on only 1,000 meters as they did by clearing 100,000 meters of pristine forest.” In creating profitable businesses that support small farmers and boost local economies while reducing flight from rural areas, deforestation and protecting watersheds, Simoes and Segura are showing that everyone wins. “You know,” Simoes says, “conservation can be good economically *and* environmentally. All people need is the right information, the right alternatives.”

EARTH University congratulates Simoes and Segura on this well deserved honor and recognition of their accomplishments in Brazil. Their work is a clear extension of EARTH’s mission to develop ethical, socially responsible and environmentally sensitive agricultural entrepreneurs capable of leading economic development in the tropics.

###

About EARTH University

EARTH University (www.earth.ac.cr) is a private, international, non-profit university located in Costa Rica, dedicated to education in the field of agricultural sciences and the rational use of natural resources, with the interest of contributing to the sustainable development of the humid tropics. Founded in 1990, EARTH University has approximately 400 students from 24 countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In keeping with EARTH University’s mission to affect change in the areas in greatest need of development, 80 percent of students are granted full or partial scholarship. The University has graduated nearly 1,200 professionals and has an international faculty composed of 44 professors from 20 countries. EARTH University Foundation (www.earth-usa.org), based in Atlanta, coordinates fundraising and special events for the University in the United States.

About the National Geographic Emerging Explorers Program

Each year, the *National Geographic* Emerging Explorers Program (www.nationalgeographic.com/emerging) selects up to ten explorers from fields as diverse as anthropology, space exploration, mountaineering, and music. These rising talents push the boundaries of discovery, adventure, and global problem-solving. This Program recognizes and supports these uniquely gifted and inspiring young adventurers, scientists, photographers, and storytellers who are making a difference early in their careers. To help the Emerging Explorers realize their potential, *National Geographic* awards each US\$10,000 for research and exploration.

CONTACT:

Ann C. Barrett

Communications Division
National Geographic Society
1145 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 857-7662
ABarrett@ngs.org

Tracie Ingram

EARTH University Foundation
TIngram@earth-usa.org
404-995-1235