After the years of conflict, the Asháninka face a new threat. The greatest driver of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon is now subsistence farming, and as the population grows in these more peaceful times, there is an urgent push to grow more food. A study published in May this year, by Princeton University, on biodiversity loss in Peru, showed that in the western Amazon, smallholder "slash-and-burn" agriculture is the "primary driver of forest destruction". The main method of farming among the Asháninka involves felling trees to make a clearing, creating space in the sunlight where their food crops can grow.

In 2016, wildfires caused a spike in deforestation rates in Cutivireni – fires that may have been started by burning to prepare the ground for planting.

[...]

"People in remote areas have an obsession with growing yuca," says Aurora Lume, an agronomy graduate and member of Cool Earth's field team who grew up in the region (her family had to flee their village when guerrillas moved in). "A family of three will clear a hectare of forest to plant this crop. But the soil only has a useful life of two years. After that, they will move on and clear another patch."

The agronomist is helping Asháninka people in this area to boost the productivity of their land for food crops. Cool Earth also pays a coffee technician to visit the villages and advise on how to improve the quality of their coffee and cacao yields – these could be a useful source of income. Coffee grows better in the shade, so a successful coffee business keeps the forest canopy intact.

DA QUI>>>>>>The Cool Earth team convened a meeting in the tiny settlement of Tankoari, before a crowd of about 50, including children, and the chief. As woodsmoke billowed, Bustamante gave the villagers a severe lecture about the new clearings we had walked through. There had to be better planning, she insisted, if they were to continue to receive funding.

Lume then unfurled the instrument that will enable this planning: a large satellite map. The map showed the area across the Ene river almost entirely stripped of forest after a government-sanctioned land-grab by farmers from the Andes in the 1980s. On the Cutivireni side, the picture was more varied: dark brown patches showed dramatic forest clearance from 2016, mostly caused by fire, and pale patches indicated the areas where crops were growing.

Analysts at Cool Earth made these maps from data produced from Landsat images by Matthew Hansen at the University of Maryland. Campaigners, NGOs and investigators increasingly use Hansen data to compile evidence of large-scale clearance by multinational companies. But satellite mapping is also proving a powerful way to demonstrate to local communities the effect of their farming methods.

The villagers at Tankoari were impressed: they had not realised the bald patches were so numerous, or so close together.

"The people were taken aback by what they saw," Daylar Capaquia, a field officer with Cool Earth, told me later. The Asháninka territory runs eastwards almost to the border of the Otishi national park, more than 3,000 sq km of pristine forest, and they had a sense of the forest rolling on indefinitely. "Now the Asháninka are realising their situation and understanding how precarious their environment is," says Capaquia. "The mapping exercise is a new beginning, there's a transition under way." (289 words)

From: "Money and maps: is this how to save the Amazon's 400bn trees?"
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/06/local-tribe-save-amazon-indigenous-peruvians