

**AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW**

Gero Leson (he/him)

**AUTHOR**

"Honor Thy Label"

**VP OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps

# GERO LESON



"Imagine how it feels to work for a company that tackles, for a living, persistent global problems in an intelligent, strategic, constructive, not-dogmatic, and enjoyable way."

**GERO LESON** is Vice President of Special Operations at Dr. Bronner's, the top-selling natural brand of soaps in North America, maker of exceptional fair trade and organic body care products sourced to the highest agricultural and labor standards, and a leading mission-driven brand worldwide. He joined the company in 2005, helping it transition to sourcing all its major ingredients directly from certified fair trade and organic projects. Under Gero's leadership, Dr. Bronner's has become a pioneer in the global movement to establish socially just and environmentally responsible supply chains. The company's projects are respected examples for the impact that brands can achieve by making ethical supply chains a priority.



For more information, visit:  
[WWW.DRBRONNER.COM](http://WWW.DRBRONNER.COM)

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# BIO

**DR. BRONNER'S ENLISTED GERO** in 2005 to build a new fair trade and organic supply chain from the ground up, when the company became concerned about potential labor abuse and exploitation in its existing supply chains and could not find organic and fair trade third party suppliers for its main ingredients. Gero, an applied scientist with hands-on experience, thus established Dr. Bronner's sister companies, Serendipol in Sri Lanka, Serendicoco in Samoa, and Serendipalm in Ghana, to produce and supply organic and fair trade coconut oil and palm oil, respectively.

These vertically integrated projects purchase raw materials from 2000 organic certified smallholder farmers and process them in coconut and palm oil facilities with up to 400 employees. He also developed close partnerships with independent like-minded operations such as Canaan Palestine, for olive oil, Pavitramenthe in India, for mint oils, and Oribi in South Africa for tea tree oil. Gero's work to restructure Dr. Bronner's supply chains resulted in the company and all its major ingredients becoming certified fair trade under the Fair for Life program in 2007 and Regenerative Organic Certified in 2023.

Today, Gero and Dr. Bronner's Special Operations department support the local management teams of each ingredient supplier project with expansion of and improvements to their production facilities, and monitor ongoing operations and community development endeavors such as local education, healthcare, and environmental infrastructure projects. Gero's team also develops strategies for implementing and showcasing concepts that combine beneficial economic and ecological impacts, such as the planting of mixed agroforestry systems.

Overall, Dr. Bronner's sourcing of organic and fair trade raw materials now benefits an estimated 35,000 people world wide including farmers, employees, and their families—improving livelihoods while simultaneously regenerating soil and local environments.

Gero's Special Operations team focuses on the education of farmers in these communities, to develop practices such as composting, cover cropping, mulching, and other regenerative organic methods that build up soil fertility and organic matter. These practices increase yields and profits for farmers, and aid local communities' resiliency to heat waves and storms, thus mitigating and adapting farms to the effects of climate change. This work also prompted Dr. Bronner's to engage, in 2017, with Patagonia and the Rodale Institute, to create the Regenerative Organic Certified standard, to encompass soil health, animal welfare, and fair labor.

Furthermore, Gero has helped the company explore its ancestral roots in his own birthplace of Germany. He has also worked closely with company President Michael Bronner and other leadership to develop Dr. Bronner's brand in Europe, Japan, and Australia.

Gero was born in Cologne, Germany, and holds a master's degree in physics and a doctorate in environmental science and engineering. While he spends half of his time at projects, he still enjoys traveling and immersion in other cultures. He lives in Berkeley, California with his wife Christel Dillbohner, a visual artist who has participated extensively in the work of Dr. Bronner's Special Operations department.



**GERO** is the author of the book *"Honor Thy Label: Dr. Bronner's Unconventional Journey to a Clean, Green, and Ethical Supply Chain,"* published by Portfolio Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House in March of 2021. It chronicles the evolution of Dr. Bronner's supply chain as it established fair trade and regenerative organic agriculture models.



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# INTERVIEW ANGLES & TALKING POINTS

## REGENERATIVE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE:

Gero and the Special Operations department he leads promote and implement regenerative organic farming and agroforestry practices at all major supplier projects, including those operated by close partners. This includes training of farmers and implementing composting, cover cropping, conservation tillage, and replanting of trees using the concept of mixed "dynamic agroforestry." Thanks to Gero's leadership, Dr. Bronner's is the first company in the world to achieve the Regenerative Organic Certified standard for coconut, palm, mint and olive oil. With this experience, Gero's team has now helped more than 20 agricultural projects worldwide to achieve Regenerative Organic Certified, thus improving their access to markets seeking regenerative ingredients.

## FAIR TRADE:

Dr. Bronner's is committed to sourcing raw materials from fair trade projects around the world that ensure a fair price, living wage and community infrastructure, benefiting an estimated 35,000 farmers, workers, and their families. Education, health care and women's issues, such as access to safe and affordable menstrual products, are key priorities. Dr. Bronner's also works to catalyze policy change and grow public awareness on the importance of organic agriculture and fair trade models.

## SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL:

Used in Dr. Bronner's bar soaps, this ingredient comes from Serendipalm, a fair trade and regenerative organic palm project in Ghana which Gero established with local partners in 2007. This palm oil does not contribute to habitat loss for orangutans or other endangered species, as is common in areas of the world where rainforests are destroyed for palm production. Rather, it demonstrates that palm oil can well be grown by small holder farmers on existing farm land and benefit their farms and communities. Serendipalm also produces organic and fair trade cocoa and prepares for the production of cassava flour.

## CLOSED LOOP MANUFACTURING:

Gero advises Dr. Bronner's fair trade partners on implementation of environmentally sustainable closed loop manufacturing processes, such as the use of coconut husks to power the boiler at the coconut processing facility at Serendipol, and the marketing of by-products of coconut production.

## IMPACT OF AGRICULTURE ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

Due to the use of regenerative organic agricultural practices, Dr. Bronner's supply chain has a smaller carbon footprint – i.e. less net emissions of Greenhouses Gases per unit production, than conventional operations. Learnings from these improvements are now used to initiate and invest in other projects that improve Dr. Bronner's climate impact.

## INDUSTRY COOPERATION ON ETHICAL SUPPLY CHAINS:

Gero champions cooperation between natural products companies with the goal to ensure that their purchase of agricultural raw materials benefits farmers, their land and communities, and global climate.

## OVER 150 YEARS OF SOAP-MAKING HISTORY:

Dr. Bronner's was founded in by Emanuel Bronner in the U.S. in 1948; German-Jewish family began making soap in Laupheim, Germany in 1858. Gero works closely with Dr. Bronner's leadership to reconnect with the history of the Bronner family's soapmaking legacy in Germany, purchase and rebuild the family's ancestral home in Laupheim and establish meaningful relationships with German individuals and organizations active in overcoming the trauma and division created by the Holocaust.

## REGENERATIVE ORGANIC COCOA:

Small-scale farmers in Ghana and in Ivory Coast who cultivate palm plants used for creating the palm oil in Dr. Bronner's bar soaps also grow cocoa using regenerative organic practices, alongside companion crops including ground vegetables such as casava and yams in a dynamic agroforestry technique that models the natural structure of a West African forest. Addressing the usually dire economics of smallholder cocoa production through transparent premiums and assessing the risk of child labor are also key elements of this work



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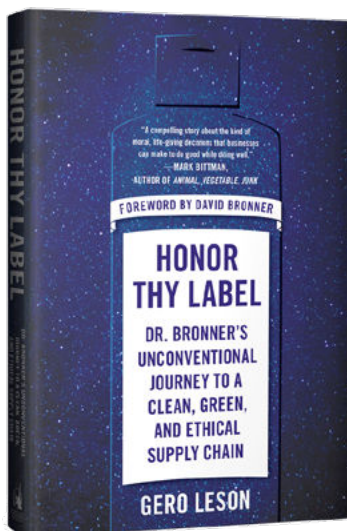
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# DR. BRONNER'S MISSION STATEMENT

DR. BRONNER'S is a family business committed to honoring the vision of our founder Emanuel Bronner by making socially and environmentally responsible products of the highest quality, and by dedicating our profits to helping make a better world. "All-One!"

To-date Dr. Bronner's has donated over **\$100 MILLION** to charitable and activist causes.



## RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE

TIME

FAST COMPANY



DER SPIEGEL

The Guardian

ORGANIC INSIDER

Forbes

Treehugger



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