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Seventy-six producers from the Cooperativa de Caficultores y Agricultores de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (COOAGRONEVADA) have continuously been working to reduce water consumption, specifically in coffee processing, and to reduce water contamination, which is caused by the mucus and pulp of the coffee cherries.

As a first step towards achieving this goal, the organization adopted an ecological processing system. Before implementing the system, 40 liters of water were used to process one kilogram of dry parchment coffee. Miguel San Juan comments on the results: “With the dry ‘hopper’ (where the coffee cherry is transported to be pulped, without water) and the tanks / tubs, we now only use five liters of water per kilogram of processed dry parchment coffee.” The coffee pulp was another problem solved by producers, by investing in the construction of pulp processors, or trenches. Oscar Martínez stated, “The collected coffee pulp decontaminates the water and can then be used as an organic fertilizer for coffee crops.”

However, there was still the need to analyze the contamination that leaked into nearby water sources, which caused severe damage to local streams, due in part to the loss of oxygen.

As a result, the General Assembly decided to invest $20,000 in the development and implementation of water treatment plants. Sandra Palacios, COOAGRONEVADA Manager, affirms: “It has been a blessing to be able to invest the Fairtrade Premium, to contribute to the social and environmental wellbeing of the rural and urban communities of Santa Marta.”

In effect, the decrease in water consumption and the water treatment of the surrounding streams and tributaries have had a positive impact on the ecosystem, generating quality water to the aqueduct of Santa Marta.
YOUTH LEADING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PROJECT IN CARANAVI, BOLIVIA

In 2014, small-scale organic coffee farmers in Bolivia were severely affected by coffee rust, or la roya (Hemileia vastatrix). The impact of the fungus on coffee plants resulted in decreases in production, with an initial reduction of 50% to 90% between 2015 and 2016. The majority of affected plants did not survive the disease and producers were forced to renovate their entire plots.

It is believed that the rust epidemic in Bolivia was caused by access rainfall and increased temperatures, both of which can be attributed to climate change. Additional factors include old coffee trees, degraded soil, lack of adequate crop management and fertilization, amongst others; this weakens coffee plants, making them more sensitive to pests and disease, such as coffee rust.

With the support of Fairtrade Germany and financing from commercial partner, LIDL Germany, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), in collaboration with the Fair Trade National Platform in Bolivia (CNCJ-Bolivia), together are implementing a two-year project to strengthen eight small producer organizations. The project aims to build the organizations’ resilience to climate change by improving organic production systems and training young leaders.

Currently, 330 producers are participating in the project, building family nurseries (or greenhouses) with the objective of renovating more than 300,000 coffee trees. Additionally, producers participate in Field School, in which they are learning best (agricultural) practices relative to their region. This includes seed selection, plant nurseries, plotting the land and crop management.
In order to support in analysis and learning, each organization has developed a “demonstration plot” where producers can experiment with and try out new practices.

Of all the participants, they have selected 30 youth to be trained as promoters and organization leaders. The training school included themes such as gender and masculinity, self-esteem, leadership and training methodologies, climate change, organic and Fairtrade certification, production, marketing and coffee exporting, among others.
The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC) seeks to promote sustainable family farming, which includes younger generations working in the fields. At the same time, CLAC wants to safeguard children from any form of work that deprives them of their childhood, future potential or dignity; as well as prevent them from work that could be harmful to their physical and psychological development, or could interfere with their schooling. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), these forms of work are constituted as child labor.

CLAC is aware that child labor is present in the agricultural sector, and that coffee is one of the high-risk working areas, as considered by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The problem is complex and multicausal, requiring multiple elements of response, some of which are in reach of a small producer organization.

Others though, require much more profound changes in the socio-economic structures in which coffee farmers live and work. Compliance with standards related to child labor is a matter of raising awareness, understanding the norms and their fundamentals; however, it is also a matter of being able to comply with said standards. The income received by many coffee-farming families is not enough to ensure their subsistence, which is what ultimately results in the employment of family members or children. As a whole, Fairtrade aims to generate opportunities for farmers, which can help them overcome the causal factors of child labor and other non-decent working situations that often occur in the coffee supply chain. To achieve this, all actors within the supply chain must take responsibility.
Starting with CLAC and its member organizations, the work approach is as follows:

1-Build capacity and raise awareness about the issue with CLAC staff and all member organizations, with emphasis on the difference between child labor and work that is permitted, ensuring the protection of children and youth;

2-Take action and appropriately respond to any known case of child labor that CLAC is notified of, always within the framework of the Child Protection Policy;

3-Promote dialogue and recognition of child labor within small producer organizations, analyze risks related to non-compliance of Fairtrade standards, reflect on the fundamental causes of child labor (in the context of the organization) and support in the development of a risk mitigation proposal;

4-Create institutional alliances that support CLAC’s objectives in child labor prevention and remediation;

5-Promote actions that protect children and their wellbeing within small producer organizations.

In 2017, CLAC provided training to coffee organizations in Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Colombia, Bolivia and Perú. In addition, it is working together with a Guatemalan coffee organization to implement a special pilot project. This project aims to identify possible risks of child labor and implement actions to mitigate them, with participation from organization management, members and their children. The project has also supported the development of Child Protection Policies in various organizations in Guatemala.

CLAC takes this opportunity to call on other actors in the coffee supply chain to assume their responsibility and actively participate in and support the initiatives of small producer organizations. It is important to continue working together as a responsible and committed supply chain to promote child protection, by reinforcing points of collaboration, seeking out partnerships and support from governments, civil society and within the communities in which we work.
Dos Costas Cooperative is located in Boa Esperança, Minas Gerais, Brazil, famous for its coffee culture and production. The organization was founded in 2006 as a “Producer Association” by 49 small-scale coffee farmers, seeking alternatives in the face of large, industrial coffee farms. Today, Dos Costas is made up of 196 members, producing Arabica Coffee at an altitude range of 800 to 1,100 meters above sea level.

A short time after its establishment, organization leaders became familiar with the principles of Fairtrade, and saw the certification as an opportunity to differentiate their coffee in the international market. For this reason, they contracted an Agricultural Specialist to assist members in coffee production, specifically regarding socio-environmental standards and other Fairtrade criteria. Finally, in 2008 Dos Costas became Fairtrade certified. The certification resulted in organizational growth and overall increased participation by members; in addition, it helped establish a sustainable base for coffee production, with a focus on environmental, social and economic impact.

In 2009 the “Producer Association,” with just 69 members, was transformed into a cooperative, with the aim of further strengthening the organization and better facilitating coffee sales for members, without losing sight of its founding mission. The work that began in 2006 was intensified in 2008 due to the certification process, with the principle challenge of reducing the use of agrochemicals. The orientation provided by the Agronomist suggested various methods uncommon to the region, such as pest and disease management, plant conservation, decreased use of herbicides, increased weeding and the use of green fertilizers and organic matter as essential tools in coffee production.

Today, nine years after becoming Fairtrade certified, the agricultural practices adopted “debunked the myth” that agrochemicals must be applied to prevent pests and diseases. In 2008, 54% of organization members used agrochemicals, applied without agronomic methodology, as a means of monitoring pests and diseases. In 2017, 95% of members applied these products with agronomic methodology (this includes specific treatment plans for crops).
This also resulted in increased profitability of all coffee produced; it was measured, that after nine years of Fairtrade certification there was a 26% reduction in pesticide use and 58% in herbicides, generating a cost of 7% (of the total cost of production) per bag of coffee.

In addition, it was confirmed that the decrease in herbicide use did not have a negative impact on productivity, as was feared by many members. On the contrary, it improved the level of organic matter in the soil, increasing fertility and productivity per hectare. For example, in 2008 the average production among members was 24.39 bags / hectare; in 2016, the average increased to 37.32 bags / hectare, while the 10 year average in Brazil stands at 22.6 bags / hectare.

The described results demonstrate the importance of Dos Costas’ Agronomic Department, which currently serves 90% of members in areas such as technical assistance, planning, crop analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and emergency visits. These developments, along with the support of Fairtrade, have resulted in more efficient production processes and the adoption of more sustainable practices, making Dos Costas producers more competitive in the international market.
YOUTH PROMOTERS FROM BOLIVIA VISIT FAIRTRADE ORGANIZATION IN PERU

As part of the “Youth Leading Climate Change Adaptation Project,” 15 youth promoters from eight small producer organizations visited coffee facilities at the Central de Cooperativas Agrarias Cafetaleras de los Valles de Sandia (CECOVASA) in Juliaca, located in southern Peru. The visit also included representatives from the Fair Trade National Platform in Bolivia (CNCJ-Bolivia), the Bolivian Coffee Network and staff from the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC). CECOVASA is made up of nearly 5,000 small-scale coffee producers, of both Quechua and Aymara decent, that make up eight organizations in the Tambopata and Inambari valleys.

During the three-day visit, the youth promoters visited producer plots, plant nurseries and other facilities to become familiar with production systems, crop management and coffee processing specifically for export. In addition, they learned about the importance of processing and quality control management in all stages of production. Finally, and most importantly, the promoters identified practices they will be able to replicate in Bolivia; such as planting seedlings in tubes, humidity control in processing and pruning management within coffee plots.

Overall, the visit was a great learning experience and motivating for the youth promoters, especially after being able to see the developed coffee plots, which are under the same production system that they are implementing as a part of the project in Bolivia.
Fifty-nine producers and technical staff from Manos Campesinas, a Fairtrade organization located in Guatemala, participated in an advanced workshop, focused on best agricultural practices and coffee processing. The event took place from November 20 to 24, and was organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC).

In the initial stages of the workshop, a specific training was carried out for the field technicians and agricultural engineers that provide extended services to Manos Campesinas, in order to specify the quality parameters of farming and field-related work. This includes harvest, controlled fermentation, washing and drying, in addition to the various processing methods: natural, natural / pulped, yellow, red and black honey.

Later, practical training was offered to producers and field technicians, focused on critical points in coffee collection, processing and drying. In order to do this, a matrix was designed to determine critical control points and identification methods to determine the physical defects of coffee and their causes. They also identified coffee density (based on variety) in seven coffee-growing regions to calculate quality potential and type of processing required to improve cup quality.
Another important practice included in the training was how to measure Brix, and its weight in relation to altitude for the following coffee varieties: Catuai, Icatu, Anacafe, Costa Rica, Caturra, Bourbon and Paches Colis. These practices were carried out in the Municipality of San Pedro in the Experimental Center of the ACIPACU Association, technically supported by Manos Campesinas.

From these learnings, the field technicians, alongside the producers, were left with the tasks of experimenting and testing the parameters and processing to improve overall coffee quality at Manos Campesinas.

“The training went very well, as it explained various ways of working, including coffee processing, fermentation and optimal harvest time.”

“Through this activity, we are now able to determine cup quality, and in turn, provide recommendations to producers on best coffee varieties to plant, which have been similarly produced in the region as to not lose the quality of our coffee.”

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