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As members of the Coffee Network, which pertains to the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), we are very concerned about current coffee prices, and the negative impact this has on the lives of small-scale producers and their families. In general, we also see that the conventional market devalues the efforts of producers in food and aliment production, including coffee.

For this reason, the fair trade movement emerged as an alternative market that recognizes the value and work of small-scale producers, as well as the quality of their products. Although Fairtrade sales have grown by nearly 10% in the last year, it is also true that only 30% to 40% of coffee production is sold on Fairtrade terms. For this reason, we must continue promoting the consumption of Fairtrade products around the globe, so that its positive impact continues to grow.

INTRODUCTION

To meet the commercial needs of producers in the market, CLAC participates in events such as trade shows, forums and congresses. In addition, by means of its field staff, CLAC supports small-scale producers in areas such as organizational strengthening and technical assistance, in order to increase productivity and continue improving quality in production processes.

Finally, I would like to express our commitment as CLAC’s Coffee Network to continue working with small-scale producer organizations, as well as the coffee industry, to better position Fairtrade as a movement that promotes economic, social and environmental change.

Best regards,

Carlos Reynoso
President, CLAC Coffee Network
From September 10-16, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers, CLAC, hosted the third tour for coffee experts and technicians from around the continent. The excursion took place in Brazil and was attended by 16 technicians from 13 Fairtrade producer organizations. Participating countries included Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

This particular tour was based on the concept of mountain coffee production, including information on portable machinery, harvest and post-harvest processes, specialty coffee preparation and production costs. For this reason, the delegation visited several organizations in Lavras, Alfanas, Santana de Vargem, Boa Esperança, Paraguaçu and Nova Resende, in the southern region of Minas Gerais.

First, participants visited the “Agência de Inovação do Café” (InovaCafé) at the Federal University of Lavras. There, the delegation had the opportunity to access information on technology and innovation in coffee production, mainly focused on farm labor and machinery.
At the Cooperativa de Pequeños Agricultores de Santana Da Vargem (COOPASV), a Fairtrade certified coffee organization, the technicians observed how to implement photovoltaic energy in production, a model treatment plant used to decontaminate wastewater from human feces. Finally, this water is used to irrigate coffee farms. This technique demonstrates how producers can implement environmentally-friendly farming practices, with a focus on climate change adaptation.

In Boa Esperança, the delegation visited the Cooperativa Dos Produtores de Café Especial de Boa Esperança Ltda., Dos Costas, whose technical team has developed a soil management system to improve productivity. Through the technical assistance provided by the cooperative, Dos Costas has managed to reduce pesticide use by 26%; this has improved productivity and reduced production costs, in turn, improving the quality of life of organization members.

For the last part of the tour, participants arrived at the Cooperativa Mista Paraguaçu Ltda. (COOMAP), located in Paraguaçu. At this organization, local technicians presented on their experiences implementing water treatment projects. The delegation also visited several of the cooperative’s infrastructures, including the warehouse and dry processing plant, which is automated and includes an electronic traceability system.

Later, they visited Carmo Barbosa Fernandes’ farm, where the group had the opportunity to learn more about EMATER (Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural do Estado Minas Gerais) and their work in production. On the farm, the technicians were taught about the concept of “harvest 0,” which helps stabilize production by means of pruning. This process consists of pruning certain coffee trees - every other year, for example - so that they do not produce a harvest. This helps the trees restore themselves, later returning to a productive state.

Overall, it was a very important tour for all participating technicians, having exchanged information and developed new skills in areas such as production, coffee quality and best practices. These learnings will be applied and replicated at other Fairtrade organizations throughout Latin America.

“For us, it has been an extremely important experience, as we can adopt some of these technologies and apply them in our own countries. In the case of Costa Rica - in the area of machinery - where we are facing high production costs, we see the alternatives they are applying in these countries, which have had very interesting results. We can invest in this technology for our coffee, and small-scale producers.”

Quoted on participation in the tour
Luis Armando Carranza Hernández
Coopeatenas R.L., Costa Rica
A very frequent problem in coffee communities is inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables, not only among families, but especially in children. The lack of these foods can cause nutritional deficiencies, and therefore, low performance in school and other activities. For this reason, a group of women from the local coffee community joined together to develop a food security program, implementing organic gardens to grow their own vegetables.

These women belong to the Cooperativa Agraria Cafetalera Maranura Ltda., a Fairtrade certified organization in the District of Maranura, in Cusco, Peru. Empowered by their participation in the cooperative’s Development Committee, and seeking out food alternatives for their families, the women decided to carry out the project.

Now, each coffee-growing family cultivates their own food, including lettuce, onions, radishes, cabbage and carrots, which are produced year-round, thanks to techniques such as crop rotation. What is not consumed is taken to the local market, where the vegetables are offered to the community at a fair price; promoting high quality organic products and healthy lifestyles.
Mrs. Petronila, a participant in the project, expresses: “With this project, funded by the Fairtrade Premium, 235 families have been trained and provided with supplies [for their gardens]. As a bonus, they have encouraged family-oriented participation in organic agriculture”.

The actions carried out by the Women’s Development Committee at Maranura Cooperative demonstrate that it is possible to carry out projects that have an overall greater impact on families and food security in coffee-growing communities.
AN INTERVIEW
WITH COOAGRONEVADA:
IMPACTS OF THE
FAIRTRADE PREMIUM

Up until now, what is the
greatest impact you have seen
as a result of the Fairtrade
Premium?

“The [Fairtrade] Premium has been invested in renewing
coffee crops, plague and disease management, eco-friendly
processing and water treatment plants, which has positively
impacted us by increasing productivity,
coffee quality and prices.”

Leonor Becerra Moya,
Coffee Producer
“All investments made have improved the wellbeing of both rural and urban communities by preserving the [surrounding] ecosystems of the Sierra Nevada in Santa Marta, providing clean, high quality water to the Piedras River, a micro-basin that supplies water to the Santa Marta aqueduct.”

Juan Avendaño,
Board Member

“First of all, the implementation of the coffee fertilization plan is, in part, financed by the Fairtrade Premium...

[In addition] to technical support, promoters and members are committed to using soil analysis to carry out the organic fertilization plan, complemented by shade regulation, plague management and quality control during harvest, processing and drying... [all of which] have had positive results, increasing productivity and cup quality.”

Julio Vega Sepulveda,
Quality Control Coordinator

“The first initiatives [carried out with the Fairtrade Premium] included housing improvements. We changed ceilings, walls, floors, bathrooms and kitchens, making for a much nicer lifestyle in the countryside.”

Luz Balaguera,
Coffee Producer

The Fairtrade Premium generating social impact

The Fairtrade Premium as an instrument for clean water
Child Protection: A Pilot Project with Manos Campesinas

From the beginning, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), along with its member organizations, have been committed to protecting children and adolescents in agriculture. One of the Fairtrade principles, the concept of child protection also aims at including younger generations in coffee, in a safe and positive way. With this in mind, CLAC has developed a pilot project focused on child protection, together with Manos Campesinas, a small-scale producer organization in Guatemala.

In Guatemala, coffee production is traditionally known as a family-oriented activity, especially during harvest. In this sense, family-based participation in organizational activities ensures the wellbeing of all those involved, in addition to providing access to education for members’ children. However, in this area of work, there is the risk of facing vulnerable or dangerous situations, which may affect children, or their families.

Although it is difficult to solve the fundamental causes of child labor, Manos Campesinas has taken on tasks - as part of the pilot project - to generate skills and raise awareness about the issue to its managers, members and staff. The organization also developed a protection policy, which defines responsibilities and response procedures in case of situations which may be harmful to children or adolescents.
At farm-level, Manos Campesinos conducted an analysis from the perspective of producers and their children, which focused on (1.) the main situations that affect children and (2.) a prioritization of actions within reach of the organization. In addition to this, they defined guidelines on which practices are appropriate for children, in the framework of family farming, and which practices are high-risk and should be avoided. This area of work included a secondary analysis which determined what type of work is characterized as dangerous child labor in coffee production.

According to the certifications Manager at Manos Campesinas, Rafael Hernández, “the agencies and organizations [working] for child protection in Guatemala are very pleased by the initiative and leadership of Manos Campesinas, seriously taking on this issue and demonstrating commitment to support and collaborate within the organization.”

To continue raising awareness, Manos Campesinas developed campaigns and distributed materials to its seven base organizations, reaching a total of 1,073 small-scale coffee producers. In the day-to-day activities of the organization, they will continue to work on the issue in and outside the work environment, generating institutional alliances and fighting for the rights of children and youth in coffee.
In recent years, Fairtrade’s investments in the international coffee market have leveraged many opportunities and new business for small-scale producer organizations. In this sense, being present at international coffee expos, with a strategic and more frequent approach, makes Fairtrade coffee more visible in the specialty market.

In 2018, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), together with Fairtrade International and the National Fairtrade Organizations (NFOs), participated in specialty coffee expos in the United States, Europe (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), Japan and Korea. By participating in these events, Fairtrade has been able to reposition its coffee in the quality market, by means of booth representation, high quality coffee cuppings and tastings, and hosting other activities aimed at the coffee industry and other audiences.

For Fairtrade producers, trade shows and expos are an opportunity to promote their coffee. With the support of CLAC, participating organizations receive logistical support, meeting facilitation, translation, and for some, the opportunity to participate in coffee cuppings.

At the Global Specialty Coffee Expo (SCA, United States), CLAC, with the support of Fairtrade America and Fairtrade International, hosted private cuppings for specific clients, with nearly 50 coffee samples from Latin America, Asia and Africa. Sample selection was carried out with Olam Specialty Coffee in New York, a major coffee trader with strong influence in the global market. In addition to Arabica samples, for the first time, Fairtrade hosted a Robusta cupping, which was attended by buyers from Keurig Green Mountain, seeking out coffee for new blends.
In June, CLAC also participated in World of Coffee (formerly SCAE), which took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The trade show lasted three long days, full of meetings, cuppings and client visits. This year, CLAC and Fairtrade International, along with the other Producer Networks (Fairtrade Asia Pacific and Fairtrade Africa), developed the first Fairtrade Coffee Forum in Europe. The objective of the Coffee Forum was to create an open dialogue about the Fairtrade pricing model for coffee. In total, there were more than 100 attendees, including representatives from producer organizations, NFOs, the coffee industry, governments and civil society groups that work with coffee. Participating panelists addressed pricing problems in the global coffee market and discussed both the advantages and challenges of the Fairtrade pricing model, with the aim of improving the market and in turn, the incomes of small-scale coffee producers.

To close out the year, CLAC is in Asia, participating in trade shows in Japan and South Korea. In September, coffee representatives attended the SCAJ World Specialty Coffee Conference and Exhibition in Japan, alongside Fairtrade Japan and other actors from the Fairtrade system. Throughout the trade show, Fairtrade helped organize several commercial events, including specialty coffee cuppings, where four organizations from Latin America presented their coffees. In addition, they hosted a seminar, where small-scale producers had the opportunity to share about their realities as coffee farmers in the global south with consumers, traders and Japanese journalists.

By participating in international expos and trade shows, CLAC aims to continue supporting small-scale coffee producers in areas such as coffee quality and sales, with the final objective of better positioning Fairtrade coffee in the market.

“Participating in SCA, we shared lots of experiences with friends and clients. We also realized the potential that high quality [coffee] markets have, though we [continue to] face the challenge that oftentimes final consumers don’t recognize the efforts of coffee producers.”

Luis Gonzaga, General Manager
Global Cafes, Colombia

“Outstanding cupping session during SCA event with CLAC’s team, where very interesting Fairtrade Organic Robustas were noticed on the table. It was a nice initiative, and we were more than happy to participate in the session”

Quoted on the private Robusta cupping
Beto Pimentel, Keurig Green Mountain

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Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers

Av. El Boquerón, Calle Ayagualo M-1A, Ciudad Merliot, Santa Tecla, El Salvador
Tel. (503) 2278-4635
http://clac-comerciojusto.org
info@clac-comerciojusto.org