

PRODUCER PROFILE



PRODUCER NAME: PRODECOOP

PRODUCTS: Coffee

COUNTRY: Nicaragua

FLO ID 832

Fairtrade certified since 1993

Number of members 2,275



Introduction

Promotora de Desarrollo Cooperativo de las Segovias or PRODECOOP was founded in 1993 in the Segovia region, northern Nicaragua. It is a 2nd grade organization made up of 39 1st grade base organizations based in Esteli, Madriz and Nueva Segovia.

Since becoming Fairtrade certified, farmers have been building up their knowledge of coffee production, and earning recognition for their quality coffee. Farmers have better access to speciality coffee markets, are well-known both nationally and internationally, and have stable relationships with coffee buyers. The leadership are active in national and international organizations for small producers. Almost 30% of members are women.

Coffee growing and processing

All PRODECOOP's coffee is shade-grown in the wet tropical climate and sandy high-nutrient soils of the Segovia highlands. PRODECOOP have built a laboratory to grow a natural fungus that fights *la broca* (berry borer disease) which has been affecting the harvest. After harvesting, farmers transport their coffee cherries to the nearest wet processing plant for de-pulping and washing.

PRODECOOP have a dry mill in Palacaguina (about 90 minutes from Estelí) with 13 permanent staff, and up to 200 seasonal workers. Here, the coffee is weighed and undergoes quality control. Experts assess the characteristics of the coffee. If there appears to be a discrepancy, a sample is sent to the lab for further testing. This ensures only the best coffee is taken to the patio for drying. Throughout the process, organic and conventional crops are kept apart, and traceability is maintained. The coffee is milled, and the green beans are prepared for export before being transported to the port.

Development Strategy

In 2004, PRODECOOP created a Cooperative Development strategy to increase its impact. This focus has allowed the cooperative to launch programs and projects which improve the income of cooperative members. They have replanted and restored 700 ha of land, whilst a further 500 ha are being rejuvenated by a project from HIVOS (Humanist Institute for Cooperation) and the European Union. The base groups have begun to diversify their income with honey production for national and international markets. They have also launched a tourism project to cater for this growing industry; the cooperative has invested in a hotel, restaurant and swimming pool.

CONT/...



Member of PRODECOOP and her young family.
©Sean Hawkey (FI)

COFFEE PROFILE

Altitude 1,250m

Smallholders 2.2 ha on average

Total area of production 4,999 ha

Growing practices 54% organic

Coffee variety Arabica: Caturra, Bourbon

Coffee quality SHG: dark and smoky with flavours of roasted coconut, honeysuckle and apple cider. Low acidity. Cupping score: 82 - 85

Harvest January - March

Export & shipping April - July

Other certifications OCIA (organic), Biolatina (organic), CLAC *Sello Pequeños Productores* (Fairtrade Latin American producer network: Small producer label)

PRODUCER PROFILE CONT/...



Fairtrade

PRODECOOP distributes a proportion of the Fairtrade Premium to its member cooperatives, and manages the rest centrally. At the General Assembly, delegates from the member cooperatives vote on how the money will be invested. Annually, they invest a proportion of the Fairtrade Premium in business development, while the rest is invested in:

Education

Premium Funds are invested in primary school equipment. The cooperative also provides scholarships to university and secondary school students who want to study coffee. 68 scholarships have been awarded so far.

Women

PRODECOOP uses the funds from the Fairtrade Premium to focus on promoting gender equality throughout the cooperative. Women must hold at least 40% of the leadership positions, and training programs are held on a regular basis to educate men and women about the important role female voices play in successful coffee production, from harvest to distribution. Through PRODECOOP's programme of gender equality, women are supported to run small projects, such as selling crops and keeping chickens. The cooperative has also invested in land specifically for women.

Quality & Productivity: training young people

The cooperatives uses Fairtrade Premium funds to train producers' children and family members. They can become 'promoters', offering technical assistance and guidance about certification. The cooperative offers them a small stipend. PRODECOOP have also used Fairtrade Premium funds to build an organic fertiliser plant for members to source low-costs inputs.

Social

The Fairtrade Premium has been used to develop food security programs. Through diversification, the project is increasing the income and nutrition of the members and their families.

Challenges

- Families continue to suffer from food insecurity during *meses flacos* or 'lean months' when there is no income from coffee.
- There tends to be a low level of literacy in the communities.
- There is still need to develop better housing, drinking water and sanitation for many communities.
- The cooperative are still developing a way to differentiate quality and variety coffees to further increase their share of the speciality market.

CONTACT:

www.prodecoop.com



The PRODECOOP team. ©Fairtrade Foundation



Pictured above is one of PRODECOOP's coffee tasting experts. ©Fairtrade Foundation

'With Fairtrade income we have made improvements to our community. Before, we slept on the ground and did not have basic amenities. Now some of us have floors, some furniture, sanitary services, and potable water. If we sold all our production at Fairtrade prices our dreams would come true.'

Alexa Marin Colindres
PRODECOOP member

