



Nicaragua

PRODECOOP Las Segovias SHG EP FTO

PRODECOOP (Promotora de Desarrollo Cooperativo de las Segovias) helps farmers maintain high-yielding trees that produce quality cherry by offering financial support for farm renovations and seedlings to revitalize rootstock.

Details

COFFEE GRADE:

SHG EP

FARM/COOP/STATION:

PRODECOOP

VARIETAL:

Bourbon, Caturra

PROCESSING:

Fully washed

ALTITUDE:

1,250 meters above sea level

OWNER:

2,275 farmers working with PRODECOOP

SUBREGION/TOWN:

Esteli, Madriz & Nueva Segovia

REGION:

Northern Nicaragua

FARM SIZE:

2.2 hectares on average

AREA UNDER COFFEE:

About 5,000 hectares total

BAG SIZE:

69kg GrainPro

CERTIFICATIONS:

FTO

HARVEST MONTHS:

December - March

About This Coffee

PRODECOOP has served coffee growers in the regions of Esteli, Madriz and Nueva Segovia since 1993, when the annual average C market closing price was at an astounding low of \$0.52 per pound. The negative effects of these low prices were compounded by the fact that this was the 3rd year in a row that the 'C' price had failed to rise above \$1 per pound.

This price dip, caused in part by the unraveling of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), made it difficult for farmers to sell their coffee at profitable prices. Farmers in Nueva Segovia banded together and formed PRODECOOP to increase their market bargaining power and sell their coffee at better prices.

Today, PRODECOOP is able to market several smallholder blends to specialty roasters around the world, helping them garner higher prices for their hard work.

Cultivation

The departments of Esteli, Madriz and Nueva Segovia are mountainous regions in Northern Nicaragua. The soils are sandy and high in nutrients. The climate is humid and tropical. This combination is perfect for high-quality coffee production.

Farmers in this rural and remote area of Nicaragua have been often underserved by government and, even, private initiatives. With aging rootstock and limited access to agricultural inputs, many farmers had low yields and low quality – a very difficult combination to work with.

To combat this, PRODECOOP has focused on renovation and training in Good Agricultural Practices. An overwhelming focus has been put on supplying traditional, high-quality varieties, such as Caturra, ensuring that coffee quality is maintained and access to specialty markets is secured.

Many of PRODECOOP's members are certified Organic, and a strong emphasis has been put on organic alternatives to chemical pesticides. To protect coffee farms, a PRODECOOP lab grows a naturally-occurring fungus that preys on coffee berry borer beetles.

Harvest & Post-Harvest

Farmers selectively handpick cherry on their farms in the highlands and deliver their harvests to nearby wet mills. At the mills, mill workers pulp and ferment cherry before washing it in clean water and laying parchment to dry in the sun in thin layers on the patios.

Once dry, wet mills deliver the parchment to the PRODECOOP dry mill in Palacaguina. The mill has 13 permanent staff. Ranks swell to over 200 workers during the harvest.

More About PRODECOOP

After the immediate urgency of the 1990-1996 price depression passed, PRODECOOP expanded its focus to include other ways to help its members improve their lives. PRODECOOP programs address a wide range of community and farming issues.

On the broader community scale, PRODECOOP supports the children of farmers to help them stay in school and succeed. They focus specifically on secondary school and university-aged students and offer a variety of supports including scholarships and educational outreach.

Food security is one of their primary concerns as well. One of their programs helps families enhance food security through trainings in agricultural diversification. These trainings help communities create more sustainable food systems.

Last but not least, PRODECOOP works with 400 women to increase gender equality by offering leadership training and capacity building for farmers, producers' spouses and other community members.

Coffee in Nicaragua

Nicaragua may not be the most famous producer of Central American coffee, but it has great potential. The country is known as the land of '*los lagos y los volcanes*' (lakes and volcanos) and has many coffee growing 'pockets' that few have heard of or experienced. Many producers in the country are experimenting with new varieties and processing methods, making it a specialty origin to watch.

Many coffee producers in Nicaragua today are buoyed by cooperatives that provide a wide array of services, supports and opportunity. As seen in the win of the ‘*El Acuerdo de las Tunas*’, where 3,000 landless workers won land rights, collective action by farmers can be far more effective at enacting widespread change than the advocacy of individual farmers.

Cooperatives and farmer associations in Nicaragua encompass a large percentage of the country’s coffee producers, and they are taking their destiny in their own hands. By putting great emphasis on quality and by aiming for the international specialty coffee industry, cooperatives and farmers associations are helping their members gain influence and import that will, hopefully, garner enough profit to enable farmers to continue to improve and invest in their farms and their families.

Large and medium-sized (10+ hectare) farms also hold a significant place in Nicaragua’s coffee landscape, as well. Many of these farms have also prioritized social and environmental issues and are working on quality improvements at both cultivation and post-harvest levels.

Farmers, for the most part, will process coffee on their own farms, and the majority of the time coffee is dried on large drying patios under sun.

