

PRODUCER PROFILE



NAME: OROMIA COFFEE FARMERS COOPERATIVE UNION / OCFCU

PRODUCTS: COFFEE

COUNTRY: ETHIOPIA



FLO ID 897

Fairtrade certified since 2002

Number of members 35,407

INTRODUCTION

Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (OCFCU) is the largest Fairtrade coffee producer in Ethiopia. As the birthplace of coffee, the Oromia region is home to unique and diverse plant species. Two-thirds of the country's coffee is grown in this region.

OCFCU was founded in 1999, first unifying 34 smallholder groups. Today there are 217 primary cooperatives in the Union. 41 are Fairtrade certified 1st grade organizations, and membership is growing year on year. OCFCU members are dedicated to promoting environmental stewardship and social justice in their communities. Delegates from OCFCU's organizations come from up to 800km away to attend General Meetings and make decisions.

COFFEE GROWING AND PROCESSING

Generations of Ethiopian coffee producers have avoided agrochemicals, and OCFCU reinforces this with advice and workshops. Over 80% of OCFCU's Fairtrade certified coffee is grown organically under a canopy of Acacia and Oak trees in bird-friendly conditions. The natural decay of plants and leaves, as well as animal manure enriches the soil. Coffee is also grown amongst with cardamom, ginger, papaya and sweet potatoes. This creates ideal conditions to grow a unique coffee. OCFCU produces six types of coffee, all award-winning.

OCFCU is responsible for managing processing, marketing and commercialization of the members' coffee. The Ethiopian government granted OCFCU a licence to act as an exporter for its members so they can avoid the central auction. This means better traceability and quality control.

OCFCU coffee is both wet and dry processed. Some farmers deliver their harvest of red cherries directly to the primary cooperative for wet processing, others will sun dry and hull their coffee before taking it to the nearest primary cooperative. The primary cooperative will process the coffee into parchment and deliver it to the OCFCU warehouse in Addis Ababa. OCFCU do the final sorting and processing before transporting the product to Djibouti port.



Pictured centre is Itanish Wolde sorting coffee. She is a member of the Negele Gorbitu group, part of OCFCU. ©Eric St-Pierre (FI)

Women hold prominent positions throughout the organization. The Union has sponsored women's football teams which brings communities together to promote equality.

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Altitude varies across the region
Smallholders 1.5 hectares on average
Total area of production 52,106 ha
Growing practices 50% organic
Coffee variety Arabica: Yirgachaffe, Sidamo, Limu, Harar, Nekemte & Jimma
Coffee quality Each coffee has its own profile, from sweet balanced acidity of Sidamo, to the spicy flavour and heavy body of Jimma. See OCFCU's website for more information.
Harvest October – January (Yirgachaffe, Sidamo, Limu, Harar & Jimma) February –April (Nekemte)
Export & shipping From Djibouti port
Other certifications BCS (organic) (24 out of 41 groups), UTZ (3), RFA (1)

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BENEFITS OF FAIRTRADE

70% of the profits from Fairtrade sales are redistributed to the primary cooperatives and its members. 30% is invested in training and projects run by OCFCU. The Union also invests in marketing so they can increase sales and the returns to their increasing membership.

Sustainability

OCFCU runs training for farmers on sustainable, bird-friendly techniques, composting and natural fertilisers. Farmers are encouraged to intercrop their coffee with productive plants such as avocado, mango and cardamom. This both supports the household and develops unique flavours in the coffee.

OCFCU has provided loans to five primary cooperatives to purchase eco-friendly machines to prepare washed coffee. This saves water, reduces pollution of the surrounding water sources, and saves money on running costs.

Economic: diversification of income

OCFCU has trained farmers to produce honey. They distributed 200 beehives to members. The union is also training young women in how to set up microenterprises – a vital means of income for the household.

Economic: credit and emergency funds

OCFCU is the biggest shareholder in the Co-operative Bank of Oromia, which it co-founded in 2006. This has enabled primary cooperatives to access loans so they can purchase their members' coffee, and provide other services.

The Union provides financial contributions to people who have suffered natural disasters. OCFCU have also set up a fund for repairing equipment if it fails.

Productivity and quality

Several primary cooperatives have used the Fairtrade premium to fund treatment for coffee diseases. OCFCU have also purchased a grinding machine so they can grind and prepare their coffee for identifying qualities and meeting the needs of their suppliers.

Health

OCFCU has constructed four fully-equipped health clinics, and continues to support the running costs of this service available to the whole community.

Coffee infrastructure

Several primary cooperatives have used the Fairtrade premium to construct storage facilities for their coffee and machines to wash the beans more efficiently whilst preserving the quality.

CONTACT:

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Water The Union has established 56 clean water supply stations for coffee growing communities. The primary cooperative Waijin Kabenya installed the facility pictured above. ©OCFCU



Local infrastructure and schools

OCFCU has improved roads and built bridges throughout the region so vehicles can pass safely. OCFCU's primary cooperatives have built 15 schools and 42 classrooms with the Fairtrade premium. ©OCFCU

'My home has totally changed, my personal health and income have improved and I'm expanding my farmland. We now have a shop the co-operative established where we can buy goods and a school constructed by Fairtrade benefits.'

Mengesha Wocho, member of OCFCU's Kelaitu Hase Gola primary cooperative

