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Implemented by:



Environment – Colombia

Forest management provides income for coffee growers

Together with coal, oil and nickel, coffee is one of Colombia's main exports. But the country's coffee growers face tough competition on the global market. Prices are subject to wide fluctuation. Deforestation, the construction of sawmills and the cultivation of many new crops in the fields offer a secure and better income to the coffee growers.

Context

Arabica coffee from Colombia is popular throughout the world. However, this is not making its coffee growers rich because they have to offer their product on a highly competitive world market. Coffee prices have been fluctuating greatly for many decades now and the growers' income has not been reliable. To prevent coffee growers from cultivating more lucrative crops for the manufacture of illegal drugs, KfW Development Bank has, together with the Colombian government, devised a complex programme intended to provide the growers with a dependable additional income, conserve the forest and ensure biodiversity.

In a country ravaged by drug wars and civil war, the coffee cultivation zone on the banks of the River Magdalena was regarded as being a safe and stable region. Its population of over two million earns a living from the cultivation of coffee, generally on small plantations of fewer than five hectares. Nowadays, the families have to make sure that their coffee is of the highest quality if they are to obtain good prices on the global market, so cultivation is only worthwhile on the best soils. Climate change and an increasing number of extreme weather events have led to much terrain being eroded and consequently losing its value.

Project approach

To date, 65,000 hectares of fallow land have been reforested as part of the "Forestry as an alternative means of production" programme. KfW is supporting the programme with approximately EUR 18 million. Around 10,000 families are participating, all of whom live in eight municipalities within the coffee cultivation zone. They have organised themselves into forestry centres, each responsible for 1,000 hectares of land. Two of the centres have already developed sawmills

Project name	Forestry as an alternative means of production on the margins of the coffee zone
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Colombia
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural – MADR) and Coffee Growers Federation (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros – FNC)





The cultivation of fruit and vegetables in the shade offered by trees ensures a higher yield. Source: KfW

that are under cooperative management. More are to follow. Plant nurseries have been set up specifically for the cultivation of seedlings.

KfW advised the growers on how to diversify the crops they cultivate. What are termed agroforestry systems were established. These are areas under cultivation where trees, vegetables and fruit flourish together. The trees provide shade and maintain the water level in the soil. This in turn increases the yields of coffee, fruit and vegetables. Crops that were previously relatively uncommon have been planted, such as manioc and bananas. Fruit trees supply additional yields and, over time, timber will provide income. The growers are also thinking in new ways when it comes to coffee production. They are now turning to more environment-friendly methods. In this way, they can have their product certified as organic coffee and thus tap into new markets with higher-quality offers.

Furthermore, agricultural advisers, sociologists and nutritionists lend support to families so that they can also transform their gardens into ecological habitats and harvest healthy food, enabling them to prepare good-quality dishes. This improves their diets, especially those of their children.

Impact

The forests that the coffee growers have reforested prevent soil erosion. The water balance in the soil is stabilised again. The reforestation is selective, meaning that existing natural forests can be linked to one creat-

ed, covering 20,000 hectares of land in total.

All in all, 65,000 hectares of woodland have been reforested. This makes the Coffee Growers Federation the country's largest reforestation organisation. The newly planted trees are under protection and may only be managed sustainably. This benefits the coffee growers, who can rely on the fact that even in a number of years they will still be receiving an income from sustainable logging. The forest is now effectively their pension plan. The period during which no income is generated, until the trees are large enough to be used, is being bridged with investment aid.

The project has enabled the participating growers and their families to boost their income. On average, this has risen by 75 %, and in favourable locations by even as much as 90 %. 6,000 new jobs have been created by the sawmills and wood processing. These also bring money to the region.

Reliable incomes and good economic prospects create stability. Those who can look to the future with confidence have no reason to join the armed gangs or go down the road of risky, illegal narcotic crop cultivation. The promotion of the coffee growers therefore contributes not only to the preservation of peace in Colombia but also to the conservation of species and environmental protection and the promotion of farmers.



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