



MEDIA RELEASE

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Resilience to Crises – Coffee Farmers Must be Strengthened in a Holistic Way

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges to the lives of smallholder coffee farming families and exacerbated their already difficult situation. However, it was observed that meliorating certain aspects of the farmers' life situations could contribute to increasing their resilience and lowering their vulnerability.

Crises can be health-related, they can be caused by war, nature events, or economic changes such as the current global inflation. During the COVID-19 lockdown, smallholder coffee farming families had to face their own specific challenges. Many of them experienced food insecurity due to limited access to goods and price increases. Transportation stopped, leading to reduced availability of workforce and inputs like seedlings or fertilizers. This placed additional pressure on a livelihood situation that is already vulnerable to low productivity levels, the effects of climate change, and damages caused by pests and diseases. Aside from economic constraints, the situation was exacerbated by social problems, such as increased cases of domestic violence or teenage pregnancies. And in Central America, the storms Eta and Iota occurred during the pandemic, adding to the general situation of crisis.

However, it was observed during and after the pandemic that meliorating certain aspects of the farmers' life situations could contribute to increasing their resilience and lowering their vulnerability to these challenges. Families who participated in projects of International Coffee Partners (ICP) for instance were obviously better able to react to and mitigate challenges posed by the pandemic. ICP follows a holistic approach aiming to improve the livelihoods of smallholder coffee farming families through various aspects. It supports farmers with the formation of farmer organizations, trains them in best agronomical practices, climate change adaptation, and gender equality, and strengthens youth and the intergenerational dialogue.



“Coffee-producing countries are quite fragile when it comes to tackling international crises”, states Giuseppe Lavazza, vice Chairman of the Lavazza Group, a shareholder of ICP. “This is related to the dimension of the coffee farmers. The vast majority of them are very small farmers with portions of land of on average no more than one hectare. Their total dependency on coffee is a big constraint to these players.” That is why, especially over the pandemic, ICP tried to help farmers diversify their activities and production. “We support them in becoming more entrepreneurial, resilient to the hazards of the market, and financially stable”, adds Giuseppe Lavazza.

For example in Honduras, farmers under ICP training start intercropping with avocado, lime, or banana, e. g. “This gives them more food security”, reports Claudia Muñoz. She is Technical Coordinator at Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS) Central America, the on-site implementor of the ICP projects. “We also promote agroforestry systems and the production of organic fertilizers in order to decrease the production costs – all with the goal to increase the farmers’ income and reduce their vulnerability.” In order to produce higher qualities and quantities of coffee and thereby increase their earnings, ICP is training farmers on sustainable farming practices. Victor Komakech, Regional Project Manager at HRNS Uganda, points out another important factor: “We support the farmers to organize themselves in farmer organizations and cooperatives. This helps them to attain better prices in the market, better purchase conditions for inputs, etc. It is important to bring the farmers together to make them stronger.”

Farmer communities are therefore best prepared for crises if they are strengthened on different levels. Approaches should include all the different aspects of their realities:

- Diversified crop cultivation can prevent families from food insecurity.
- Joining farmer organizations helps farmers to organize themselves and support each other also in terms of market access.
- Sustainable and innovative agronomical strategies and techniques can make farmers more independent from inputs and increase productivity.



- Training in gender equality helps to balance unequal power levels and better distribute responsibilities and tasks.
- Intergenerational family businesses with youth participating and evenly distributed tasks provide for constant workforce availability and continuity in farm management.

The statements were taken at the panel discussion “Stronger After the Crisis – Resilience in Coffee Farming” that was held at the Terra Madre Salone del Gusto 2022 in Turin, Italy.

About International Coffee Partners

International Coffee Partners (ICP) is a pre-competitive initiative of the leading European family-owned coffee companies, Delta Cafés of Portugal, Franck of Croatia, Paulig of Finland, Joh. Johannson of Norway, Löfbergs of Sweden, Lavazza of Italy, Neumann Kaffee Gruppe of Germany and Tchibo of Germany. ICP’s objective is to contribute know-how to establish a sustainable coffee sector in key producing countries through the implementation of best-practice projects in coffee farmer communities. Since 2001, ICP has reached nearly 100,000 smallholder families in 13 countries.

More about International Coffee Partners:

<https://www.coffee-partners.org/>

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