

SUCCESS STORY:

Thousands benefit from coffee training



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Farmers attend a coffee training in Tembaro. More than 14,000 smallholders were trained to improve coffee quality.

Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee and the source of some of the finest coffees in the world. Its importance to the country's economy is paramount. Coffee export values were the highest ever during the 2006/2007 production season, reaching 180,000 MTs valued at \$424 million. An estimated 85 percent of Ethiopia's coffee is produced by thousands of smallholder producers in Oromia and SNNP. Collectors, or "subsabies," buy coffee from the farmers who in turn sell to regional coffee mills, or "akrabies," for initial processing. Most of Ethiopia's coffee is sold by the akrabies to exporters in Addis Ababa, where coffee undergoes final processing and is graded at the Central Liquoring Unit (CLU), and sold via the national auction.

Despite Ethiopia's substantial export volumes, impediments limit growth and income. Some international roasters note inconsistent quality in Ethiopia's coffees and report that quality and consistency improvements will generate higher prices. To achieve consistent taste and quality, the USAID Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (USAID-ATEP) is helping producers, traders, and exporters through improved harvesting, handling and processing. Training farmers in good agricultural practices (GAPs) and training traders and processors are the major focus of USAID-ATEP's coffee program.

In June 2007, the Coffee Forum, established with assistance from USAID-ATEP, launched the Millennium Campaign to train farmers in harvesting and postharvest practices to improve quality ahead of the September harvest season.

The massive training effort reached 14,454 producers, collectors, processors, exporters and MoARD development

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— Ato Solomon Tessema Yimam, manager of the coffee farmers' union at Bench-Maji



The deep red color of these coffee cherries shows improved selection and quality.



Samples tested at the Coffee Liquoring Unit.

Impact of the Millennium Campaign

A USAID-ATEP survey of six coffee processors of washed (parchment) coffee in Sidamo and Yirgacheffe following the Millennium Campaign found that of the coffee beans graded at the CLU, about 900 MTs in 2006 and 2007, the percentage qualifying for Grade I increased from 1 percent in 2006, to 12 percent in 2007, while the volumes receiving Grade II designation increased from 14 percent to 61 percent. Consequently, the volumes at lower Grades III-V fell from 80 percent to 23 percent, signifying an overall quality increase.

A related survey of five processors of higher-valued sun-dried coffee found even higher increases following the Millennium Campaign. The percentage of coffee qualifying as Grade I increased from 6 percent in 2006, to 49 percent in 2007.

These quality improvements are indicative of the net impact of the campaign, the result being higher prices, increased export values, and a strong international profile for Ethiopian coffee.

agents from the 82 targeted woredas from July 21 to Aug. 13, 2007.

Training topics included:

- Selection and Harvesting – instruction for producers in berry selection (ripe red vs. unripened green cherries) and techniques for minimizing damage during picking.
- Price Differentiation – instruction for collectors in sorting of product into different grades to segment their market and receive premium prices for berries.
- Drying and Storage – instruction for processors in proper drying and storage techniques that reduce contamination and minimize spoilage.

USAID-ATEP clients are reporting significant improvements in coffee received and graded at their facilities, with significant volumes receiving higher grades this year.

Other factors contributing to improved quality include processors' investments in sun-drying tables and other infrastructure, favorable weather conditions, and other technical assistance and quality-related training from USAID-ATEP, woreda-level MoARD development agents, and regional marketing staff.

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Coffee farmers are informed via radio programs on current prices received at the national auction and are therefore armed with the information to negotiate prices with local collectors.

Following the success of the Millennium Campaign, the Coffee Forum is planning another for mid-2008 on basic production including stumping of old trees and pruning to increase yields, transplanting of seedlings and other best practices.



A training participant speaks his mind during a session focused on production challenges.