

SUCCESS STORY

Ethiopian coffee farmers increase profits with sun drying techniques

Coffee is an important part of Ethiopia's agriculture and trade landscape, accounting for more than 40 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. While most of Ethiopia's coffee is marketed through the national auction, USAID's Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (ATEP) is helping producers and exporters tap into lucrative specialty market niches.

One of these niches is sun-dried coffee, also referred to as unwashed or naturally processed coffee. Sun-dried coffee is of particular interest to environmentally minded buyers because it requires fewer resources. Coffee is often processed with powered equipment requiring substantial quantities of water to blast pulp and mucilage away from beans. The water is often tainted during the process and discharged into local streams and ponds.

Sun drying eliminates the need for expensive depulping equipment and still allows farmers to add value to their coffee on the farm.

Because sun drying keeps production costs low and can earn \$0.25 to \$0.50 per pound more than commercial-grade coffee, farmers stand to earn more profit.

USAID-ATEP promotes raised and covered drying beds for sun drying. These beds are low-cost and farmers can build these beds on their own with readily available resources. Basic materials include chicken wire, shade netting, plastic sheeting, and lumber.

The use of these beds, as opposed to traditional ground drying, allows air to circulate around the beans for even drying and a richer, more flavorful product. The use of these beds also reduces contamination and removable coverings protect beans from rain.

USAID-ATEP has co-invested more than \$33,000 in the construction of 300 specially designed sun drying beds for four lead clients. These clients have in turn co-invested \$52,000 in this technology.

The result has been significant increases in sales and quality for program-assisted farmers. A survey of four USAID-ATEP lead clients – Limu Kossa, Amaro Gayo, Guji Coffee Export and Dedesa Agro Industry – that invested in sun-drying beds and received project technical assistance showed that most of their coffee sold at a higher premium, with average annual sales increasing 364 MTs by volume (159 percent) and \$1.2 million by value (255 percent) over pre-project sales.

"Because of USAID-ATEP's invaluable technical assistance in processing sun-dried coffee, we are able to enter into the specialty market," said Asefa Wolde Mariam, the Export Manager for Guji Coffee Export. "We even received a letter of appreciation from the national bank for selling our coffee at specialty export prices". This company is currently expanding and building more sun-drying beds for the upcoming coffee harvest.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Coffee is dried on raised, low-cost beds at Limu Kossa Plantation.



USAID-ATEP farmers learn how to maximize the benefits of sun drying with low-cost tables. The program teaches farmers how to avoid over drying, which causes beans to become brittle, and under drying, which makes beans prone to fungi and bacteria.