

# Low Cost Coffee Cupping Laboratories

In 2003, CDA has continued to play a lead role in laying the foundations for developing Honduras as a supplier of specialty coffee. Major CDA-led initiatives have included the development of a flavor profile map, cupping in the process more than 800 coffees from 10 departments. This was followed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Honduran Specialty Coffee Competition held in association with the Honduran Institute of Coffee (IHCAFE) and the Specialty Coffee Association of Honduras (ACEH) as the major co-sponsors of the event. Pre-competition cupping of 400 nationwide samples by CDA-trained local cuppers was followed by the competition with 15 international and 5 local judges cupping the best 80 coffees. In addition to facilitating sales and raising both national and international awareness of the quality available, the two activities enabled CDA to focus on the zones and growers with specialty grade coffees. This has been followed by the next logical step – expand the training of growers and cooperatives in cupping so that they can identify and separate their best coffees and negotiate premium prices – and ensure a fairer distribution of the premium prices with the exporters.

Fintrac CDA originally started these activities in 2002 with the installation of two full cupping laboratories in San Marcos de Colon and Ocotepeque and the training of 38 local cuppers; these already provide cupping services to around 500 coffee growers. They have demonstrated that coffee quality can be improved through cupping and that growers can obtain premium prices. These laboratories cost around \$10,000 to fully equip.

A lower cost alternative - mini laboratories - was required to expand the number of cupping facilities on a national basis which would then extend the outreach and availability to more growers. More cuppers throughout the regions were also required.

CDA has prepared 11 technical bulletins on specialty coffee; the following 5 are directly related to cupping and laboratories:

- #7. *How to prepare coffee for cupping.*
- #8. *Coffee roasting profiles.*
- #9. *Coffee flavors from different regions in Honduras.*
- #10. *Equipment and Utensils required for a cupping laboratory.*
- #11. *Developing low cost cupping laboratories.*



## MINI - LABORATORIES

Fintrac CDA has developed a low cost mini-laboratory which enables rural communities and coffee cooperatives to adopt the practices. The basic equipment consists of a small roaster and grinder, worth a combined total of \$48 together with 2 dozen see-through glasses, spoons and a coffee maker or a pot to heat water. The complete cupping lab has an average cost of \$100.



## CUPPING SYSTEM

In addition to the facilities, a simple and basic cupping procedure and scoring system has been developed based on the international cupping protocols.

Efraín Muriillo, CDA's coffee specialist explains: "The procedure implemented is not a rigid system for people with extraordinary abilities - it's a method adapted to the taste and olfactory senses of all people in order to identify the best coffees of a group. It's very flexible."

**QUALITY AWARENESS**

Overall the Fintrac CDA training and technical assistance program has continually emphasized coffee quality and the systems to obtain and quantify quality. These, together with the cupping competitions and cupping laboratories have raised grower awareness in the need to obtain higher quality coffees. One exporter has already noted that the overall quality of the coffees he has received in the early 2003 / 2004 season is higher than previous seasons.



**D**uring the second half of 2003 basic cupping training has been provided to more than 120 farmers and members of 16 cooperatives and grower groups located in high grown coffee regions - half of the trainees were women. Eleven of these groups have already purchased and installed the basic equipment and are cupping coffees in the new “mini-laboratories”. In addition, 1 cooperative purchased more expensive cupping laboratory equipment and another 2 cooperatives re-activated their unused cupping labs. Only two of the groups approached decided not to install cupping facilities.

This work has now provided cupping services to more than 1,300 coffee growers in 12 departments.

These new laboratories meet on a regular basis for cupping sessions to taste and qualify grower samples. They will do so throughout the 2003-2004 harvest to identify and separate the best coffees in each of the regions – for sale at premiums.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Cupping coffee enables identification of both quality attributes and defects. When defects are identified, they can normally be traced back to the production or handling systems. Corrective measures and changes can then be implemented in the handling systems to reduce or eliminate the quality defects.



Cooperatives and Groups Installing New Cupping Facilities			
Name	Location	Result	# Growers
<b>Cafés Orgánicos de Marcala</b>	<b>Marcala, La Paz</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>300</b>
Horizontes La Peña	Yorito, Yoro	Installed CDA Design	60
<b>COARENE</b>	<b>San Juan, Intibucá</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>185</b>
CARSBIL	San Nicolás, Intibucá	Installed CDA Design	30
<b>Amigos Los Alpes Ltda.</b>	<b>Los Alpes, Intibucá</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>50</b>
COCASJOL	San José Colinas, Santa Bárbara	Installed CDA Design	80
<b>COCAEROL</b>	<b>El Rosario, Ocotepeque</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>78</b>
COPROCAEL	La Encarnación, Ocotepeque	Installed CDA Design	31
<b>IHCAFE Grower Group</b>	<b>San Luis, Santa Bárbara</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>25</b>
Grower Group	Lepaterique, Francisco Morazán	Installed CDA Design	3
<b>COCAFAL</b>	<b>San Pedro, Copan</b>	<b>Installed CDA Design</b>	<b>104</b>
COCAFELOL	La Labor, Ocotepeque	Bought own Equipment	18
<b>Grower Group</b>	<b>Moroceli, Fco. Morazan</b>	<b>Reactivated existing lab</b>	<b>-</b>
Comicaol	El Paraiso, El Paraiso	Reactivated Existing Lab	100