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Coopedota launches world's first carbon neutral coffee

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The Coffee Cooperative of Dota (Coopedota) announced in March, 2011 that it had achieved carbon neutrality certification for its green and roasted coffee beans. This is the first time that coffee production has been certified as carbon neutral.

Coopedota, a cooperative of 800 coffee farmers from Costa Rica's Dota valley, certified its coffee to the British Standards Institution's PAS2060 specification for demonstrating carbon neutrality. Since its publication last year, PAS2060 has been recognized by experts as the most credible international certification standard for carbon neutrality.

As part of the certification process, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the life cycle of the product (production, transport and sale) were reduced and offset to result in zero net emissions. Many carbon neutrality certifications focus on point-source, as opposed to life-cycle emissions.

Dota valley's coffee is considered one of the world's finest. It is sold by quality- and sustainability-conscious retailers in Europe, North America and Asia. Coopedota also sells a limited amount in the high-end local market.

In February, Lonely Planet ranked Coopedota's coffee shop as one of the top ten places to drink coffee in the world.

Michael Phillips, 2010 World Barista Champion, trained at Coopedota and used its coffees during the World Barista Championship in London. "Indeed, we are famous for our coffee's high quality, but lately our customers value our sustainability practices as well," says Coopedota's general manager, Roberto Mata.

Coopedota's environmental efforts appear to track the global climate negotiations. The coop began reducing GHG emissions in 1998, immediately after the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. That year, the coop reduced 40% of its processing plant energy consumption and eliminated wastewater discharges to the local river.

In 2009, spurred by the media attention around the Copenhagen climate summit, Coopedota set an ambitious target on achieving net zero GHG emissions. Over the past 18 months, they have worked with consultants from EARTH University, Peace Corp personnel and even graduate students from Yale University to measure its carbon footprint and establish a carbon strategy.

Hortensia Solis, the coop's sustainability manager, participated in the Costa Rican delegation at the UN's climate summit COP16 in Cancun, Mexico to learn more about climate change and its linkage with agriculture.

It's no secret why Coopedota has taken this bold step. "Climate-smart coffee is about our bottom line and our continued existence," says Ms. Solis. "The market for low carbon products will grow as consumer's worry more about climate change", says Ms. Solis. "We want to capture the value for sustainable purchases and pass it on to

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this year's low coffee supply.

On March 10th, global coffee prices spiked to 34-year highs, going above US\$300 per quintal, said Mr. Mata.

According to Ronald Peters, head the Costa Rican coffee grower's Institution (ICAFE), the industry should replicate Coopedota's efforts. "This carbon neutrality certification gives us a sense that we as an industry can contribute more towards creating a low-carbon economy in Costa Rica."

The coffee sector accounted for roughly 10% of Costa Rica's national emissions in 2005. Most of these emissions arise from the use of nitrogen based fertilizers.

In 2007, Costa Rica announced that it would become carbon neutral by the year 2021, the 200th anniversary of its independence.

Carbon Clear, a third-party verifier, was selected to conduct the certification because of its international reach and distinguished client list including the EuroStar, PwC and Hyatt Hotels.

Further Information

Coopedota is a coffee cooperative based in Santa Maria de Dota, Costa Rica. You can learn more about Coopedota at: www.coopedota.com. For media enquiries, please contact Hortensia Solís at telephone +506-8312-8840 and/or via e-mail at: hsolis@coopedota.com.

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