THE FUTURE OF Coffee

Within the majority of the 25 million coffee farming households worldwide, women do most of the work while men enjoy most of the benefits from the sales. There is hardly an incentive for women to improve productivity and quality. Many young men and women leave the countryside as they see their parents struggle to survive in the coffee sector. They pursue better-paid jobs in urban areas instead. The coffee sector is faced with a huge challenge: the future of coffee is at stake.

Hivos has been working for more than twenty years on improving smallholders’ positions in the coffee value chain. Together with local partners, support programmes for thousands of coffee smallholders have been developed aiming at improved productivity and enhanced coffee incomes.

FAMILY FARMING IS BUSINESS

Giving women and youth a more equal share in the benefits from coffee production pays off. Case studies from East Africa show that coffee productivity can raise up to 86%, premium quality coffee can be increased with 23% and household earnings can accumulate with 44%. Human capital results include shared decision making and control over income, increased food security, improved income diversification, better shared workload and less domestic violence. Also, participation rate of women in meetings, training, and leadership positions at producer organisations increases.

These results certainly will help to create a positive image of coffee farming among youth. When they realise that coffee farming can be a profitable business, chances are likely to increase that they will regain interest and start planting new seedlings, learning Good Agricultural Practices, hiring themselves out to older farmers, or training others in strategy and planning. Or they might jointly lease a piece of land and start coffee farming together.

Key actors in the coffee sector recognize the benefits of involving women and youth in coffee farming business. There is big momentum for joined action.

COFFEE FARMING FAMILIES ENTERPRISE ENGAGEMENT (COFFEE)

The African Fine Coffee Association (AFCA), together with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Hivos, developed a programme called ‘Coffee Farming Families Enterprise Engagement’ (CoFFEE). With this program gender and youth will be integrated in AFCA’s strategic plan and four main strategies of capacity development, improved market linkages, institution building and advocacy.

Hivos will take the lead in capacity development on gender and youth within AFCA, the country chapters and members through developing and implementing: 1) Coffee farming as a family business among smallholders; 2) Gender sensitive training programs, facilitating women and youth participation and 3) Women and youth entrepreneurship in the coffee chain. Hivos will ensure that lessons learned are disseminated from the implementation of these strategies.

REQUEST FOR DONORS

We are currently looking for additional funding partners to join us in this ambitious programme.