

Mexico

Case study example - Principle 2: Organic coffee production in Mexico - "small farmers need extension support to successfully build their opportunities"

Coffee is amongst the key cash crops in southern Mexico. Although the global price for a pound of beans has fallen to historic lows, making it simply no longer worth the money for small farmers to harvest their crops, the potential of organic coffee is being realised. The rapidly growing markets for especially organic shade-grown coffee and cacao, are projected to potentially generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues for the Central American region, substantially contributing to the improvement of incomes for small farmers and indigenous people. Significant attention has been given to the positive relationship between small environmentally friendly coffee producers and biodiversity, increasing the livelihood opportunity of the former and conserving the latter. To further develop the biodiversity sensitive industry in a meaningful manner, in southern Mexico management of the farming entities is left to the small farmers and producers, who are often organised in cooperatives. However, it has been realised that certain key issues currently impeding on the successful further development of the industry need to be addressed at other levels. For example, research and extension needs on issues including pest management, monitoring of organic shade-grown production systems, and the understanding of the ecological functioning thereof, quality improvement and even betterment of marketing opportunities, have to be addressed by service organisations, government extension, research institutions and others. Further, Government policies such as pesticide subsidies, which tend to favour conventionally grown crops need to be adapted to support the development of the organic coffee industry, to allow for more environmentally friendly practices; although the small producers should have a stake in the further development of the policies, it is clearly a different stakeholder group that is acting on that level. International trade deals, which will affect the environmental offsets, will have to be managed at yet other appropriate levels.

References: [Comisión nacional para el conocimiento y uso de la biodiversidad](http://www.conabio.gob.mx/) (Mexico; <http://www.conabio.gob.mx/>); CBD webpage: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/case-studies/>