



CAFÉ FEMENINO



BOARD



EMPLOYEES & SENIOR
MANAGEMENT



SMALL HOLDER FARMERS &
CONTRACTORS



CONSUMERS



COMMUNITY

Café Femenino is a coffee company that sources exclusively from women farmers around the world. First established by a coffee cooperative in Peru (CECANOR) and their commercial trading partner Organic Products Trading Company (OPTC) in 2003 to promote social justice and empower female coffee producers, Café Femenino now sources coffee from nearly 2,000 female farmers across Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Rwanda, and Sumatra.



SUMMARY

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2003

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 8

COUNTRIES OF OPERATION: Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Rwanda, Sumatra

AREAS OF VALUE CHAIN & GENDER OPPORTUNITIES INTEGRATED:

Farmers & Contractors

- ☐ Buy from and directly pay female farmers and cooperatives.
- ☐ Provide direct payments to female farmers.
- ☐ Promote putting land titles in women's names.
- ☐ Promote women's participation in farming cooperatives and create women's associations within cooperatives.
- ☐ Engage (and require) women in leadership and decision-making roles in farming cooperatives.

Consumers

- ☐ Leverage the market interest in gender-equitable and ethically sourced products.

Community Members

- ☐ Funnel money from gender-equitable brands back into the community.

BUSINESS IMPACTS:

- ☐ Increased supplier base (i.e., the CECANOR cooperative in Peru has grown from 464 female producers in 2003 when they jointly created Café Femenino to 800 producers in 2018).
- ☐ Distributed to more than 250 roasters across the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK.

SOCIAL IMPACTS:

- ☐ Increase in farmers' incomes (women sell coffee at a premium of \$0.02 per pound in addition to the Fairtrade/organic premium, as well as premiums associated with high quality).
- ☐ Improved recognition of the women's valuable farming contributions.
- ☐ Increase in men participation in childcare and domestic responsibilities.
- ☐ Increase in school attendance among girls.
- ☐ Reductions in physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.



Coffee farmers from a Café Femenino co-op.
Photo credited to Café Femenino.

BACKGROUND ON GENDER STRATEGY

Eighty percent of the world's coffee is produced by 25 million smallholder coffee producers.¹ While women play a large role in all farming activities associated with coffee: preparing the terrain, tending the seedling nurseries, and creating compost to fertilize the soil, as well as harvesting, de-pulping, fermenting, and drying coffee; they are rarely involved in selling the coffee, receiving income for the work they do, or deciding how the money earned will be used.

At the first conference of Women Coffee Producers in 2003 in Northern Peru, a Peruvian farming cooperative – CECANOR – with 464 women coffee producers decided to partner with their commercial trading partner Organic Products Trading Company (OPTCO) to create a coffee brand and accompanying social program – Café Femenino – that would separate coffee production

produced by all female farmers from the rest of the coffee traditionally produced through the fair-trade co-op. The idea was for the money produced through this all-women brand to be given to the women themselves and to enable them to use their decision-making power to use the money to improve the living conditions of women and their families.

Café Femenino pays an additional premium (\$0.02 per pound) for coffee produced by the female farmers who participate in the Café Femenino Program; the co-op (OPTCO pays it) pays this directly to the female farmers. When OPTCO sells the Café Femenino brand of coffee (produced by all- female farmers) to a roasting company, the roasting company is required to make a \$0.05 per pound donation. This donation either goes to the Café Femenino Foundation (the non-profit arm of the Program), which is then used to support development programs to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of women in the supplier co-ops or is split between a contribution to the Café Femenino Foundation and a local non-profit

¹ Fairtrade Foundation, Coffee <http://fairtrade.org.uk/en/farmers-and-workers/coffee>

GENDER OPPORTUNITIES IMPLEMENTED & RESULTS

Farmers & Contractors:

Organic Products Trading Company buys Café Femenino green beans that are produced under the standards and criteria of the Café Femenino Program. Café Femenino beans are produced and purchased from exclusively female farmers. As part of their business model to contribute to enhancing women's livelihoods and wellbeing, as well as the fact that they are able to charge a premium for their product on the market (due to ethically minded customers who are interested in empowering women), when OPTCO buys Café

Femenino beans, they pay their farmers a \$0.02 per pound premium (on top of Fairtrade and organic prices). This motivates male family members to see the value in women's agricultural contributions. This also helps Café Femenino to attract more cooperatives and for the cooperatives to attract more members as women see the advantage of selling through a co-op that can give them above market rates and a stable buyer that they can count on and plan for year to year, as long-term planning in isolated coffee cooperatives can be a challenge. For example, CECANOR, the co-op that co-founded Café Femenino has grown from 60 women members in 2003 to 800 women

producers in 2018. (CECANOR has always been men/women, however, women rarely participated. In 2003, there were very few women participating in the cooperative – they were primarily women without husbands, such as widows or those who had been abandoned). Of the 800 women participating with Café Femenino in 2018, 464 were wives of male members, and had previously been involved in farming, but were invisible within the co-op. Table 1 outlines the profile of the different co-ops currently supplying Café Femenino coffee - including the countries, names of the co-ops, number of female members in the co-op, and number of women serving in leadership roles

In addition to the requirement that all producers are female, Café Femenino also requires the following of the producer groups:

- Payments are made directly to female farmers: When payments are made to the household, women may lack the decision-making power over how to spend this money, however, when the payment is made directly to the woman, she has control over how to spend or save her earnings. In cases where women still

may not feel empowered to control their own money, the women's association, mentioned below, may help bolster women's decision-making power.

- Women are listed on land deeds for the land on which they farm: Women often lack access to land. This can be particularly challenging in cases of divorce, widowhood, abandonment, or inheritance. Making sure that women's names are on the land deed can help to ensure that women get equitable access to land. Having her name on the land deed can instill a sense of value and ownership over a woman's business and livelihood. This helps to enhance women's self-esteem and make them feel like valuable contributors to their family's wellbeing. Additionally, women in developing countries often have difficulties obtaining credit due lack of collateral since the land that they jointly own and farm is in their husbands' name. With their names added to the title, women have better access to credit.
- Creation of a woman's association within the cooperative: Because men are typically the members of coffee organizations (co-ops), women's voices/priorities are often not heard. Participation in the cooperative is especially important for Fair Trade cooperatives where the use of the social premium that is awarded to the co-op is voted on by the co-op members. Without the participation of women in the cooperative, their voices are never prioritized. Formation of a women's association within the co-op encourages attendance and participation in meetings and decision-making. Additionally, the regularly scheduled meetings give women a space that

Country	Co-op	# of Female Members	# of Women in Leadership
Bolivia	Union Proagro	42	2
Brazil	Coopfam	59	4
Columbia	Cosurca	438	26
Guatemala	Asobargri	161	3
Guatemala	Nahuala	70	6
Mexico	Cesmach	146	2
Nicaragua	Corcasan	270	3
Peru	CECANOR	800	50

Table 1

never existed before. In this space, women can talk, solve problems, and learn. It was because of the formation of the women's groups that the women began to create projects and programs focused on bettering their communities. Once a project is created, it can be sent to the Café Femenino Foundation for funding.

- Provision of leadership opportunities for women within the co-ops: Women often do not have leadership roles within farming cooperatives. As this is where many decisions are made regarding how the cooperation will operate, it is important for women to serve in these roles so that they can push for interventions that will benefit female farmers. Café Femenino requires women serve on the Executive Board of the co-ops they work with; if there are no women on the Board, Café Femenino works with the co-op to develop a pathway for women to fill these positions.
- Provision of financial and business decision-making power within the co-ops: Similarly, women often lack financial and business decision-making power within farming cooperatives. Involving women in these roles can enable them to influence how the co-op's money is invested and what initiatives are pursued.
- Women's leadership in programs and projects: The women's association prioritizes and designs projects that they submit and request funding for, from the foundation arm of the

Café Femenino Program. These projects must be from the women, administered, executed, and managed by the women. The very act of "doing the thing" is what creates leadership, learning, and the optics that women are capable of doing things in a leadership capacity.

These standards/stipulations, the premium earned by female farmers, and the projects designed by the women's groups and funded through the foundation branch of the Café Femenino Program have enabled women to gain both self-confidence and status within the household. Many women also report that as they are able to significantly contribute financially, their husbands respect them more and are willing to help out with household tasks. Also, with income, women are better able to navigate potentially abusive situations as they no longer feel stuck without any resources.

Interestingly, OPTCO has found that the coffee produced by all female farmers is consistently of higher quality than the coffee produced through traditional cooperatives. After discussions with the farmers it is hypothesized that this is due to the fact that women feel ownership over the Café Femenino coffee and also want to excel in this unique opportunity that has been presented to them.

Community

Roasters are required to donate an additional \$0.05 per pound of Café Femenino coffee purchased either to the Café Femenino Foundation or split between the foundation and a local non-profit supporting women. This money is used by the Café Femenino Foundation to support programs designed by women from the producer co-ops from countries of origin such as: construction of early childhood centers; construction of community centers; creation of community gardens; leadership and nutrition workshops; and stove improvements throughout local villages and homes. These initiatives help women to experience enhanced social impacts through their engagement with Café Femenino.

We have used the money we've received from the Café Femenino premium to invest in improving our homes, providing education for our daughters, and improving the food that we feed our families. Café Femenino has been wonderful in improving the self-esteem and empowerment of the women in our community.

—SABINA, CECANOR FARMER IN PERU

Caution: A report by the Coffee Quality Institute from 2015 states that some industry experts have reservations about “women’s coffee”.² They are concerned that this could lead to “gender washing” where the coffee is produced in women’s name, but not in practice. They also suggest that this could create barriers with or backlash from men or could be viewed as gimmicky to make purchasing decisions on the gender of the producer rather than the quality of the coffee produced. The report suggests that rather than just focusing on sourcing from only female farmers, companies should aim for a more gender diverse supplier base and ensure that they are implementing gender equitable practices such as women’s participation in leadership and decision-making roles and trainings and inputs to enhance coffee quality produced by female farmers, to warrant a higher market price. From the time of its initial formation, OPTCO created Café Femenino with the aim to improve the lives and working conditions of female farmers. This is why, in addition to sourcing from female farmers, the Café Femenino program includes social programming to challenge traditional economic systems and structures that discriminate against women and create better living and working conditions for female farmers and their families.

Café Femenino has made a concerted effort to structure their program in a way that will prevent these challenges. From the perspective of OPTCO it is imperative that Café Femenino not be simply used for marketing purposes and for leveraging customer interest, but for educating the entire coffee industry about the poor living conditions of female farmers and to create a market-driven program that can improve those conditions. A report on gender equity in agricultural value chains summarized: “A label/brand provides an identity for the social movement. Labelling involves the consumer in the gender equity movement. It mobilizes international market recognition and support for women through spending on consumer items...Labeling and brand identity makes it possible for the consumer to be a part of this social movement by buying the product. Café Femenino educates consumers about the coffee farmers’ condition. This requires a clear, easily identified label, a clear story, a unifying message and design. The Café Femenino Program has taken great efforts to stand apart from the confusion and noise in the marketing world. This clarity and success make it attractive for other groups of producers to join the Program.”³

² Coffee Quality Institute (CQI). (2015). The Way Forward: Accelerating Gender Equity in Coffee Value Chains. CGI. Available at: http://www.coffeeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Way-Forward-Final-Full-Length-Report_opt.pdf

³ KIT, Agri-Pro Focus and IIRR. (2012). Challenging Chains to Change: Gender Equity in Agricultural Value Chain Development. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, Royal Tropical Institute. Available at: http://cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/02/Challenging_chains_to_change.pdf

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Operational considerations, such as getting land titles in women's names and making payments directly to female farmers can motivate female farmers to stay in a company's value chain.
2. Farmers themselves see value in selling through brands that exclusively purchase coffee beans from female farmers.
3. Monitoring who actually produces the coffee can be a challenge.
4. Separating out crops that are specifically produced by women may actually increase the quality of crops produced, as women feel ownership over that produce and want to excel in their production.
5. Provision of additional funds for social support programing can improve living conditions and wellbeing of female farmers and motivate them to stay in a company's value chain.
6. There is a market for coffee produced exclusively by female farmers, and customers are willing to pay a premium to support such brands.
7. There is a specific type of customer for whom ethical sourcing is how they want to do business.
8. Identifying markets where women are already present but may not be equitably receiving recognition and remuneration is an efficient way to enhance business outcomes and create social change. The women farmers are coffee producers, who are producing coffee anyway (and for generations). By tying their contributions to market incentives, these female farmers are able to experience added social benefits.
9. In order for the sourcing of agricultural produce from female farmers/cooperatives to have a positive impact on the lives of those farmers, the brand/product must have an intertwined social program that aims to transform some of the systems that disadvantage women. Just calling coffee "women's coffee" is dangerous in that it can further oppress women who are now being used for their photograph without receiving social benefits in the form of training, education, empowerment, or status increase from the sales of their coffee.

IMPACTS:

Business impacts:

- Increased supplier base (e.g., the CECANOR cooperative in Peru has grown from 464 female producers in 2003 when they jointly created Café Femenino to 800 producers in 2018).
- The amount of hectares of land controlled by women for production of Café Femenino coffee beans has grown from 50 hectares to 2,000 hectares.
- Distributed to more than 250 roasters across the US, Canada, Australia and the UK.
- Coffee produced by Café Femenino farmers is consistently higher quality than what OPTCO gets from other farmers/cooperatives; higher quality scores enable Café Femenino to sell the coffee at a premium on the market.
- Company has been able to tap into a new customer segment that values women's empowerment and paying a premium for coffee that support female farmers and their communities.

Social impacts:

- Increase in farmers' incomes (women sell at premium of \$0.02 per pound. Farmers in Peru reported that this translates to an approximate increase of \$200 in annual income per Café Femenino farmer.
- Improved recognition of the women's valuable farming contributions.
- increase in men participating in childcare and domestic responsibilities - men are acknowledging women's contributions, supporting women both in their farming activities and their domestic tasks.
- Reductions in physical, emotional, and sexual abuse - men have expressed that they now value their wives and do not want to treat them poorly. Also, women are no longer stuck in abusive situations without any financial resources to help them escape.
- Increase in school attendance among girls - for example, one funds from the Café Femenino Foundation were used to send 600 daughters of coffee farmers in Peru to school.

This case study was conducted through (1) a review of reports: from the Coffee Quality Institute- [The Way Forward: Accelerating Gender Equity in Coffee Value Chains](#); from Root Capital- [Applying a Gender Lens to Agriculture](#) and [blog](#); and through review of [Café Femenino's website](#) and [Grounds for Change's website](#); and (2) an interview conducted with the Program Director for Café Femenino.