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PRESS RELEASE

Magdalena to be the department for project intervention to improve working and living conditions for coffee smallholder

4C partners with Melitta Europa GmbH & Co. KG. – Division Coffee – and DEG to foster sustainability of the Colombian coffee production

The baseline study of the develoPPP project on improving working and living conditions for coffee smallholders in Colombia has been finalized, having identified Magdalena as one of the departments with the greatest need of intervention to improve productivity and living conditions, especially when considering economic opportunities for rural youth, gender balance, productivity, access to markets and adaptation to climate change, as the baseline study conducted by the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (ABC) revealed.

The department of Magdalena is located in the north of Colombia, with more than 4,000 coffee growers, many of them belonging to indigenous communities. Coffee producing areas in Magdalena are located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, where the department has ecosystems and climatic conditions suitable for coffee. On average, the coffee farms have a planted area of 2.76 hectares, with an average age of coffee plantations of twelve years and an estimated proportion of 4% of coffee growers under 30 years of age.

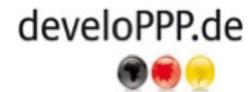


Figure 1: Department Magdalena, Colombia



Figure 2: Department Magdalena, Colombia, source: Unsplash

Magdalena has been identified as the department with some of the highest rates of rural poverty, youth unemployment and lack of rural education in comparison to the other six departments assessed (Antioquia, Caquetá, Cauca, Huila, Meta, Risaralda) as well as one of the departments affected greatest by the impact of climate change, facing a high risk of deforestation of the remaining forest area. A decrease of almost 50% in suitable area for coffee production is predicted, whereas all other departments



assessed were facing losses in suitable area of around 6-28%. The need for climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and preventive measures to avoid expansion into forested or protected areas is needed, as the forested area under deforestation risk was identified to be more than 63%.

Coffee productivity in Magdalena amounts to 0.71 tons/hectare, with which it is only half of that of departments such as Antioquia, Huila and Risaralda, where the yields per hectare are above 1.4 tons. At the same time, access to international markets for coffee produced from Magdalena lags behind those of most of the other departments, representing only 2% of the total coffee exports from Colombia, in comparison to 10%-18% in the best performing departments.

“Having identified Magdalena as the project implementation region to best achieve impact on the ground and where most need for intervention exists fits perfectly into our vision to support the market access of the farmers of the project, as Magdalena is a region of high commercial interest to us. Supporting here with our project to improve the livelihoods of coffee farmers and young adults makes us very happy”, says Jan Rischkopf, Sustainability Manager at Melitta Europa GmbH & Co. KG.

The baseline study started with a risk analysis based on remote sensing technologies powered by Global Risk Assessment Services (GRAS) for 15 relevant coffee departments to allow for a pre-selection of higher risk regions for the in-depth baseline study. For this, data on protected areas, high carbon stock areas, potential deforestation, converted grassland and national social indices was collected and processed. A pre-selection of the above mentioned seven regions took place, based on the results of the GRAS risk assessment, as well as potential sourcing regions of Melitta and possible synergies with other similar projects.

Within these seven departments, ABC conducted a detailed baseline study and provided the project with key information that allows strengthening the impact, sustainability, scope and quality of the project interventions. The study identified social, environmental and economic challenges that make coffee production risky and volatile as well as unappealing for young adults. Further, possible target regions for project implementation and main topics for the project’s training program were identified.



Figure 3: Colombian coffee farmer, source: FNC

Within a multistakeholder workshop conducted by 4C, the findings have been presented and discussed. Challenges and improvement areas for coffee farmers and possibilities to better integrate young adults into coffee production were further elaborated and important issues to be addressed in the training program of the project were identified. Major challenges within the social, economic and environmental dimension included among others high costs of coffee production, low



productivity, lack of farm and income diversification, risk of deforestation and negative impact of climate change as well as reduction in biodiversity, soil fertility and inadequate agricultural practices. The main drivers identified for young adults to migrate to the cities and leave coffee production were the unattractiveness of the coffee sector due to heavy work, low income and absence of social recognition as well as the lack of access to capital and land.

Looking again into the department of Magdalena and especially the needs identified for the rural youth, the baseline study revealed the demand for greater opportunities in terms of employability, participation in projects for the creation and strengthening of initiatives and access to capital for implementing business ideas related to the coffee industry.

“Through the active participation of various actors from the coffee industry, including coffee producers, traders, roasters, NGOs and research institutions, we are glad to have received a broad input on the main challenges to be addressed within the training program that we are going to develop together with the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (FNC), ABC and NES Naturaleza in the coming months, as well as input on training methodologies to be applied”, highlights Myriel Camp, Program Manager at 4C Services.

Further information on the project and the results of the baseline study can be found [here](#).

About the develoPPP program

develoPPP is a program launched by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 1999 in order to foster the involvement of the private sector in areas where business opportunities and development policy initiatives overlap. DEG is one of the two official partners appointed by BMZ to implement the develoPPP program on its behalf.

