

PRODUCER PROFILE

Name: Mahenge Agricultural Cooperative Union

Product: Coffee

Country: Tanzania

FLO ID: 24213

Fairtrade Certified Since: 2012

Number of Certified Members: 633



Introduction

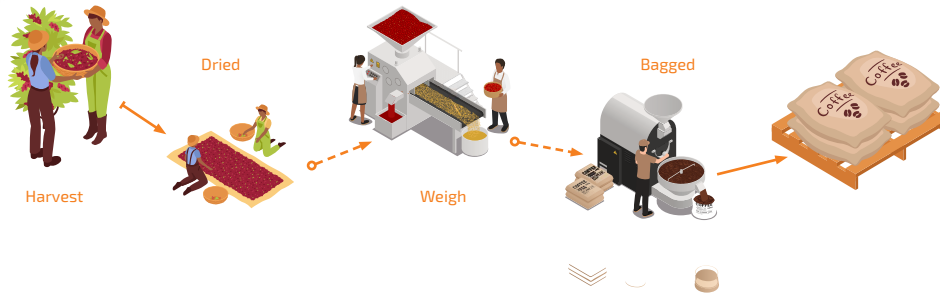
Mahenge AMCOS is a 1st grade producer organization with more than 600 Fairtrade certified small-scale coffee producers located in the highlands of southern Tanzania in Ruvuma region.

Members are small producers with small farms owned by families with at least 0.5 – 3 acres of land. The co-operative collects coffee from members as red cherry which it processes to get parchment before sending it to the factory for the secondary processing and grading.

Members also grow bananas, maize, sweet potatoes, wheat, beans and keep livestock, particularly cattle, pigs and goats as part of income diversification.

Mahenge AMCOS is managed by a board of 7 people who are democratically elected by the farmers during the annual general meeting (AGM). The day to day activities of the co-operative are handled by management comprising the chairperson, secretary and accountant.

Coffee Growing & Processing



Mahenge AMCOS is a primary co-operative owned by small coffee producers with small farms. Through them, coffee is collected at family level and then sent to the Central Pulping Units (CPUs) owned by the co-operative for processing.

Mahenge AMCOS produces wet arabica coffee by harvesting red cherry, removing the red peels using special machines known as central pulping units after which the beans are fermented for not less than 72 hours. Thereafter, the coffee is washed in clean water and then dried on drying tables. This is primary processing stage. After the coffee has been dried, it is taken to the factory for the secondary processing stage where the hard-white cover is removed to get polished green beans which are then graded based on their sizes and weight. Among the grades obtained are AA, A, B, C, PB. At this stage, the coffee can be sold either through the local market (Tanzania Coffee Board) or direct export. At the moment, Mahenge AMCOS has two markets. From the coffee collected from farmers, about 30% is sold to a direct market in Germany - InterAmerican Coffee and the rest sold locally through the Tanzania Coffee Board.

Coffee Profile



Altitude:

1400 - 2000 m ASL



Area of Production:

1500 Ha



Coffee Variety

Arabica



Growing Practices

98% inorganic,
shade grown



Harvest Period:

June - December



Export and shipping:

Auction and direct export,
from Dar es Salaam and Tanga



Coffee Grades:

Fairtrade, Café practices



Benefits of Fairtrade

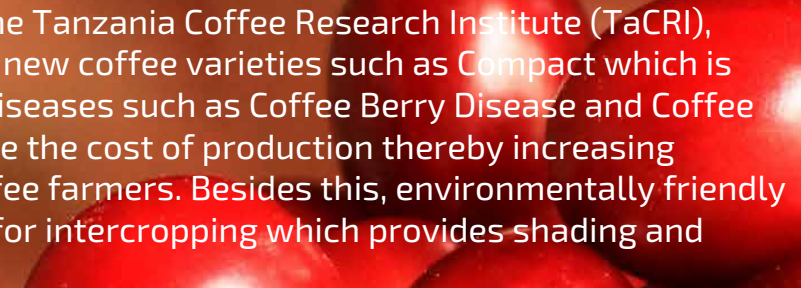
All members of Mahenge AMCOS are Fairtrade certified. This makes them enjoy the benefits of Fairtrade minimum price for their certified coffee when the market prices are extremely low covering their costs of production.

Quality and Productivity

To improve coffee quality and productivity as decided in the AGM, the co-operative has invested in buying agricultural inputs for farmers, availing resilient coffee seedlings to members through establishment of a coffee nursery, upgrading coffee drying facilities and acquisition of processing equipment especially CPUs. These interventions have led to improved productivity and quality of coffee collected from farmers.

Environment: climate change and coffee diseases

With the help of government through the Tanzania Coffee Research Institute (TaCRI), research has led to the development of new coffee varieties such as Compact which is resistant to drought and major coffee diseases such as Coffee Berry Disease and Coffee Leaf Rust. In the long run this will reduce the cost of production thereby increasing disposable income for small holder coffee farmers. Besides this, environmentally friendly tree seedlings are provided to farmers for intercropping which provides shading and protects the soil from erosion.





Fairtrade Premium

The co-operative has used Fairtrade premium to make investments in:

- Provision of health insurance to its members.
- Warehouse construction for coffee storage .
- Construction of a village dispensary which is now in its final stages; this will reduce distance travelled for healthcare service (from 30km to 8km) as well as maternal deaths.
- Education where it has supported two schools; Mahenge and Langandondo primary schools in conducting major renovations and installation of furniture in classrooms. Further, the co-operative has allocated 70% of its Fairtrade premium on the establishment of a private school which is expected to start operations in 2021. This will be part of an income generating project for the AMCOS.

Challenges

- Change of weather conditions which affects coffee growth and productivity.
- Fluctuation of global coffee prices which affects farmers' earnings.
- High cost of agricultural inputs leading to poor quality of harvest and thus low prices.
- Difficulties in adoption of organic coffee production practices.
- Aged farmers affecting productivity.
- Lack of access to affordable finance.



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