

PRODUCER PROFILE

Name: Rwenzori Farmers Cooperative Union (RFCU)

Product: Arabica Coffee

Country: Uganda

FLO ID: 3932

Fairtrade Certified Since: 2014

Number of Certified Members: 3200

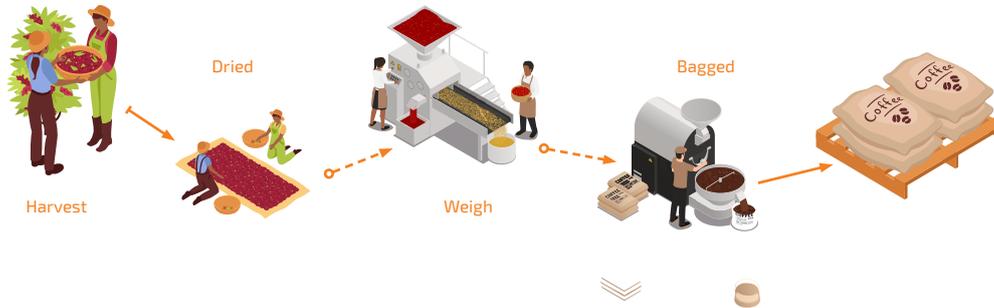


Introduction

Rwenzori Farmers Cooperative Union is an Umbrella Organisation representing the interests of 13 (Thirteen) primary cooperative societies in the Rwenzori Region of Western Uganda in the Districts of Kasese, Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo with a total membership of 2571, who produce Vanilla, Cocoa and Coffee among others. It organises and encourages farmers to improve their quality and production techniques and thus access to better markets and prices. The region's vanilla farmer communities formed a cooperative in pursuit of better prices. Rwenzori Farmers' Cooperative Union was founded in 2005 as Mubuku Vanilla Morinda Farmers Association and later registered as a union on January 8, 2014. The union is Fairtrade Certified and also some of its members are Organic Certified.

The union has a general assembly which is the supreme decision-making body of the 2nd grade. In the general assembly all 1st grades are represented. The general assembly elects the executive committee (Board) charged with guiding the manager in the day to day running of the organisation. There is also the internal Control Committee that makes efforts to oversee the executive committee activities. A Premium Committee was also elected to provide guidance to the utilization of premium funds. The 1st grades also have a general assembly as the supreme decision-making body, and also do have executive committees elected during the general meeting, a premium committee, a control committee and also a committee in charge of savings and credit (SACCO).

Coffee Growing & Processing



RFCU by default practices organic production for all its products including coffee. Only red cherries are harvested, floated, dried, hulled, stored carefully to come up with quality Rwenzori floated natural Arabica. Other farmers dry their coffee at home on tarpaulin, collected centrally, hulled and bulked and sold to local exporters as DRUGA.

Main crop: August – December and **Fly crop:** February – May

Shipping: September – February, March - August

Benefits of Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Premiums have been invested in:

- Purchase of land equivalent 11.6 acres targeting coffee processing plant construction. So far, the infrastructure plan has been developed as funds for actual construction are being raised. Once it is constructed, centralised processing will be done and new jobs will be created.
- Enhancing security on vanilla and coffee farms (revolving fund scheme). Farmers are able to access loans at very low interest to secure their farms and to invest in productivity.
- Various committees were able to hold meetings and support farmers to ensure quality and good agricultural practices. This has enhanced more productivity and good governance.





Challenges

- Absence of previous Fairtrade buyers affects access to new ones because they usually ask for previous sales. Moreover, the farmers who have benefited from Fairtrade prices and premiums from vanilla and cocoa look forward to such markets for more investments.
- Adverse effects of climate change, where rains continue to fall during the harvest/ drying season as well as the extreme sunshine affect the quality of the coffee.
- The union faces a significant challenge in obtaining affordable crop finance to purchase coffee from farmers.



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