



COMUCAP

La Paz, Honduras

About the Cooperative

COMUCAP, which stands for Coordinadora de Mujeres Campesinas de La Paz (Organizer of the Rural Women of La Paz), is a cooperative located in southwest Honduras. It was founded in 1993 by women seeking economic independence to support their families.

Before COMUCAP was founded, men were the landowners in the region and made most of the business and production decisions. The women struggled to succeed economically and socially under this inequality, so they decided to take action to free themselves from their economic dependence on their fathers and husbands. This initiative led women in La Paz to organize and create COMUCAP.

With the encouragement of a German NGO, one of COMUCAP's founders began a radio program for women called *Siempre Vivas*. Her audience consisted of many impoverished women who didn't own land and were often victims of domestic violence. These women realized that the root of the problem was economic insecurity, and they began to look for ways to earn money for themselves and their families.

Banding together, the women of COMUCAP purchased approximately one hectare of land and planted coffee. Through hard work and perseverance, the cooperative has grown their farmland from that single hectare to 37 hectares. COMUCAP also has a wet mill, drying patios, and a compost production plant that have helped foster coffee quality.

Thanks to the success of the association, many of the women have been able to purchase their own land, perpetuating economic stability and freedom while breaking a cycle of abuse.



Quick Facts



Location: The Marcala, Chinacla, Santa Elena, Cabañas, San Miguelito, and San José municipalities of the La Paz department, Honduras



Varieties: Catuai, Bourbon, Typica, Caturra, Maragogipe



Process: Washed



Altitude: 1,200-1,600 meters



Certifications: Fair Trade, Organic



Number of Members: 504 divided into 19 base groups



Full-Time Staff: 10 people



Production Output of Co-op Owned Farms:
Six containers per year



Farming Area: 37 hectares



Products and Services: Coffee, aloe vera products, honey, wine, and ecotourism services

Socioeconomic Programs

The co-op now sells coffee, aloe vera products, wine, and honey, and also manages an ecotourism center, all of which provide sources of diversified income.

With the support of several NGOs, COMUCAP has trained its members in nutrition and food security and has developed family and school orchards. These orchards were created from small areas of land where the members reuse old tires and kitchen pots to extend the viable surface for plantings. Currently 40 percent of the members work at one of the orchards, which generate additional income for the farmers, as they sell the produce they don't consume.

The members of COMUCAP have allocated part of their Fair Trade premium to create *Caja Rural*, which is a cash fund that offers one-year micro-credit loans to members for small expenses and investments. The program is also supported by NGO funds. It has had a major impact on the members; for example, it has helped farmers buy necessary school supplies for their children during the start of the school year.

Looking to the Future

COMUCAP has a number of initiatives planned for the near future that will improve their production practices—specifically their farm productivity, wet mill efficiency, and quality control capabilities.

COMUCAP aims to increase technical assistance for members at the farm level by implementing a program where agronomists visit producers more regularly. The goal is to improve farm productivity through ongoing technical guidance and feedback that is provided frequently throughout the year.

At the wet mill level, the cooperative's goal is to replace old equipment that is reaching the end of its useful life. New equipment will increase the efficiency of the mill, improving throughput during the harvest, which is important to uphold quality.

In the cupping lab, the quality control team plans to purchase a new roaster so they can roast a greater number of coffees at once for quality control evaluation and to better understand the members' coffee. During the 2017-2018 harvest, they began to segment micro-lots for the first time in order to provide additional offerings to buyers, and aim to ramp-up their segmentation efforts even further in the coming harvests.

A Coffee with Impact

COMUCAP's coffee is among the best in Honduras, and its impact on the livelihoods of women farmers and more than 500 rural families makes it a top offering that Sustainable Harvest® is proud to offer to roasters.



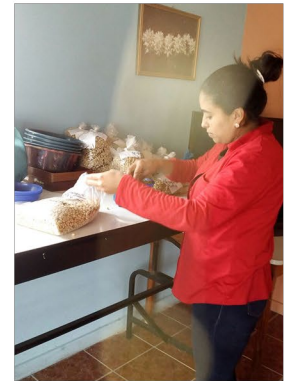
Members showcase support for their *Caja Rural* program from the NGO Coffee Kids. Coffee Kids also supports the food security and orchard program at COMUCAP.



COMUCAP hosting a workshop with members on International Women's Day 2018 where women and their children participated in special activities promoting food security.



Elisa Escobar, cupper at COMUCAP



Sentry Martínez, member of the quality control team at COMUCAP