

SABOR COFFEE[©]

Sustainability Report 2021





Foreword

This is our first sustainability report.

The Cuartas-Alvarez family have been the stewards of Finca Las Cruces for three generations, continuing the family tradition of coffee growing and agriculture. We are committed to supporting our local community by providing employment, and continuing to work with our workers and their families through education.

This report helps us to reflect on the experiences we have had over the past year, to take an inventory of where we are at, and to set our sights on the future. It also gives us the opportunity to share with you our interactions with the farm, our team, and the results of our development of the techniques we apply to our harvest, improving the sustainability of the farm year by year.

For many years we have produced coffee to sell to the local coffee federation, steadily refining the quality and taste of our produce. Last year we were so encouraged by the very high scores we were getting in sample tastings that we decided the time was right to bring our coffee to a wider range of customers as a single origin denomination product.

2020 was the year that gave us the opportunity to press the reset button, by looking in detail at the cost of running the farm, analyzing the cupping results and setting the approach for the future of our farm. We decided that the time was right to launch a direct trade strategy. The specialty coffee market is blossoming in Europe and by commercializing our coffee by selling direct to roasters we have a way of making the farm financially stable, securing the future for our family, our workers and generations beyond.

FOREWORD	2
DIRECT TRADE	4
OUR PROCESS	8
OUR FACILITIES	9
OUR LAND	11
OUR PEOPLE	13
THE FUTURE	15
LANDMARKS	17
2021 INITIATIVES	18



Direct Trade

From farm to Cup

New Direction

By sending our coffee direct to roasters in the UK and Europe we plan to make the farm financially sustainable and to secure the future of the farm and its workers in the long term. Direct trade means fair pay for the farm and full traceability so our buyers know which plot the coffee came from, who picked it and when. We will also continue to be transparent in our processing and logistics.

To ensure quality and consistency of our coffee, last year our sister Liliana took over the daily running of the farm and the implementation of our plans. We carried out extensive fermentation trials before deciding that 30 hours was best to showcase the unique flavours and notes of our beans. We also invested heavily in the infrastructure of the coffee processing, setting up parabolic dryers and composting the coffee skins. We have partnered with a local coffee farmers' co-op to assist us with the hulling, grading and packing of the coffee. In this way the proceeds will help a local co-op and will generate further local employment.

On the commercial side, to facilitate direct trade, we got our license from the Columbian Coffee Federation, opened a company in Colombia to support the export logistics and set up an import company in the UK, as well as forming alliances with local and regional logistics agencies.

2021 started with lots of positive energy and very tasty beans!

Sustainable Agriculture



V Our walnut plot

Our Process

Over the years we have continually developed our agriculture processes. Although it has been a slow process we believe this is why we are achieving such excellent feedback from the cupping of our beans.

The coffee cherries are harvested at their optimum level of sweetness, when they are very ripe. In our farm all the cherries are selectively picked by hand. We make sure the workers get an incentive, by paying them 20% more than other farms and that the coffee gets checked before it goes into the floatation tank.

During the processing all beans are floated and manually sorted in fresh spring water. After that they are submerged underwater for 3 hours, and then de-pulped, before undergoing a 30 hour fermentation. Finally, they are washed again and then sun-dried in traditional marquesinas (parabolic dryers), before packaging. The final product is an incredibly clean, sweet and expressive coffee.

Fermentation

Last year we employed a local agronomist with a specialism in coffee, with the view of getting better results in the cupping. For this we took various samples from the different plots and had various periods of fermentation, from there the samples were sun-dried, before we sent them to the Café de Colombia official laboratory to get tested. Once we received the results, we decided that 30 hours was the best time for the fermentation.

From all the samples we sent two different batches to the laboratories at different times, the first one under the farm name and the second time under the local coop name in order to find out the consistency of these trials, and to be able to make a more informed decision on the ideal fermentation time.





Our Facilities

We made some improvements to our coffee facilities that will improve the working conditions for our workers and also reaffirm our relationship with nature.

A parabolic dryer was built above the coffee processing buildings, to benefit from the heat of our sunshine and protect our drying beans from the rain.

We use a mechanical dryer for our coffee which is powered by the parchment which is a waste-product of hulling. It is important to us to recycle resources and create as little waste as possible. We built a brand-new composting area to benefit from the organic fertilizer produced by the coffee skins and also to control the damage from the acid generated by the skins on the soil and prevent contamination of the water sources and streams. .



Our Land

After the harvest all the attention goes on the maintenance of the fields, such as weeding. As some terrain for the farm is quite hilly, we do manual weeding, leaving the weeds that are good for the soil and that prevent erosion.

The next step is to fertilize the coffee trees, using organic fertilizers such as compost made from the coffee skins, rich in phosphorus. This helps the coffee trees to flourish and to bear abundant fruit.

Once the trees are fertilized, they need to be pruned to control their height and the number of branches. We control shading by growing rows of plantains, which are also pruned, as a secondary crop.

We keep a good eye on the flowering season. We know when the timing is right to have an ecological prevention against the berry bean borer (or broca, as we call it in Spanish). We do this by fumigating the plants with a naturally occurring fungus as an organic method to control this pest. This allows us to omit the use of additional pesticides

Our Water

Part of the farm is maintained as a small native forest, protecting local fauna and flora and vital to maintain the health of our two natural spring water sources. This year we planted bore (Alocasia macrorrhiza) in order to improve the water level of a patch of land which is getting swampy.

This plant, apart for its natural beauty, is very efficient at capturing solar energy under shady conditions. In its stem, carbohydrates accumulate in the form of starch and its leaves contain significant levels of nitrogen making it a promising species for feeding pigs and poultry.



Our People

Human input in agriculture is essential. Our workers live locally and maintaining employment opportunities in our community is very important to us. We have a continuing programme to improve the living conditions of the families who live and work on the farm.

In our journey to sustainable agriculture, we have been grateful for the assistance and guidance of our local coffee federation. They helped us upskill our workers, training them in the sustainable management of our trees, employing organic methods. The federation provided formal training programmes for our workers, combined with on-site work with an agronomist. We care about safety as well as efficiency, in every part of the farm. We've invested in new processing facilities and updated equipment across the farm.

Our sustainable approach for the well-being of our workers goes hand in hand with fair pay. Our daily rate of 35,000 Colombian Pesos, is between 15-20% more than other farms. During the coffee harvest, we pay workers 600 Colombian Pesos per kg of coffee picked which is 20% more than neighboring farms. For our full-time workers, we pay them full holiday pay.

As a family we believe in education, this is why we have supported and encouraged our workers to send their children to school, college and university. We have supported this by providing all their kit school every year. We paid the university fee and provided food and accommodation for three years for one of the sons of our farm manager.

We also have supported our workers with training, by enrolling them in courses about agriculture management, for this we have paid their salaries while they are doing their courses.



Amado Bartolo
Our long standing farm
worker



The Future

Agriculture is the future of this planet, so we need to make it sustainable. One example of our organic path is the way we keep our trees healthy. We have stopped using chemicals. Now we control pests with a fungus.

An example of our recycle and reuse philosophy is the way in which we create compost made from coffee skins. That compost is returned to the plots to improve soil quality. We also reuse the husk of the coffee bean after hulling as fuel for our mechanical dryer.

We are proud of the improvements we've achieved so far but we aren't complacent. Our philosophy is to always aim to do better every year.

In our opinion, sustainability in coffee production starts with the financial security of the coffee producers, this is why we are reaching out to international markets.

Coffee agriculture is the main source of income for this region; this is why we employ local staff, such as an agronomist with a specialism in coffee, as a way to encourage others to stay in the region.

We also would like to keep our logistics chain very tight and local, i.e. we have a partnership with a local coffee association to help us with the hulling, grading and packaging of the coffee, so any income produced by this activity stays within the local economy.

Our contribution to Net Zero

The contribution of our farm with being 100% carbon neutral is intrinsically linked with our facilities. For this we have made improvements to our coffee facilities that will improve the working conditions for our workers and also reaffirm our relationship with nature.

The above elements that we have implemented will all help us work towards the sustainable future that we envision.

Moving from traditional to sustainable agriculture

It has taken fifteen years for us to get our farm to practice sustainable agriculture, here are some of our milestones.

2005

2005 Started a period of crop rotation, planting fruits like lulo, corn and beans to give the land a break from coffee

2010 Plot 1 planted 10,500 coffee trees

2011 Plot 2 planted 6,000 trees

2012 Plot 3 planted 7,500 trees

2014 Plot 4 planted 1,600

2017 Rebuilt the house and added new processing facilities

2018 - 2020 started to renovate trees

2018 stopped using herbicides to control pests

2020 improvement of facilities and preparation for direct trade

2021

2021 Initiatives

Transparency pledge

Finca Las Cruces is a family farm, we keep daily records for all the activities in the farm and we are happy to share them. As long term coffee farmers we are more than aware of the challenges of the coffee industry, where market prices are so low that it makes coffee farming less financially attractive. This is why we would like to change by combining our farming responsibilities and our knowledge of the food and drink industry in the UK to secure the financial future of the farm and its community.

We aim to be transparent about the cost of production, including the salaries that we pay our workers, so that roasters and consumers know the true price of producing coffee. With this we are aiming to increase awareness to roasters and to consumers of which kind of economic model they are supporting



2021 Initiatives

Certification

We started the process of becoming an organic farm because our father instilled in us a love for nature. However, for a small family farm like ours, the cost of certification is very high compared to our volume of production.

So, prior to certification, we prioritized overhauling the full infrastructure of the farm. Now we are investigating the certification of our organic status with Ecocert.

We are also looking at including Rainforest Alliance certification as we keep a part of the farm reserved for nature and bird-friendly. There is a wide variety of birds on the farm. Our sister Liliana has a feeding platform for baranqueros (Amazonian motmot) that enjoy very ripe plantains – a beautiful sight to behold!



Broaden local support to local coop and other farmers

As we learn from this Direct Trade model, we would like to share our knowledge with our community. This is why we are helping the local coffee farmers' co-op to fine tune the hulling and quality control of the coffee, so this will become an extra source of income and a local employment generator..

Summary

Sabor Coffee takes its commitment to sustainability very seriously. We know we are caretakers of the land for future generations and therefore we endeavour to ensure our farm and the surrounding areas are treated with the soundest farming practices possible.

Synergy between nature and our commercial coffee production can and does exist. We are proving that it is indeed possible to produce high quality coffee yields whilst respecting the soil and natural environment.

Our coffee plants are treated with the utmost care and love and we know that it shows in the final cup profile. We hope our work on the farm can be showcased by roasters around the UK and translated into a wonderful drink for coffee lovers the world over to enjoy!



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