

The COFFEE Project

Cooperation On Fair, Free,
Equitable Employment



BACKGROUND

The COFFEE Project is a four-year initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (USDOL-ILAB). The project aims to reduce the risk of labor issues in coffee supply chains by working with the private sector and other relevant actors. Activities include the development of a toolkit to improve labor conditions, capacity building, and pilot projects in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico. Pilot projects were developed through research and stakeholder consultation and involve the piloting of tools and cost-effective, sustainable, scalable approaches to reduce labor risks.

Labor is the largest single expense for coffee producers, especially during the harvest season. To mitigate economic risks, farmers often use piece rate payment systems and production quotas, tying workers' wages to productivity. Verité research has found that a lack of prior experience and skills in the coffee sector is a major driver for labor risks during the coffee harvest, particularly when highly mobile migrant workers are employed. In this scenario, low levels of experience and skills lead to less production and lower pay for workers, along with poorer quality coffee for producers. This working arrangement can also increase the risk of other labor risks such as wage and hour violations, gender discrimination, and child labor. In response to these issues, this project will design and pilot alternative payment models to mitigate these risks. Scan the QR code to learn more about the COFFEE Project.



Our Partnership Model

With support from prominent coffee companies that collectively purchase over 60 percent of the world's coffee, including four of the top five roasters, the COFFEE Project serves as a hub for innovation, dialogue, and raising the bar on labor conditions.

This project promotes fair wages and working conditions for farmworkers in the Colombian coffee sector by developing and piloting alternatives to the widely used piece rate payment system. These solutions aim to benefit farmworkers and farm owners alike.

Under this pilot project, Verité, in partnership with other leading research institutions, is conducting research into best harvesting practices in the Colombian coffee sector, including an independent and thorough assessment of the social and economic effects of alternative payment models on both workers and coffee farmers. Verité will provide clear guidance on how to replicate and scale effective payment models.

Another objective of this pilot project is to improve the incomes of vulnerable farmworkers by helping them to increase their productivity, while reducing health and safety risks. The primary activity to meet this objective involves the development and implementation of a training curriculum for manual and mechanically assisted coffee harvesting.

These capacity building efforts will be further strengthened through the design and implementation of an alternative payment model on select farms for both manual and mechanically assisted harvesting. This model includes the provision of premiums directly to workers.

Lastly, Verité is working to increase stakeholder understanding of labor standards and capacity to detect and reduce labor risks and their root causes in the Colombian coffee sector.

PILOT PROJECT

**The COFFEE Project is based on a collaborative, multistakeholder approach.
For more information or to learn how to become a project partner, contact:**

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