



Geographical Indication Product Database - Step 1-

Colombian Coffee

SOURCE :

Author :

Institution : OriGIn

Date : 11 July 2006

DESCRIPTION :

- 1. NAME OF PRODUCT :** Colombian Coffee
- 2. COUNTRY AND REGION IN THE COUNTRY:** Colombia – Colombian mountains
- 3. TYPE OF PRODUCT : (including the possible substitutes and imitations of the product)**

Colombian Coffee is exclusively Arabica. Is grown in the Colombian mountains by coffee growers who, through the years, have mastered their traditional manual harvesting and humid processing techniques.

- 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRODUCT AND ITS AREA (including its specific characteristics, conditions of production, main differences with the substitutes) :**

Coffee is cultivated in an area of about 900 thousand hectares of Colombia. Its area of influence extended to some 4 millions hectares.

Colombian Coffee is exclusively Arabica. Is grown in the Colombian mountains by coffee growers who, through the years, have mastered their traditional manual harvesting and humid processing techniques, described as follows:

Growing:

Thousands of carefully selected beans are planted in the nursery. The beans are sown close together and covered with rich, fertile soil.

About eight weeks later, the seeds germinate and roots develop. The healthiest plants are selected and transplanted in the nursery and carefully nurtured for six months. When the seedlings grow to about two feet in height, they are transplanted to the plantation where they are carefully cultivated.

It takes an average coffee tree approximately three to four years to grow to full size and to blossom. The first fruit appears about six months later and they bear ripened fruits and flowers at the same time.

Processing:

When the coffee beans are a rich, red color, they are ready for harvesting. The berries are then picked individually. After the farmer picks all the coffee berries from the tree, they are put into bags and loaded on mules or donkeys.

They go on to the only mechanical means of help for the farmer, the de-pulping machine. This machine removes the pulp off of the two seeds that are in the center of each berry. The two beans found in the berry are flat on one side and rounded on the other. The pulp, or the red covering that you see, goes back to the soil as fertilizer for new plants and seeds while the beans, still encased in a tough parchment husk, go to large concrete tanks.

Here they soak in cold mountain water for 24 hours. The soaking starts a slight fermentation which is of vital importance for the aroma of the coffee.

The beans are then carefully washed in long concrete troughs. Any twigs, debris, or poor quality beans are discarded. Unlike beans from other origins, all Colombian Coffee is "washed" coffee, which gives Colombian Coffee its rich taste and aroma.

When the washing is over the beans must be dried. They are scooped up and put into large straw baskets. They are then spread out on great open-air terraces, where they are turned again and again until the wind and sun have dried them completely. It is necessary to cover the beans at night and when it rains.

Quality

Another aspect of the uniqueness of Colombian Coffee is the quality control standards. It begins in the farm where the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia sends an appointed official to inspect each farm for sanitary conditions, healthy trees and the quality of each harvest. The inspector checks to see if the beans have been washed properly. He looks for adequate bean size, color texture and overall quality. He begins the final test by removing the husk and tough parchment to expose the bean. You will see him cut the bean in half with a sharp knife. If there is not



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too much moisture in the bean, the beans will not fly away. If the bean is too dry, it will split too quickly, but if it has been dried just right, the inspector will authorize the farmer to take his crop to the market. The beans are put into burlap bags and loaded onto jeeps. In certain regions, mules and donkeys are still an important mode of transportation from the farm to the market.

At the market, the farmer's crop is further tested by the operation's owner. His assistant punctures the coffee bags and removes a random sample of beans and puts them into a tiny machine which removes the bean's parchment. The owner then tests the beans for aroma, color, size, moisture and texture. Only the best crops are sold and distributed for export.

Milling

The beans are now brought to the mill where they are fed into machines which remove the tough parchment husk and silvery skin that surrounds each bean. The beans pass through different screening processes, where they are freed from impurities and sorted by size, weight and shape. Women undertake that last critical inspection and discard inferior quality beans. Now the rich, olive-green beans are ready to be poured into bags and are sealed for export.

Before the bags are sealed, yet another sample is taken which is graded and weighed. This sample of coffee is roasted, ground, and finally tasted in a properly prepared cup of coffee. The experts give marks for aroma, acidity and uniformity. If the experts are not satisfied with the quality of a particular lot, export is refused.

Coffee Grower's careful selection, classification and milling processes, result in a world-known quality product characterized by its mild and clean cup, pronounced aroma and mid-high acidity and body.

5. LINK WITH THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA (tradition, know how, reputation, soil, climate, etc.):

Coffee is cultivated in an area of about 900 thousand hectares and its area of influence extended to some 4 millions hectares

Coffee growers have mastered through the years their traditional manual harvesting and humid processing techniques.

Tradition and know how of the Colombian coffee production is explained in detail on the conditions of production: Their careful selection, classification and milling processes result in the world-known quality product characterized by its mild and clean cup, pronounced aroma and mid-high acidity and body.

Due to its unique geographical situation, Colombia enjoys the advantage of having fresh coffee of consistent quality throughout the year, which allows the positioning of 100% Colombian brands.

6. PRODUCTION SYSTEM / SUPPLY CHAIN (some data about the number of producers, processors, market structure) :

Coffee directly employs nearly 600 thousand people, some 30 percent or rural workers and additional 2 million people are dependent on coffee to some degree. There are currently some 300 thousand families of small and medium farmers who are directly dependent of coffee production.

There is also a social protection network for 50 thousand poor farmers.

The coffee industry has been the principal motor of Colombian economic and social development for the past 100 years. Thanks to a multiplier effect the industry has stimulated the growth of the industrial sector and given impetus to the financial, trade, transport and services sector. The coffee industry has been vital for job creation, economic growth; the balance of payments, income distribution, and public finances and regional development.

7. MARKET AND REPUTATION (size, price premium, attractiveness, growth) :

The yearly production volume of Colombian Coffee is 11.5 million bags 60 kg.

Coffee farmers are free to sell their coffee to cooperatives (38 cooperatives and 492 purchasing point all around



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coffee area), or to private exporters, through intermediaries. Coffee is exported by the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia, and also by private exporters. Private exporters shipped about 70 percent of the total exports in 2005

Although Colombia coffee exports are mostly green coffee, coffee suppliers have recently become more diversified. Exports of soluble, decaffeinated coffee and coffee extracts have been growing. The diversification is also aimed to supply the specialty coffee market, a growing niche in which Colombian coffees have played a mayor role. Market for this kind of coffees reached 1.5 million bags in 2005

8. APPLICANT / HOLDER (IF ANY) :

RELEVANCE: Why is this case important for research in general and for SINER-GI in particular?

As a product from a developing country, Colombian coffee has certain characteristics that make it a ideal product for research:

- It illustrates on the cases in which GI names apply to a whole country
- It demonstrates how the strict production characteristics and controls fulfilled by producers confer the quality required by consumers who are ready to pay a premium price for Colombian coffee.
- It shows how a well-known GI as Colombian coffee realizes that the trademarks system is not enough to protect their quality product or to satisfy the demand of consumers to take informed decisions about the products they consume.
- It is the first GI that applied for being registered in the EU register.

In conclusion, Colombian coffee is GI case that may offer a very complete overview of GIs as an ideal tool of development.

CATEGORY :

☐ **Origin Product**

☐ **GI product**

☒ **Recognized GI**