

Nicaragua

ICO MEMBER: code n°17 – “other milds” group

BOTANICAL SPECIES: Arabica

BAGS: 69 kg

FLOWERING: from May to June

HARVEST: from October to December

HARVESTING METHOD: picking

SHIPMENT: from December onwards

SHIPMENT PORT: Puerto Cortes

PRODUCTION: 2 milion bags

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Coffee was introduced into Nicaragua in 1796 as a decorative plant. It was not until 1824 that it began to be cultivated on the Altiplano towards the Pacific in the province of Crazo and later Managua. In 1841, small quantities of coffee (circa 800 bags a year) were exported in Europe together with other agricultural products such as indigo, cotton and tobacco. The terrain best suited for the cultivation of coffee in Nicaragua turned out to be at the heights of the central mountain range, particularly in the regions of Segovia, Jinotega and Matagalpa with its fertile volcanic soil, humid tropical climate and lush vegetation. However, these regions mainly belong to local populations, who find themselves caught between the interests of coffee barons and the large profits envisaged by the cultivation of the product. All of this inevitably resulted in the systematic extinction of the natives in a conflict which lasted many years. Those who didn't perish were enslaved and forced to work in plantations on land, which had until recently belonged to them. In 1881, several thousand native Indians rebelled and attacked the government headquarters in Matagalpa, demanding the end of forced labour. The Nicaraguan army suppressed the revolt, killing thousands of indigenous people. Despite this, resistance continued for many years and the cultivation of coffee in Nicaragua long remained risky work to be involved in.

Between 1936 and 1979, Nicaragua fell under the dictatorial control of the Somoza family, initially with the father and later with his two successors. In those years, in particular during the final phase of their rule, Nicaragua underwent mayor economic growth, mainly due to investments in infrastructure, public education, rural development and industrial expansion. Record prices in the international

coffee and cotton markets, the cultural backbone of those countries during the years, provided the final push. However, Somoza's dictatorship was also a period strongly marked by corruption, repression, and a well-being concentrated in the hands of a very narrow elite. All these factors exacerbated the inequalities and resentment amid the less privileged population. This political malaise endured for quite a while and in 1979 rebels in the shape of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, took the reins of the country. They implemented a series of socialist reforms including: the nationalization of banks, distribution of lands through agricultural reform and the establishment of state-controlled cooperatives. However, these policies resulted in even more inequality and resentment amid the population. In fact, the government began to control the entire coffee sector through Enecafe (State coffee institution). Producers were forced to sell their coffee at 10 cents per pound while Enecafe resold it on the international markets at \$2 per pound.

The political instability which has characterized the country over the last 50 years and diverse natural catastrophes, ravaged coffee production in Nicaragua and the lives of those farmers forced to emigrate to Panama, Costa Rica and the US in search of better fortunes. February 1990 saw a new chapter in Nicaragua's history with its first democratic elections, which ushered in Violeta Barrios de Chamorro as President. A return to democracy brought an unparalleled process of post-conflict reconstruction to the country and three consecutive free elections.

COFFEE CRISIS

Coffee constituted as much as 30% of revenues generated by agricultural products in Nicaragua, 50% of agricultural exports and 25% of total exports when prices collapsed between 1999 and 2003. In addition, a series of natural disasters hit the country such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and the drought of 1999-2001 added further tension to the market.

So it was that in 2003, the parties came to an agreement through the reform known as El Acuerdo de las Tunas with more than 3000 families stripped of lands received small plots of land in property. From that moment on, collaboration measures intensified to improve the quality of the product and small owners received further support to diversify their crops and produce a quality able to compete with international markets.

LAS HERMANAS

Las Hermanas (Spanish for “the sisters”) is a cooperative of Nicaraguan coffee growers comprising 200 female-only members. Founded in 2001 by Fatima Israel, an agronomist who realised that coffee processed and worked on by women was praised more highly in the tasting phase, and thus decided to create a separate brand. Nowadays, Las Hermanas collaborates with two non-profit associations such as Grounds for Health and Coffee Kids, and is very close to being independent from a financial standpoint.

Region Qualities



Nicaragua Matagalpa SHG



Nicaragua SHG EP San Juan
Rio...