

THE SPECIALTY COFFEE **CHRONICLE**



**SUSTAINABLE OR
NOT SUSTAINABLE?**

**MUSHROOMS
AND COFFEE**

**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE
CUPPING**

**HOST YOUR OWN
IN-HOUSE BARISTA
COMPETITION**

**COFFEE
DOCUMENTARY
FROM THE GROUND UP**

A Winning Combo: COFFEE WASTE AND MUSHROOMS



Chido Govero, from Zimbabwe, brings a whole new social dimension to the ZERI Foundation's pulp-to-protein program, which uses coffee waste as a catalyst for farming tropical mushrooms. Govero shares the award-winning technique with orphans, who use the program for food and income.

The ZERI Foundation's innovative pulp-to-protein project receives SCAA's 2009 Sustainability Award, while the program benefits farmers' livelihoods and the environment.

By Aaron Kiel

Who knew that mushrooms and coffee go hand-in-hand? Well...they do and they're making a big difference as they help coffee farmers become more sustainable. Indeed, it's a clever and environmentally-friendly venture, dubbed the "pulp to protein project" (or the mushroom project), from Switzerland-based ZERI Foundation.

The project began when the ZERI Foundation was invited by the Colombian Coffee Federation to generate ideas on how to eliminate waste from coffee production. In cooperation with Professor S.T. Chang (then dean of the faculty of Life Sciences at The Chinese University of Hong Kong) and researcher Carmenza Jaramillo Lopez, the ZERI Foundation discovered that coffee pulp waste was an ideal catalyst for farming tropical mushrooms—a healthy, low cholesterol and fat-free source of protein.

In honor of the unique project, the ZERI Foundation's mushroom project received the Specialty Coffee Association of America's 2009 Sustainability Award at SCAA's 21st Annual Exposition in Atlanta, Ga.

"After working 15 years in the pulp to protein program, this recognition offers a tremendous platform to reach out to the coffee experts in the world who can become change agents," said Gunter Pauli, founder of the ZERI Foundation. "Thanks to the visibility of this recognition, SCAA members can now take it mainstream and simply make it the way to do coffee business forever."

The beneficial project improves the environment and creates additional revenue for coffee producers, thus sustaining their livelihoods.

MAKING AN IMPACT

After seven years of testing in Colombia, the mushroom project was introduced to Colombian coffee farmers in very remote areas of high malnutrition and poverty. More than 3,000 farmers were trained between 2003 and 2007.

The beneficial project improves the environment and creates additional revenue for coffee producers, thus sustaining their livelihoods. As a result of the program, an estimated 10,000 jobs

were created in Colombia, and now major supermarkets like Carulla, Exito and Pomona carry the tropical mushrooms, providing inexpensive, healthy food while generating jobs.

According to the ZERI Foundation, if two jobs were generated by the mushroom project for each of the estimated 25 million coffee farms in the world, then coffee waste has the potential for creating a staggering total of 50 million jobs globally. The Foundation says the same can be done with tea farms.

Today, in addition to Colombia, the project can be found in Zimbabwe, where orphan Chido Govero brings a whole new social dimension to the program by sharing the technique with other orphans, who use the program for food and income. And as stories like this are made known, coffee industry leaders are taking notice, including Thanksgiving Coffee from California and the Durango Coffee Company from Colorado—both are participating in the mushroom project—as well as Equator Coffees with its Chido's Blend, in honor of Govero.

Certainly, the initiative is a rousing success, but it also has the potential to do even more good. The ZERI Foundation says that if all coffee waste was converted to mushrooms and if all mushroom waste was fed to goats, chickens and cows, it would equal a staggering 16 million tons of food a year.

“Coffee has always been considered a cash crop,” said Pauli, “but now that coffee waste from farms and coffeehouses can be converted into food, we clearly see how a cash crop can provide food security and jobs. Did you ever think of coffee as an engine in the economy *and* a food provider?” ☺

For more information on the ZERI Foundation and its mushroom project, visit www.zeri.org or call 508-317 4030.

Gunter Pauli, founder of the ZERI Foundation, researcher Carmenza Jaramillo Lopez, of Centro Nacional de Investigaciones de Café, and Chido Govero accept SCAA's 2009 Sustainability award at SCAA's 21st Annual Exposition in Atlanta. Al Liu, SCAA's Sustainability Committee chair, presents the award.



Photos courtesy of the ZERI Foundation

The ZERI Foundation's clever and environmentally-friendly venture, dubbed the “pulp to protein project” (or the mushroom project), uses coffee waste to farm tropical mushrooms. The program won SCAA's 2009 Sustainability Award.