



Organic coffee, biodiversity, and agrochemicals: use of shade trees for low-input coffee production in Central America

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Objective

- set the stage for session on organic production by
 - linking development realities in the neotropics with academic and private priorities
 - providing an overall framework for the different themes



Outline

- Point of departure: 3 central issues
- Coffee systems as model
- Priorities for R & D
- Overview of topics in session 1a



Prerequisites for sustainability



• <u>All</u> indicators need to be satisfied

 Challenge: establish a method for integral quality assessment and payment schemes recognizing product quality and services



Issue 1: Economics / income

 Prices for most conventional export crops are at historic lows.



Issue 1: Economics / income

- Producers receive less than ever for conventional coffee (in 2001/02 < \$ 0.5 per lb.).
- Outlook: no reason to expect change.
- Solution: new products, new markets (examples: organic, fair trade, shade-grown, bird-friendly, etc, booming markets cf. Biofach).



Issue 2: Ecology – Health - Biodiversity

- Abuse of agrochemicals persists despite decades of "safe handling campaigns".
- Drinking water contamination rampant.
- Biodiversity erosion: substitution of local flora affects biodiversity from micro- to macro-level ("visible" examples: migratory birds, pandas, etc.).





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Issue 2: Ecology - Health - Biodiversity

- Biodiversity is essential for many national economies in Central America.
- CA has more than 1500 native tree species, many of high value, but less than 20 species are widely planted (and of these, most are exotics).
- Migrating birds (> 100 species in CR) are increasingly dependent on coffee agroforestry systems in Central America.
- Biocorridors of increasing importance.



Issue 2: Ecology – Health - Biodiversity

- Many changes are irreversible in human timescales.
- Solution: integrated production systems that maximize recycling and the use of local inputs and of biological services/ functions → organic mgmt and system diversification are essential tools.



Issue 3: Social structures

- Loss of rural livelihoods.
- Disintegration of rural communities and urban sprawl.
- Increasing crime rates: e.g., "express" kidnapping.
- Solution: revigorization and revalidation of rural communities (e.g. through recognition & payments for environmental & social services)



So, where to start?

Use a model system as template for others
 Coffee is a good model because:

- Great wathershed impact
- Key economic / social importance in CA

Structure of systems allows to combine many functions

Perennial "stable" system w/ trees

Organic coffee depends on trees for many reasons:

- Nutrients
 - Shade
- Diversity
 - others





Shade improves coffee quality





Shade increases bean size

- In suboptimal conditions, shade increases bean size.
- This holds for different varieties.



Shade improves coffee cup quality

- Under suboptimal conditions, shading can improve cup quality significantly
- This is of particular importance for speciality markets



Trees in coffee plantations benefit biodiversity

- In Costa Rica, more than 300 bird species have been recorded in coffee
- Shaded environments foster microbial diversity & activity (biological control)



The future: key issues for improving organic coffee systems in CA

- Harnessing of tree facilitation to benefit organic production (better quality, higher stability and income, nat'l resource conservation, biodiversity).
- Independent research and validation on biological pest control options (biopesticides, systems design etc.).





Tree architecture and compatibility







Tree-crop compatibility studies help find appropriate tree species



The future: key issues for coffee and other crops

- Effective quality control systems (incl. cheaper certification) at <u>regional</u> rather than national levels.
- Support for the self-organization of small producers and their direct marketing links.
- Structured awareness campaigns for consumers and producers.







The future: stronger alliances

- Closer collaboration among academic, business and private sectors
- Regional partners for regional issues;
 e.g. CATIE in Latin America (government mandate to cover 13 countries)
- Empowerment of consumers through increased awareness



The future: common thrust for change

- Ecological, social and economic conditions are the foundations "sine qua non".
- Consumer awareness is the motor for change.





A healthy earth grows healthy crops





Themes in session 1a "Organic Farming"

•Information, socio-economics etc.

- •Agenda for OA in developing countries with southern focus.
- •Importance of local and direct marketing (Peru, Bangladesh, Costa Rica).
- •Information exchange on E-platforms and networks (South Africa).



Themes in session 1a "Organic Farming"

• Biophysical factors

- Yield studies (vegetables in Bangladesh, rice in Cambodia, fennel in Egypt, sweet potato in Cuba).
- Fertilization limitations, mulching, compost engineering and info mgmt (Switzerland, Czech Republic, Cuba, Morocco).
- Benefits of ecological mgmt on soil quality (Nicaragua) and of mulching and VAM for N and P availability (India, Germany).
- Biological control of weeds (Ethiopia), pests (Cape Verde), and of diseases (compost and plant extracts and bacteria, Peru, Germany).
- Waste energy utilization for greenhouses (Switzerland)

