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“Development on the margin”

Chinese Coffee Farming in Transition

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Abstract

Over 120 years coffee history in the Chinese province Yunnan is a struggle story between coffee leaf rust and plantation. To fight new emerged rust races, new coffee varieties are constantly introduced. For long-term success local coffee institutes established a unique germplasm collection with over four hundred varieties worldwide available for breeding purposes against coffee leaf rust. It provides new opportunities for coffee production, while industrial farming on large plantation imposes new challenges. Nowadays however, the whole coffee plantation is threatened, because the dominant coffee variety (Cartimor 7963) in both industrial and smallholder farms is no more coffee rust resistant. Small farmers are more and more under pressure due to shrinking margins and missing scientific information and financial support. Collective farmer cooperatives seem to be an effective solution to face the crashes caused by industrialisation and increasing technologic demand. Coordination of the different requirements from science, technology and economic development among the various actors, such as farmers, researchers, businessmen and local NGOs is required. Collective farmer cooperatives have the potential to become an efficient platform.

The paper examines different farmer cooperative models which exist and are promoted by the Chinese government. The industrialisation in coffee plantation, processing and marketing in Yunnan, China will be studied. A community-based system is investigated which includes stakeholder ownership of the development process and community engagement in project consultation. Ideally, local knowledge is combined with scientific research. At the end, the possibility of a connection between sustainable farming and fair-trade market will be critically discussed.

Keywords: Coffee rust disease, cooperative model, farmers, industrialisation, scientific demand, sustainable development, China, Yunnan