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Farmers’ and academia’s views”

How can cascara authorisation in the European Union contribute to sustainable development of the global coffee value chain? A multiple case study

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Abstract

During coffee cultivation, production and consumption a wide variety of by-products is generated. One of the present applications for one of the most substantial coffee waste fractions lies in the food sector: a non-alcoholic beverage called cascara, which is based on an upcycled dried coffee cherry. However, companies operating within the European Union had to stop commercialising cascara beverages, as in the spring of 2017 the ingredient was classified as ‘novel’ and prohibited from marketing in the EU. The term ‘Novel Food’ refers to food or food ingredients coming from plants, animals, microorganisms, cell cultures, minerals, and production technologies, which were not used for human consumption on the European market before 15 May 1997. However, such novel ingredients may enhance the sustainability of global food value chains.

The study followed three research objectives. First, was an assessment of the competitive environment of cascara beverage producers in the EU. Next, understanding cascara prohibition effects on businesses, interactions between stakeholders in the ongoing authorisation process, and overall cascara trade perspectives in the EU. Third, identifying potential impacts on the sustainability of the global coffee value chain caused by a forthcoming authorisation of cascara for beverages production in the EU in the year 2022.

The analysis of the competitive environment defined a high bargaining power of buyers and a high level of substitutes, which were making the European soft drinks industry less attractive for cascara producers. It was determined that for the market success of Novel Food like cascara, informational marketing is needed to help customers overcome food neophobia. The research results showed that the inclusion of cascara utilisation in the coffee value chain would not address the coffee price volatility problem. However, the most underpaid actors – farmers could generate additional profits. Environmental impacts would take place slowly even if the beverage gained a foothold in the EU. Social impacts were the least expected in terms of the coffee VC sustainability. The effects, however, will depend on various factors such as the scale of cascara utilisation in the EU (also beyond the beverage industry) and the corporate social responsibility of big corporations.

Keywords: Agri-food waste, by-products, coffee, European Union, food value chain, Novel Food, soft drinks, sustainability, valorisation

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