

Fairtrade's workshop: from bean to cup



The first half of the workshop took place in the highlands of Morobe Province, in Sikilan Village. This region is located deep in the interior of PNG, around a four hour drive from the nearest city of Lae.

Coffee beans are found within the walls of a thick ripe red cherry, at altitudes of 1000 - 1500 metres above sea level. Picking the cherries at the right moment is extremely important as this determines the quality potential for that bean.

In Sikilan, coffee is often processed on the farm with manual coffee pulpers. Fairtrade ANZ's training sought to demonstrate the many ways in which coffee can be processed and developed to reveal the unique characteristics hiding inside, bringing out the coffee's different flavours.

While in the coffee fields, Fairtrade ANZ staff took the opportunity to talk about coffee berry borer (CBB) which was recently discovered in PNG. CBB is a small beetle that burrows into the coffee berry. It has an extremely fast reproductive rate, with the potential to devastate coffee farms. Incorporated into the best practice training, Fairtrade ANZ's Will Valverde discussed proactive approaches that farmers could undertake to prevent the spread of the CBB. This included clearing the coffee farms of all cherries following the harvest and setting up makeshift traps made from plastic bottles to capture the beetles. With adequate information and mitigation processes, it is a pest that can be managed.

The second half of the workshop took place in Lae, where participants began to learn the process of coffee roasting. As PNG coffee is often exported prior to the roasting stage, this was a new insight for many of the participants. Farmers were taught how to evaluate their green bean, identifying any defects and developing knowledge as to how such defects can affect the final coffee taste.

“We have been waiting so long for something like this,” says Mela Napiang, extension officer for Fairtrade certified producer organisation Neknasi, “we can evaluate and value our coffee”.

The final stage of the workshop was the tasting phase, where participants learned how to evaluate the aroma and flavour of each coffee sample roasted. For many participants, this was the first time they had sampled their own coffee, and through each sample, coffee quality grader Pablo Juarez provided targeted feedback about how each producer organisation can not only improve their coffee quality, but also maximise their unique characteristics.

“Now we understand the system, we understand what our coffee tastes like, we will go back to our farmers and separate our coffee by altitude, as we understand that each area has its own unique taste. We will also go back to our farmers and discuss the different ways of processing the coffee” reports Molock Terry, Manager of recently Fairtrade certified producer organisation Unen Choit.