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# Central Coffee Farmers Association (CECOFA)

## Robusta from Uganda

The CECOFA cooperative started in 2004 under the name of Nsangi Coffee Farmers Association, or Nsangi. This dynamic cooperative from Central Uganda currently has 3,200 members, 750 women among them. The quality of their robusta coffee is excellent because the shores of Lake Victoria receive a lot of rain. In addition, the fact that it is located very near the capital of Kampala is an added value because it means transport costs are low. The cooperative is one of the few producers' groups in Uganda to have a coffee bean peeling machine. It was awarded its fair trade certification in 2014. In 2016, it changed its name because its field of action was not limited to Nsangi anymore.

### **Solid cooperative**

The farmers' cooperative has worked many years to become a solid cooperative. Huge efforts were made

to bring together members, to motivate and train them. Field workers regularly visit the farms, for instance to find the best drying sites. Farmers who deliver quality beans are paid a good price and during the general assembly good practices are showcased and rewarded. Ties between the members and the management are good.

Also, everyone was willing to invest in the purchase of a coffee bean peeling machine (with BTC paying the final 30%). When beans are peeled, the farmers are given 45% of the organic waste, which they can use as fertiliser. In addition, CECOFA also invested in other social and economic community projects, such as wells and pig and poultry farming.

But CECOFA does not escape a persistent issue that affects many coffee-growing regions: the rising age of farmers. The Cooperative tries to encourage youngsters to choose for the coffee business.

It actually does so by linking coffee with... football! Coffee training course programmes are combined with football tournaments. These efforts bear fruit and youngsters gradually start to invest in coffee trees again thanks to this sports approach.

### **Project in a nutshell**

2015: Selected for marketing coaching  
2016 & 2017: data capturing + full coaching path  
Marketing budget: € 15.000  
Members: 3200 coffee farmers and their families

## Marketing coaching

In 2015, CECOFA applied for marketing support which the TDC was offering at the time to Central African coffee cooperatives. “You immediately notice the management’s enthusiasm”, said Josiane Droeghag of the TDC following a first session at the end of 2015. “They had listed their figures neatly in advance and they seemed extraordinarily eager to learn. Their strongest point was clear immediately: the strong relationship of trust between the team and the members. The same goes for their weakest point: marketing.” Eventually, CECOFA was selected for the TDC’s full marketing coaching programme, including multi-day coaching sessions in 2016.

## Investing in clients

CECOFA’s primary problem is its dependence on two major Ugandan exporters with which it has worked for many years. They ensure a relative stable flow of sales, but also literally and figuratively stand between the cooperative and international clients. Sometimes CECOFA doesn’t even know where its coffee goes.



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At the request of one of the exporters, CECOFA obtained fair trade certification in 2014 for some of its members (1200 out of 3200), but the organisation did not succeed in selling a single container under fair trade conditions in 2016.

Both exporters will doubtlessly remain important partners in future, but there is a strong ambition to invest in customer relations and to experiment in exports ‘under its own management’. Necessary steps to do so were discussed with the TDC coach in 2016.

Meanwhile, the marketing budget of 15,000 euros, which comes with the coaching, has been spent: on the name change and everything that comes with it (new logo, business cards, posters, banners and vehicle stickers), on better internet connectivity, on a new website and a Facebook page and on uniforms for staff members and football shirts for the youth team.

## Train with plenty of plans

In 2016, two CECOFA managers attended specialty coffee trade fairs in Africa and Europe to promote CECOFA. With success: a French coffee, cocoa and vanilla importer contracted CECOFA. The new client is willing to contribute to the costs involved in 4C and possibly Utz certification. 4C is a basic code of conduct used by various major coffee roasters; Utz is an international label for sustainable agriculture (as from the beginning of 2018, Utz will become Rainforest Alliance).

CECOFA itself dreams of organic certification to boost its market opportunities. For now, that step is too expensive, but the team is convinced that it can succeed in doing so in future.

“The TDC coaching sessions have opened our eyes,” says Ronald Buule, manager of CECOFA. “It seems like our train is only starting now. Slowly still. But it is a long train, with plenty of plans.”

One of these ideas is ‘Kaawa Waffe’, literally ‘our own coffee’. The idea is to sell coffee locally, with transporter bikes, for instance at football tournaments. And not so much for the sales volumes, but because it makes the farmers proud to see their own product on the market.

### More info

CECOFA: [www.cecofa.org](http://www.cecofa.org)



Happiness because of new buyer © Christine Englebert

