



THE ICO'S VIEWS ON COFFEE AND CLIMATE

REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION

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I am delighted to address you at this event, especially in view of the importance of the topic being discussed: climate change and coffee.

I would like to share with you some thoughts on the context of how climate change may impact the coffee sector over the coming years. My presentation will be fairly general. The other presenters here today will provide you with a more detailed perspective on this subject.

Climate change is probably the most severe threat currently facing the coffee industry. We recognize this at the International Coffee Organization. This is why, over the past few years, we have invested significant efforts to understand the latest developments in climate science. We have worked closely with a number of people in this room.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is unequivocal: climate change is having a severe impact on coffee production. It expects climate change to continue to impact coffee production in the future, especially considering the current state of vulnerability of coffee-growing regions.

Climate variations have always been a key factor in the fluctuation of global coffee yields.

The IPCC has improved its climate models over the past few years and it is now much more confident of its assessments. Moreover, over the past five years, we have seen how increased climatic fluctuations have impacted coffee production in reality. We have seen

how extreme weather events in Central America, Colombia and Brazil have led to losses of more than 2 per cent of global production. These events may well be early indicators of a trend where extreme weather events occur more often.

Changes in weather may also impact coffee quality. Coffee needs relatively specific conditions: temperature, altitude and rainfall in order to grow. A rising global temperature and changing climate may reduce the availability of these conditions.

The IPCC scientists have also told us that climate change can reduce the area of land that is suitable for coffee production. Their models tell us how suitable areas for coffee production could materially decrease with only small increases of temperature. They also told us how climate change could increase the occurrence of crop pest and diseases, like the coffee leaf in Central America.

Two years ago, when we faced this crisis, International Coffee Organization's council asked me to lead a delegation to visit Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. My report highlighted how climate change is an area of concern for the long-term sustainability of the coffee sector and how we need to adapt the coffee sector to be less vulnerable and more prepared to face these situations.

We believe that the coffee sector needs to be prepared to deal with the risks of climate change. To address these risks, the coffee sector will need to adapt its production and supply processes to be more resilient to weather events and an increasingly warmer planet.

Smallholder farmers are especially vulnerable to climate change: indeed, millions of smallholder families who live with limited access to agricultural services and protection will likely suffer the most. These farmers will face severe threats from adverse weather conditions, or outbreaks of pests and disease, which can wipe out whole crops and therefore their livelihoods.

Men, women and young people assume different roles and face different challenges and opportunities in coffee-producing households and along the coffee value chain. Women take care of family needs, in addition to contributing up to 70 per cent of labour in coffee production. As a consequence, women may be impacted by climate change to a greater extent.

We have a lot to work to do over the coming years. The good news is that we are already seeing countries and companies initiating action and progress to address these issues.

One example of a coffee-producing country, which is working to make its coffee sector more resilient to extreme weather events, is Costa Rica. It has developed a coffee sector action plan and will be proposing it to the UN for financing. Ms. Ivania Quesada, Costa Rica's Vice-minister of Agriculture, will tell us more about their work later on.

In addition to the work by governments, companies have also begun to work on mitigation and adaptation measures. Some of the world's largest coffee roasting and trading companies have set targets to purchase coffee that has been certified or verified in one (or more) sustainability schemes. Companies are also sharing best practices in climate adaptation via the "coffee and climate" initiative. Michael Optiz will tell us more about their latest progress.

The International Coffee Organization will attend as an observer to the 21st Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in Paris in December. We will continue to inform our Members, the governments of the leading coffee producing and consuming countries, on this important topic. We will continue to work with a wide spectrum of organizations to advance our understanding. I invite you to join us.

Thank you.