



ETHIOPIA



ORIGIN:

ETHIOPIA



OUR TEAM

Great coffee in Ethiopia starts with a great team on the ground. More than any other country, Ethiopia has so many moving parts and changes involving laws, government, financing, droughts, quality issues, exporters growing too quickly and cutting corners on post-harvest protocols, exporters owing farmers money, lots that are not actually in Addis, mixed lots, substituted lots, etc.

There are so many small things that ensure that the coffee that ends up sealed in a container in Addis Ababa is the same coffee we sampled, will last the entire journey, and will arrive in stellar shape for roasters. It is easy to have a few good years by choosing a good partner to work with, but having the information 6-8 months before harvest allows us to have a long track record of good coffee, because we can see issues before they happen and mitigate them with things like more training from our agronomists, evaluation of coffee cherries that are being delivered to sites before being sorted and put on the beds, proper drying, protocols for bed depth, etc.

FIELD TEAM



TESHALE FEKADU DUGUMA
Country Manager - Ethiopia

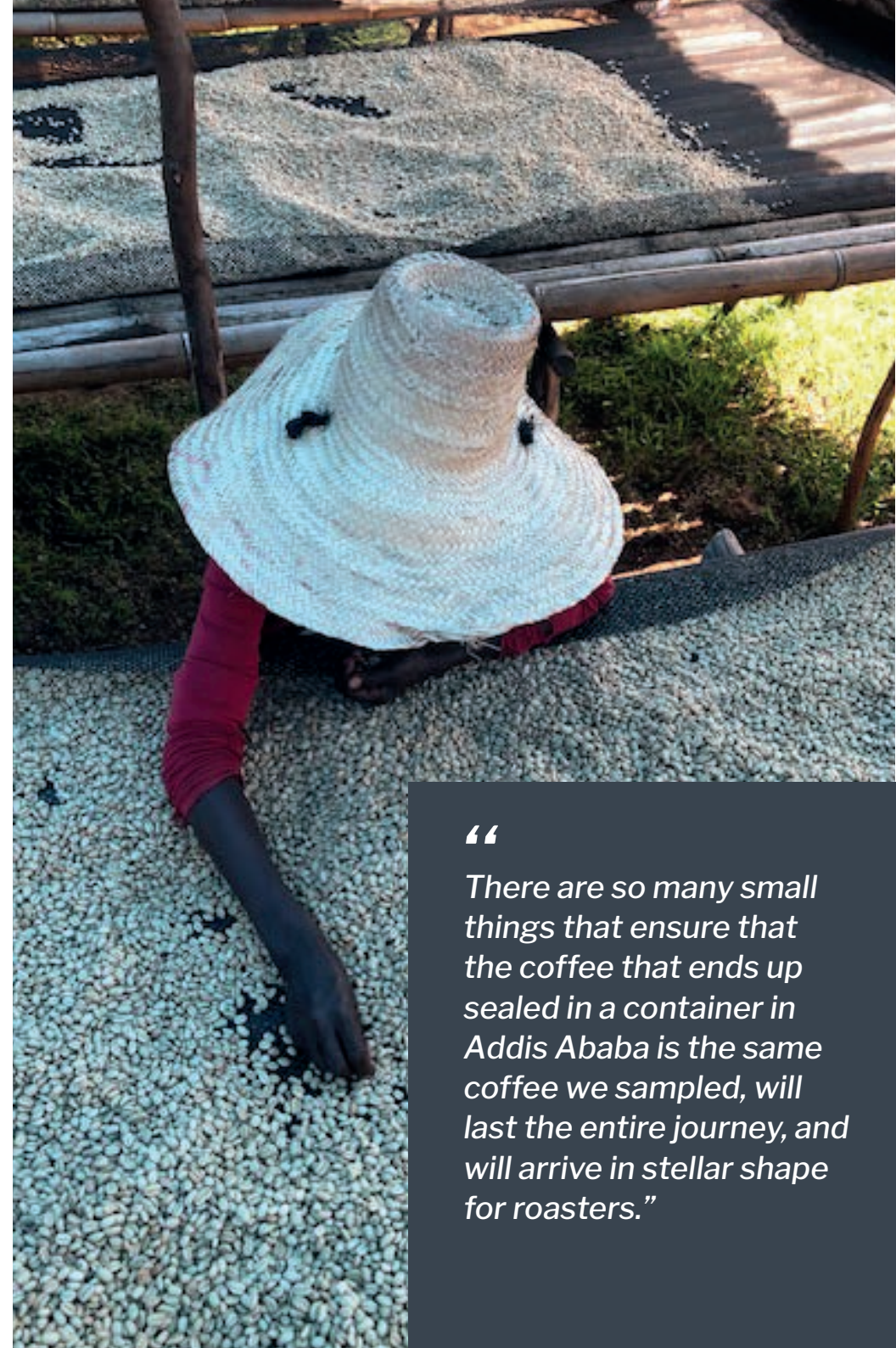


TEMESGEN HAILE BERISO
Field Officer



HARUN SIRAJ
Field Officer

Our office in Ethiopia is managed by Teshale Fekadu Duguma who has worked at JARC (Jimma Area Research Center), has a master's degree in agricultural production chain management, and has also worked as an agronomist in coffee. Under Teshi's direction, we have done several supply chain projects to improve quality; including working with Sidamo farmers to obtain export licenses and set



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up their own drying equipment, training them on drying their coffees, working with Technoserve on the Stumping Project in Sidamo and Yirgacheffe, and teaching our partner farmer in Limu, Mustefa Abakeno, the same techniques of farm renovation and composting methods so that he can begin teaching people in the west. Not to mention our two full time agronomists; Harun Siraj who works in Jima, Limu Gera, and Temesgen Haile Beriso who works in Sidamo, Yirgacheffe, and Guji, who carry out all of these efforts day to day.

There is so much more under the hood to help partners excel, and make sure our customers get the coffees they want, than just “we buy the best coffees from the best farmers.” To build something lasting that is not just coffee hunting, you need dedicated people and continuous innovation.

AREAS WE SOURCE, AND PROFILES WE SOURCE

Kuri Mountain Coffee

Brian met Habtamu over a WhatsApp call with our agronomist Harun when he was looking for an affordable coffee from Limu that would last for 10+ months after landing. Harun was walking around Kuri Mountain’s farm, and specifically their raised beds, showing him how good the parchment looked and handed the phone over to Habtamu.



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The coffees have been consistent and beautiful. Habtamu is a very smart, honest, no-nonsense businessperson who delivers what he says he will.”

Habtamu explained that he did not want to grow at any of his sites beyond a few boxes so he would never have to lose focus on quality or cut corners on fermentation or drying times. After talking to Harun a bit more to make sure it would be a good fit for the customer, Brian took the leap and bought a few containers of an 85+ G2 washed. The coffees arrived and worked well. The next year we branched out and bought coffee from his Yirgacheffe and Guji farms and Brian was able to visit his farms in January 2024. The coffees have been consistent and beautiful. Habtamu is a very smart, honest, no-nonsense businessperson who delivers what he says he will.

The roots of Kuri Mountain date back to 1945 with Aaga Dinsa, who planted coffee seeds on the 105 hectare farm he purchased in the Kuri Kebele Nekempte Lekemtpi area. Habtamu's father, Fikadu Aga, continued growing coffee and supplying coffee to the local market. In 2015, Habtamu Fikadu established Kuri Mountain Coffee, began renovating the farm in Kuri Kebele, and started building a wet mill in Kellem Wellega Gidami Town.

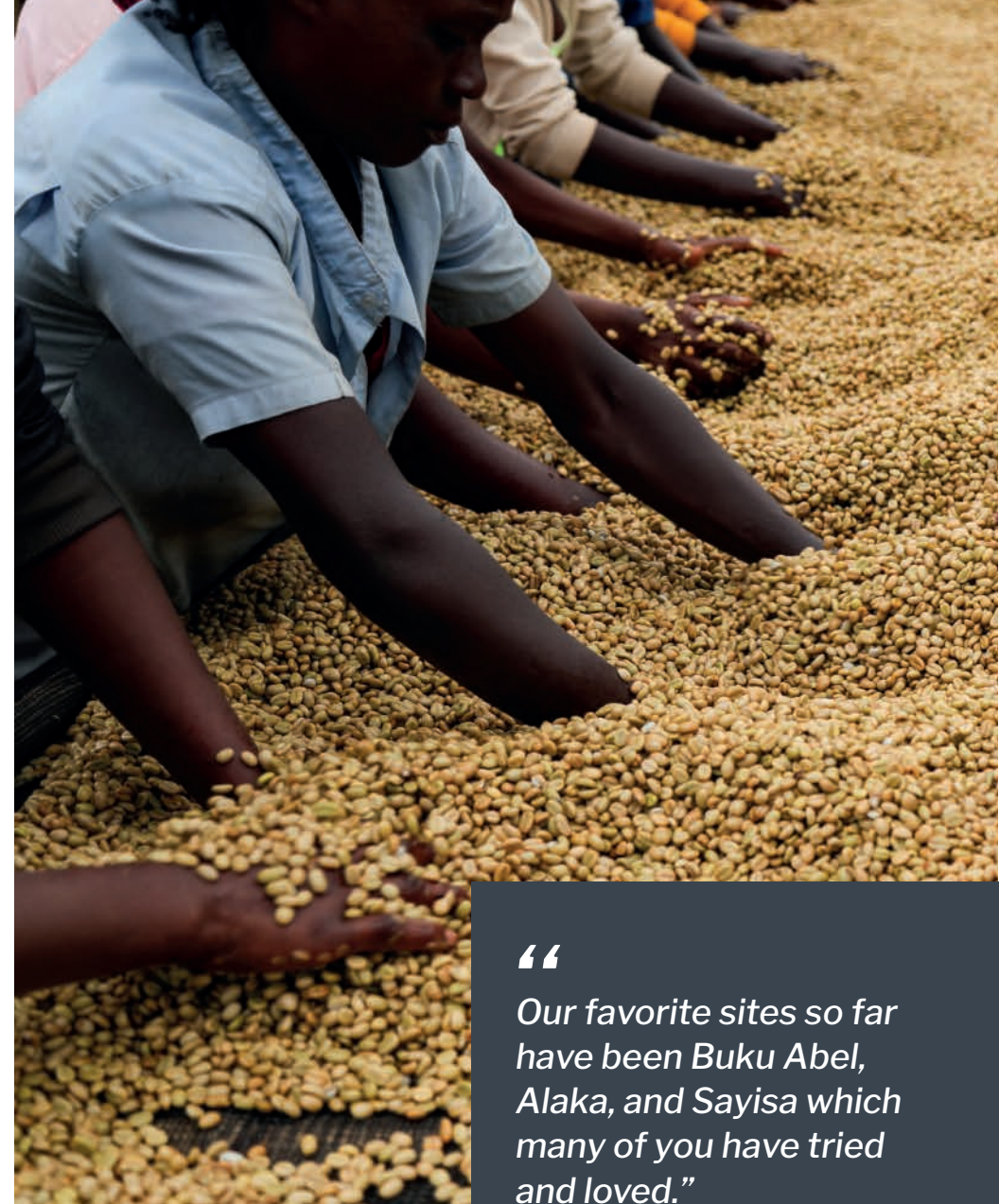
Since 2015 they have added a farm in Uruga Woreda, where their washing station is, and they work with around 100 outgrowers. They also have a farm in Limu Gera, near Sadi Loya, and a washing station there too.

They produce washed, natural, honey, anaerobic, as well as extended fermentation washed and naturals.

Naile Trading

We started working with Naile Trading in 2022 doing some really nice 85+ scoring G2 lots in a tough year for quality. In 2023 we branched out and did some 87 scoring G1 natural Gujis and several containers of G2 natural as well.

Naile is owned by Kenasa Kusa and they have five sites in Guji, where they



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produce mostly G1 and G2 naturals as well as some washed lots. Their sites are in and around Hambella and Shakiso. Our favorite sites so far have been Buku Abel, Alaka, and Sayisa which many of you have tried and loved.

Mustefa Abakeno

We began purchasing coffee from Mustefa in 2019. Brian and Teshale visited Mustefa's site and grabbed some samples off the beds, took a picture of his export license and bought some coffee in January of 2019. He is on the board of KMU Union and used to be the Chairman of Hunda Oli coop. We purchase a range of coffees from Mustefa, from SCA 87+ G1 washed and naturals, to solid G2 washed coffees.

Mustefa, 52, a father of eight children, is a smallholder farmer with 18 hectares in Beshasha Kebele, a village in the Djimma zone of Oromia. He played a pivotal role in founding the Hunda Oli Coop and Kata Muduga Union.

Early on we recognised that Mustefa's coffee had great potential, achieving high-quality cup scores at the pre-shipment stages, but the quality tended to degrade post-export. With assistance from our field agronomist, Harun Siraj, we identified key areas in both pre- and post-harvest stages that could improve overall cup quality, with a particular focus on retaining quality after export.

Mustefa was one of the first farmers to adopt good agricultural practices (GAP), such as pruning, stumping, and using waste from wet-processed coffee pulp as compost, as well as by-products from hulled coffee as mulch and organic fertiliser. These practices are now used on his own farm and by his out-growers.

Harun has also supported Mustefa with sustainability initiatives in coffee production, including leading the certification process and gathering data for the upcoming EU Deforestation Regulation compliance.

Mustefa is also diversifying his farm by planting new banana varieties on a 5-hectare demo plot for other farmers in the area. Additionally, he produces high-quality honey, which generates extra income and aids coffee pollination during the flowering season.

During the off-season, Harun assists Mustefa and local growers with data collection, yield estimation, and implementing key coffee management tasks, including pruning, stumping, shade management, raising seedlings of selected varieties, and soil and water conservation.

To preserve the coffee's natural quality, Mustefa hand-picks only the ripest cherries and follows strict processing guidelines for both washed and natural cherries. This includes careful management of drying beds, parchment storage conditions, cherry picking, and sorting protocols at the farm gate.

An important achievement was the purchase and installation of shade netting to cover and protect the coffee parchment during the hottest periods. This promotes slower, more even drying. Mustefa has also experimented with slow drying under shade, with promising results.

Falcon's Quality team shares overall cupping results with Mustefa and Harun at the end of each season. From this feedback, Harun identifies issues, and together, they work to determine the root causes and implement corrective actions for the next batch. Intervention strategies are developed and applied across Mustefa's entire value chain to improve coffee quality and services.

At the post-harvest stage, Harun regularly visits farmers to evaluate the health of



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their plants, offer agronomic advice, and provide coffee seedlings to farmers to encourage farm renewal.

To maintain lot traceability, field officers carefully keep each coffee lot separate. Each day, lots are tagged with details such as volume, processing time, date on the bed, and moisture content. The coffee is only moved into storage once it reaches the acceptable range, significantly improving the consistency of the coffee's quality. Harun has focused on gathering and organising information across Mustefa's coffee value chain to ensure transparency and traceability. He has also assisted Mustefa with organic certification for both his farm and those of his out-growers, as well as recording geographic location data for the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

The processes outlined above, in addition to others, have dramatically increased the quality and shelf life of Mustefa's coffees.

Mustefa expanded his out-grower membership to over 228 partner farmers – 216 male and 12 female – across five locations: Bedeyi, Echimo, Jarso, Kebira, and Sedi. This represents a nearly sixfold increase from the previous year, largely due to Mustefa's inclusive business model. Many farmers joined after seeing the success and satisfaction of existing members. In terms of volume, Mustefa increased his export volume by 60% year over year with an overall increase in quality from the framework established beginning in 2021.

Mustefa and his team built a larger better ventilated warehouse and purchased a hulling machine in the town of Agaro to store, process, hull, and provide services to specialty producers and exporters in the area.

Harun's partnership with Mustefa remains strong, and together, they continue to uphold high standards of quality coffee. This ongoing collaboration has led to better prices and further strengthens Mustefa's reputation as one of Ethiopia's top producers of specialty coffee.

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EDN

We have been working with EDN for 3 years now. They mostly work in Yirgacheffe and a little in Guji and West Arsi. We started purchasing from them when our old partner, Danie I Mijane, was having difficulty paying cherry prices in 2021 and decided not to export coffee that year.

The next year this issue was compounded by the fact that loans for the new 2022 harvest were based on how much coffee you exported the year prior. This has impacted his ability to export for several years. We are currently working on a prefinancing strategy with him to help him get back to exporting amazing coffee again.

EDN's full name is EDN Coffee Export PLC which is, of course, a very sexy and memorable name. Mike Tsehaye is the CEO of EDN and owns it along with his family. He was born in Ethiopia and moved to California to study Computer Science and took several coffee roasting, cupping, and processing courses during his time there. He returned to Ethiopia after school to help improve livelihoods in his home country.

Many of you will remember the washed extended fermentation from Banko Taratu a few years ago. That coffee just got better and better after it landed. When we visited Chelchele and Banko Taratu sites, the first thing we noticed was how organized everything was. All the beds have numbers and when we asked the site managers what process was on each section, they had a master chart and tags for what was drying on every single bed. The pictures here are of Banko Chelchele at about 2pm and by about 4pm you could see everyone stop what they were doing and systematically cover all the beds with yellow tarps for the night.

There are only a few exporters in Ethiopia producing really good washed coffees



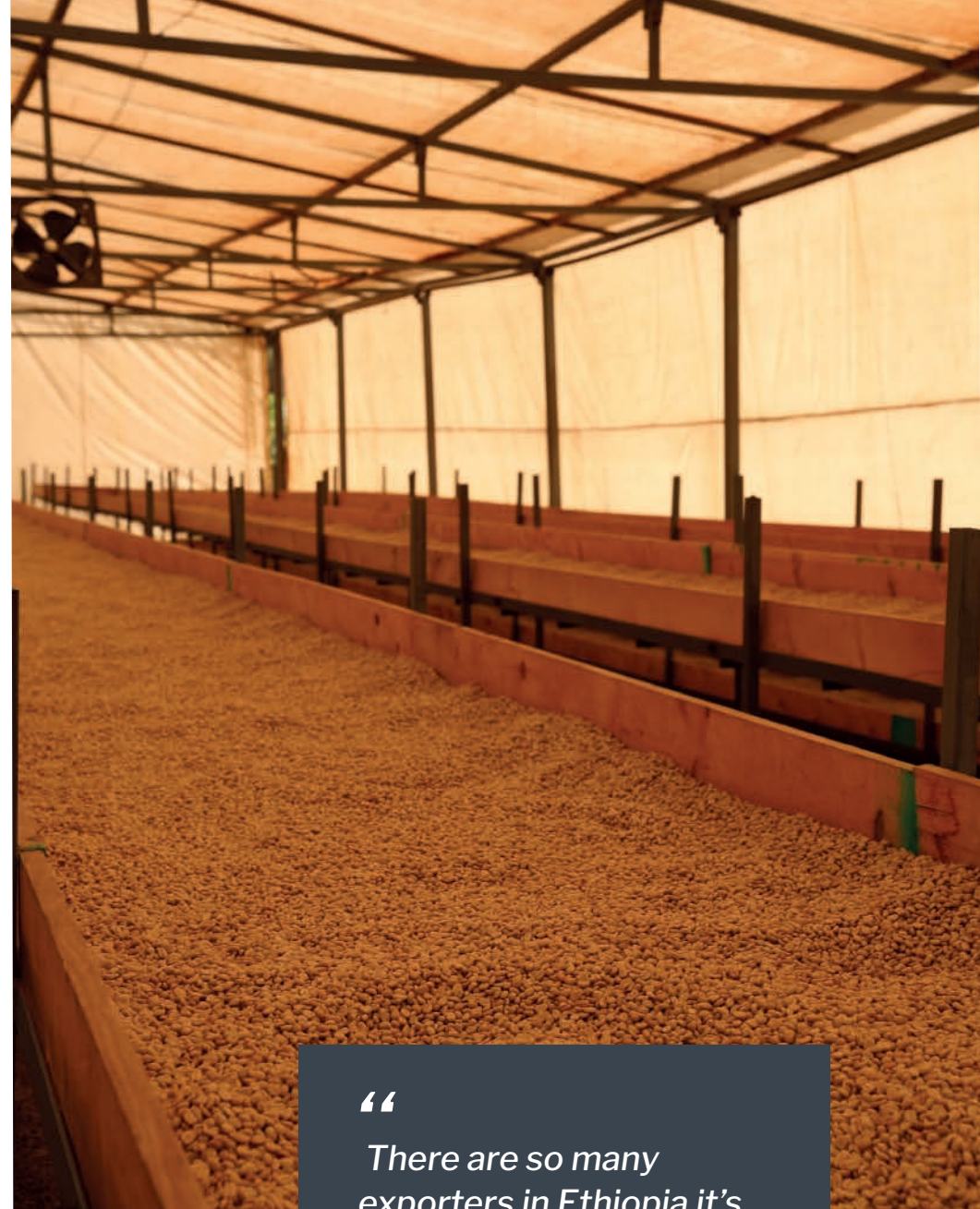
now, because the demand has dropped considerably in the last few years, in conjunction with issues with cherry density, quality, and plant recovery after a large drought in the south (Sidamo, Yirgacheffe, Guji) three years ago.

In the 2021-2022 harvest, after the drought in Southern Ethiopia, many exporters produced washed lots only to find that the coffees that for years had scored 87+ were now cupping 84+. The drought-damaged trees also produced a high percentage of quakers, which when not combined with heavy natural flavors like cherry, blackberry and pomegranate, show up front and center in more delicate washed coffees. Many of these washed lots lost exporters a LOT of money, because cherry prices were so high with production down from the drought. The following year, many exporters just needed to produce homerun coffees to survive, and so many stopped doing washed coffees altogether, because it's easier to produce naturals that cup above 85-86.

While Brian was in Yirgacheffe, he met Mike and asked him about this and why EDN's washed coffees were still great when so many others dropped in quality; he said you have to be very intentional when doing washed coffee, and make sure there is no variation in the process to ensure you produce coffee that will cup 87-88+.

EDN owns 4 sites currently: Banko Chelchele, Banko Taratu, and Halo Beriti in Gedeb, Yirgacheffe and Benti Nenka located in Hambela, Guji. They produce classic 87+ washed G1s, extended and double fermentation washed, naturals, extended fermentation naturals, as well as anaerobic naturals. We had 2 customers who asked for 100 to 300 bags of anaerobic naturals which we thought was impossible to do consistently but EDN was able to build beautiful coffees that the customers have been really happy with.

EDN is building their own dry mill which will be ready for the 2026 harvest. This will be state of the art, using steel technology sandwich panels to control humidity and temperature, which is a massive problem in and around Addis after May, and can dramatically affect coffee that is not in a barrier liner or cocoon.



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Buno General Trading

Abiyot, the owner and manager of Buno General Trading, came to our office in Addis in 2017. He was recommended by a marketer who works with exporters to try to find buyers for their coffees. There are so many exporters in Ethiopia it's actually really hard to find serious partners there. If you stay at a hotel in Addis you will be approached by huge exporters who have 20-30 sites that you have never heard of and who sell to XYZ roasters. It is a confusing, exciting and fragmented, crazy place to do business and makes us smile just thinking about it. That's why it takes many years to get a sense of how things work there.

So, our team tried Abiyot's samples and liked them and visited a few of his sites in 2018. At the time he had Dari, Halaka, Bobea, Goro and was leasing another friend's site called Gerba. They are all located in Guji.

In 2018, we imported a whole container to the East coast and West coast of Dari and Bobea sites. Abiyot's sites are located in areas with relatively young very productive trees, so the deliveries from farmers are really beautiful ripe, even cherry and the coffees are very good, even without a lot of training.

Most of Abiyot's sites are above 2000 meters so the weather is cooler and, without shading, the naturals will dry in 13-15 days. In the last few years, Abiyot has added a Penagos machine to do some washed coffees as well as shade nets to slow the drying even more.

We have an agronomist who has worked with Abiyot and with the Technoserve Stumping Project folks for the last few years to help improve quality even further. Between North America, Europe, UK, and Asia, we buy about 90% of Buno's coffee and have grown together in the last 6+ years.



The Stumping Project

This pilot project conducted by Technoserve in Sidamo has demonstrated the significant impact that sponsored tree-stumping can have. Stumping - trimming older coffee trees - is a critical step to improve both yields and quality. When practiced correctly, it can restore production to the same level as young trees.

While Brian was in Yirgacheffe, he visited two of the farms that have been participating in The Stumping Project. We have these moments where things in Ethiopia seem so huge and immovable and then something small shifts our perspective and gives us tons of energy and interest in doing our part to push things along a little further.

In the past, this would have been sparked by visiting a farmer who replanted his entire farm and did some composting simply because he got some good knowledge in Addis where he lived and then put that information to good use. Most farmers do not live in Addis or have the technical assistance (or time, money, etc) to undertake a massive renovation of their farm.

We will get into some protocols in a bit, but Brian was having a conversation with some people that went to agricultural schools in Ethiopia and found himself defending the benefits of stumping and that the quality over time will be way better—it's not just about yield. It's still not widely accepted.

There was a cupping of a farmer's coffee in the West who stumped his trees, and the coffee at 1.5 years was not quite as good as it was before he stumped. Brian mentioned very animatedly that this was totally normal as the plant is putting most of its energy into tissue growth and not cherries, and the coffee would be better by year 2 to 3 and that he had LOTS of first hand cupping knowledge of this from Central and South America. There were A LOT of other factors like lack of nutrition to aid development... anyway that was a week before this visit and it actually got our minds turning about how to prove that stumping is a good thing on all fronts: quality, quantity, and \$s.



We met up with the Technoserve technician (Asrat Shunana) in Gedeb, and he took us to the first stumped farm which was owned by Tsehanesh Kiphe who, as you can see from the photo (right), was incredibly shy, and we had about 20 people with us, all listening to every word she was saying and asking her a lot of questions.

The other person in the picture with Tsehanesh (on the left in the above picture) is lead farmer, Tsion Thebeso. She is training on both stumping and compost construction and application. Tsehanesh stumped her farm in 2022 and 2023, both years that we have done the project. In just 10 months, the stumped trees were as tall, and trunks close to as thick, as some of the 30–40-year-old trees! The trees stumped 20 months ago were even bigger than the 40-year-old trees!

We asked Tsehanesh if she planned on stumping the rest of her farm in the next two years, and she said yes. The program has already provided her with 6 times as much coffee on the 2-year-old trees as trees that are 30-40 years old. Yes, 6 times!!

We hope we don't need to get on a soap box for you to see that this is probably the most simple and effective project happening in Ethiopia right now. It is also an insanely easy thing to pitch to your boss or wholesale accounts because there is not a ton of coffee geekery or subtle 10-years-into-the-future take aways. Cut tree, get tools, two years later first ¼ of the trees stumped gives you 6 times as much income.

Ok so the trees are stumped in standard fashion at a 45-degree angle to make sure rainwater runs off the stump and does not pool and rot. The new stalks that sprout up are allowed to grow for 6 to 10 months and then the two largest ones are left to grow into a tree and the other growth is cut. For the first 2 years, compost is applied 6 times a year, which we have never seen in Ethiopia.

The compost is:

20% coffee cherry

60-70% leaves and plant material

10-20% cow manure

Very basic, but very effective compost without an insane amount of acidic coffee cherry (which is not helpful in large amounts).

The second farmer we visited is Alemu Wote, who has a 2+ hectare farm. He had a lot to say about The Stumping Project and having younger farmers follow his lead with stumping, which he said is actually working.

The label picture shows that Tsion is the lead farmer who trained him in the process of stumping and compost-making and application techniques. Off camera Brian asked Alemu if he had trouble being trained by a woman (as in many places it is a pretty male-dominated industry, though this is changing in Ethiopia) and he said, "Tsion is amazing, I admire her and she has helped me so much. My farm is doing so much better because of her hard work." Their interactions were really warm and there was a lot of obvious respect, which was really cool to see.

We asked Tsion if any of the 400 farmers were difficult to work with, and she said that everyone was so excited to be part of this project and knowledge transfer after word began to spread about the huge increase in yield.

When we walked back to our Land Cruisers to leave, there were about 40-60 people standing next to our cars who were all farmers from around the area - some were part of the project, some were not, but hopefully the small spotlight of having 20 people ogling, clicking pictures, videoing, and furiously writing notes helped raise awareness of the project and how cool it is to stump your coffee trees.



Over 62,000 farmers (43% women farmers) have stumped their coffee as part of this project, many of them without the \$140 payment, but just from hearing via word of mouth about the success of the project and the potential to earn more money with the same amount of land. It is really extremely humbling and exciting to be a part of something that has started to gain momentum into something much, much bigger.

Brian then hatched a plan with the Technoserve technician and an exporter to buy coffee from 1 year stumped, 2 year stumped, 3 year stumped, and unstumped coffee and keep the lots separate to produce a really simply processed washed and natural coffee.

Ethiopia Sidamo Single Farmers – Niguse Nara, Bekele Belachew, and Basha Bekele

In 2018, a farmer named Buriso Amaje walked into our office in Addis. He had just received his export license and wanted to talk about exporting coffee with Falcon. At the time he said he could organize 7 to 8 different farmers together so that we could do around 200 bags each to the UK, Europe, and North America. We decided to give it a try and had our agronomist visit to help them with some basic picking and drying protocols in the first year. It was already late in the season when Buriso visited us so there was only so much training that could take place that first year. None of these farmers had dried their own coffee before and had only delivered cherry to larger sites/exporters.

If you have been to Sidamo you'll know that many sites use thatched leaves/shoots instead of screen material for raised beds. When we received the PSS from the 8 farmers that first year, the coffees were all wildly different. Some were just profile differences, and some were picking and drying issues. Some local roasters at the office became really interested in the project and wanted to get involved.

In the second year, some roasters agreed to pay 30-50c/lb premium on their coffees to help build rudimentary floating tanks for the 8 farmers.

In the third year, Falcon and some roasters paid for shade nets. Once the coffees were floated and the farmers had additional training on picking and drying, and they went with the dry miller we suggested, the coffee went from 85.5-86 to 88+. The next year the coffees were 88-89.

In 2020 we were slightly late committing to the coffees and some of the farmers sold to a different importer, because there was some confusion as to whether Falcon would be buying the coffees.

Then in March Covid hit and the other importer cancelled all the contracts leaving the farmers in a very bad place. So Falcon bought the farmers' coffees that we had intended to buy originally and an exporter friend bought the rest of them to help the farmers out.

Needless to say, we have been through a lot together. The farmers now have their own out-growers and are doing extremely well and sell to several importers and roasters in many different countries which is great.

Limu

G2 washed 84+, single farmer
G1 washed 87+, single site and single farmer
G1 natural 87+, single farmer

Sidamo

G2 washed 85+, single site
G2 natural 85+, single site
G1 natural 87+ single farmer and single site
G1 natural 88+ single farmer and single site
G1 anaerobic natural 88+ single farmer and single site

Guji

G2 natural 85+ single site
G2 washed 85+ single site
G1 natural 87+ single site
G1 washed 87+ single site
G1 anaerobic natural 88+ single site

Yirgacheffe

G1 honey 87+ single site
G1 natural 87+ single site
G1 double fermentation washed 87+ single site
G1 washed 87+ single site
G1 anaerobic natural 88+ single site
G1 anaerobic natural coferments 88+ single sitep

