



COVID-19 AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

in the coffee global supply chain in Colombia

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A CASE STUDY

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

CRECE	Centre for Regional Entrepreneurial and Coffee Research
FNC	National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia)
G7	The Group of Seven
G20	The Group of 20
ICO	International Coffee Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OSHMS	Occupational Safety and Health Management System
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SGSSS	General System of Social Security in Health
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
SINTRAPEC	Union of workers of the FNC
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

This research was conducted by Vision Zero Fund¹, an initiative led by the Group of Seven (G7) countries and endorsed by the Group of 20 (G20). Administered by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Vision Zero Fund (the “Fund”) works to prevent work-related accidents, injuries and diseases in global supply chains. The Fund systematically conducts assessments of the drivers and constraints for occupational safety and health (OSH) improvements in global supply chains² in target countries in order to design tailor-made interventions. One of the Fund’s research efforts is on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OSH in global supply chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a shock to global supply chains and has disrupted the lives of millions of workers across all industries. This report presents the findings from a case study on OSH measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect workers in the coffee supply chain in Colombia. The study focused on the coffee-growing regions of Antioquia, Caldas and Nariño.

The findings revealed that overall, stakeholders involved in the Colombian coffee supply chain have effectively responded to the pandemic, allowing for the protection of workers as well as business continuity. It appears that the existing national and regional institutional arrangements were important in mobilizing this effective response. Also of note, the research found positive coordination between various actors of the supply chain stemming from a strong institutional foundation, demonstrating that such arrangements can be effective in crisis situations.

The research also pointed to areas for improvement, such as workplace OSH management and risk assessments in coffee

farms, access to occupational health services by farmers and farm workers, and the development of long-term measures to prepare for and respond to emergencies at national and workplace levels.

Key research findings

1. The authorities at national, regional and local levels together with the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia (FNC) were quick to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in the coffee supply chain. They reacted almost immediately after the initial news that the virus had entered the country.
2. In the Antioquia and Caldas regions, collaboration between the various supply chain actors played an important role in developing and implementing measures to support workplaces at the coffee-growing stage of the supply chain (Annex 2 presents a successful case of collaboration in addressing COVID-19 at the local level in Concordia, Antioquia).
3. In developing and implementing measures to prevent the spread of the virus in workplaces, employers were motivated by government requirements and the need to protect workers and ensure business continuity in the coffee sector.
4. Owing to its importance and the strong institutional support system, the coffee sector had its own COVID-19 prevention protocol within the general agricultural sector and was exempted from the general closure of businesses.
5. COVID-19 reportedly did not have the negative effects initially expected on coffee production or business continuity in the

1 The Fund is administered and implemented by the Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health (LABADMIN/OSH) Branch of the ILO. The Fund is a key component of the ILO Safety + Health for All Flagship Programme.

2 The [methodology](#) used for the assessments of the drivers and constraints for OSH improvement was developed under the auspices of a joint ILO-EU project on OSH and GSCs in the framework of the ILO Safety + Health for All Flagship Programme.

global supply chain. At the end of 2020 (coffee year), the value of the coffee crop totalled 9 billion Colombian pesos (about US\$2.3 billion), the highest in 20 years. The high average price paid by the market for Colombian coffee contributed to this landmark figure. While the prices of some inputs increased due to the pandemic, the Colombian coffee sector saw an increase in the price for Colombian coffee.

6. Farm workers and producers were impacted by the general restrictions in movement between regions that at some points posed a concern regarding adequate labour for the harvest seasons. This appeared not to have posed a major threat to the harvest and business continuity, however, as producers were given guidance on how to manage the potential labour shortage. Workers from other sectors that were shut down were hired to work as coffee pickers, which also contributed to countering the impact of restricted travel between regions.
7. Temporary workers (including itinerant coffee pickers) appeared to be the most vulnerable in the coffee supply chain due to high levels of informality and limited access to social security protection and health services. This was especially the case for migrant workers without permits who cannot access health services through the government-subsidized programme or any other social protection scheme. It was also reported that workers tended not to report COVID-19 symptoms due to fears of losing the opportunity to work during the harvest.
8. Measures adopted within workplaces along the supply chain to protect workers included physical distancing, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfection, changes in work scheduling, teleworking (where possible, at some tiers of the supply chain in cooperatives, threshing factories and exporting companies) and arrangements within farm accommodations such as distancing and the provision of all meals to prevent workers from leaving and returning to their lodgings. Coffee bean producers and farm workers expressed difficulty in complying with measures such as the use of face masks and physical distancing in the coffee lots. Employers reported challenges in ensuring compliance out of fear of losing workers if they refused to comply with the measures.
9. Study participants were of the perception that supportive workplace measures, a proactive approach and OSH measures within workplaces were effective in protecting workers' safety and health while helping to enable business continuity.
10. The major gaps identified in the study were in workplace OSH management and risk assessments in farms. In farms, it was found that no special arrangements were made for categories of workers who are part of high-risk groups (that is, at a higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19), such as older workers and workers with pre-existing conditions (for example, diabetes, cancer and heart conditions). Older workers on farms reported concerns for their safety and health. While other occupational risks arising from the pandemic (such as psychosocial risks) were identified at some levels of the supply chain (in cooperatives, threshing plants and export companies), at the farm level these were not considered.



1. Introduction

While global supply chains³ have contributed to global economic growth and job opportunities, their impact on the safety and health of workers raises important concerns (ILO 2017a, Walters and James 2009). Failures at all levels of global supply chains have contributed to decent work deficits, including in OSH (ILO 2016). Examples of successful initiatives to harness the power of global supply chains towards the better safety and health of workers remain limited.

Vision Zero Fund, which is administered by the ILO, works to prevent work-related accidents, injuries, and diseases in global supply chains. The Fund systematically conducts assessments of the drivers and constraints for OSH improvements in global supply chains in targeted countries in order to design contextualized interventions.

These assessments provide a holistic understanding of a given value chain, its institutional and market environment and the drivers and constraints for OSH improvement resulting from specific business models and commercial practices in that supply chain or lying within the institutional and policy environment. Demand from global buyers for compliance with OSH requirements, strong national OSH systems and the presence of supporting channels and institutions with capacities in OSH to support workplaces are among the drivers identified for OSH improvements in agriculture global supply chains (ILO 2021).⁴

COVID-19 is having significant impacts on demand and supply in global supply chains with implications for workers' safety and health in the workplace. The agriculture industry has been severely impacted due to containment measures such as border closures and targeted local lockdowns restricting the movement of workers and products. According to the ILO (ILO 2020a), many workers in developing countries rely on agriculture global supply chains with limited or no access to social protection. An extended crisis of this nature threatens to disrupt many lives and further exacerbate such workers' vulnerabilities.

Challenges and opportunities for OSH improvement may arise or be amplified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Identifying, understanding and anticipating these challenges and opportunities and their interactions with OSH practices in global supply chains is essential to inform stakeholders in the development and implementation of effective strategies to ensure safer and healthier supply chains.

In this context, the research in Colombia was conducted as part of a broader global research project by Vision Zero Fund which aims to provide a better understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OSH in global supply chains and the strategies, responses and motivations of stakeholders to mitigate the negative impacts on OSH and GSCs at all levels of the supply chains. The research is based on

3 Supply chains are defined as "goods and services that cross international borders for consumption or as inputs for further production" (ILO, OECD, IOM and UNICEF 2019, 2).

4 For more details on the assessment of drivers and constraints for OSH improvements conducted in Colombia GSCs see: ILO, [Food and Agricultural Value Chains: Drivers and Constraints for Occupational Safety and Health Improvement. Volume Two - Three Case Studies](#), 2017b.

the premise that OSH preventive measures may contribute to mitigating the negative effects of global disruptive forces on global supply chains (that is, disruption in supply, production, business continuity and employment), in this case the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Colombia, the research examined the measures and actions taken by stakeholders in the coffee supply chain to support the prevention of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 in workplaces at all supply chain levels. The specific objectives were to:

1. identify the OSH measures and actions that were taken in the Colombian coffee sector to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at workplace level (measures to support workplaces and measures taken at workplace level);
2. examine the drivers and constraints for the development and implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the workplace level;
3. examine whether the adoption of (or failure to adopt) OSH measures was perceived to have had any effects on the safety and health of workers, business continuity, productivity and employment in the supply chain;
4. analyse whether the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the sustainable sourcing practices of multinational enterprises; and
5. ascertain any long-term measures adopted to prepare and respond to any future epidemics or pandemics.

1.1 Research approach

The study used a qualitative approach that enabled an in-depth understanding of the experiences of stakeholders in developing, implementing and monitoring OSH prevention measures in response to the pandemic, supported by desk research. The research was conducted between 15 December 2020 and 26 February 2021.

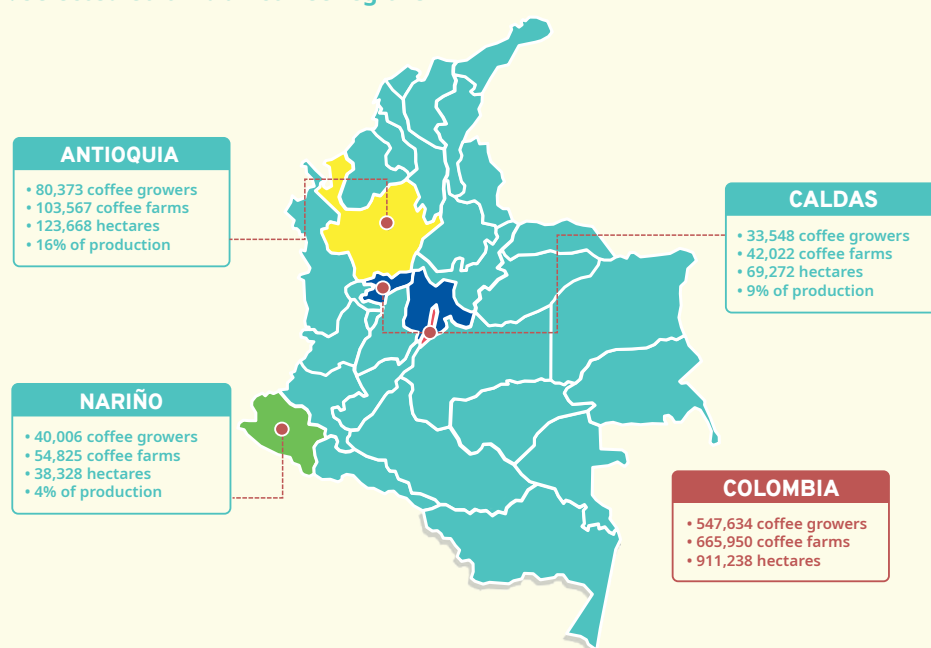
The study focused on the coffee-growing regions of Antioquia, Caldas and Nariño. The selection

of regions took into account the different sizes and types of supply chain suppliers, for example, whether they were certified/not certified, types of ownership (local versus foreign direct investment), type of end market and geographical differences, to ensure that diverse suppliers were included in the research. For the selection of regions, the following criteria were deemed relevant:

1. Representation of coffee culture in the central coffee-growing region. Antioquia and Caldas belong to the central coffee region (along with Risaralda, Quindio and Valle del Cauca), which accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the national coffee harvest and thus hires a large number of workers every year. The central region represents a tradition of coffee growing with the presence of small and large coffee farms which, due to their climatic conditions, have their main harvest in the second semester (September to December).
2. Representation of coffee culture in the south: The Nariño region is an important coffee-growing region. Along with Huila and Cauca, the region provides nearly 30 per cent of Colombia's coffee production with its main harvest in the first harvest semester (March to June). With predominantly small coffee farms, it is an important provider of labour for other coffee-growing zones, as many small coffee growers used to migrate annually to other regions (to the centre and to Huila in the south) to work as coffee pickers for the second harvest semester.
3. Contrasting responses regarding the COVID-19 situation between large farms, with high demand for hired workers, versus small farms, using mainly family labour.
4. Regional incidence of COVID-19 (the number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 inhabitants). On 31 October 2020, when the national average number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 was nearly 1,200, the department of Antioquia had over 2,204 cases, the department of Caldas close to 1,126 cases and the department of Nariño below average with 901 cases.

The selection of regions was validated with senior coffee sector representatives. The three departments combined represent 30.1 per cent of farms nationwide, 28.1 per cent of coffee growers and 25.4 per cent of the coffee-planted area.

Figure 1. Selected Colombian coffee regions



Farm coffee area (share in the region by size)	Antioquia	Caldas	Nariño
1 ha. or less	59.9%	45.6%	69.5%
1 to 5 ha.	36.9%	48.4%	29.7%
5 to 10 ha.	1.9%	3.9%	0.6%
More than 10 ha.	1.3%	2.1%	0.1%

Source: FNC-IGAC, Atlas Cafetero de Colombia, 2017 (adapted template chart from templates.com).

A total of 72 key informants (23 women and 49 men) were interviewed across the different stages of the Colombian coffee supply chain, representing diverse sizes and types of producers and other involved actors, including government officials, market agents, workers and their representatives, employers and their representatives and representatives of multinational enterprises.

A list of all participants is presented in Annex 1.

The participants were selected to provide as comprehensive a picture as possible of the processes and experiences in developing, implementing, monitoring and supporting OSH measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the Colombian coffee supply chain. In conducting the research, standard ethical procedures were observed, including informing participants about the study prior to the interview and obtaining informed consent.

The scope of the study was limited to selecting workplaces and not all coffee-producing regions in the country were covered. Thus, it cannot claim to speak for other coffee-producing regions of Colombia, although the data collected provides a basis for reasonable extrapolations to be made to other areas. The research was also limited by the COVID-19 restrictions. Therefore, data collection strategies were limited to virtual interviews. Although observations on locations would have enhanced the study, these could not be conducted due to restrictions and ethical considerations for the safety of the researchers and participants.

Interviewing stakeholders at different levels of the supply chain as well as different actors within production units in addition to documentary

evidence provided multiple sources of data for triangulation. This ensured that the reality of the situation on the ground was captured in the findings.

On completion of the study, the ILO organized a validation workshop on 10 June 2021 at which the researchers presented their findings. This workshop created a platform for stakeholders to review the findings and discuss how to address the impact of the pandemic going forward. Workshop participants included representatives from the Government (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Health and Social Protection), producers', employers' and workers' organizations, exporters, non-governmental organizations and academia.







2. Characteristics of the coffee global supply chain in Colombia

Each year, Colombia produces around 14 million bags of green coffee classified as mild washed due to the Arabica varieties of coffee exclusively cultivated and the wet milling process. This process consists of collecting coffee cherries, pulping, removing the mucilage and then washing and drying until parchment coffee is obtained. The parchment coffee is then threshed to produce green coffee for export.

Annual coffee exports amount to approximately 12.5 million bags, of which 70 per cent corresponds to standard coffee (without any certification/verification), 24 per cent to specialty coffees (including Origin, Sustainable and Preparation coffees, according to the FNC classification) and 6 per cent to industrialized coffee (for example, roasted, ground and soluble coffee). Coffee is cultivated in 22 coffee-growing regions and 551 municipalities in an area totalling 854,000 hectares (FNC 2020).

The coffee supply chain in Colombia is composed of five stages: (i) provision of inputs; (ii) farming and primary processing to produce parchment coffee; (iii) commercialization and transport of parchment coffee; (iv) threshing to obtain kernels or green coffee for export; and (v) exportation.

The provision of agricultural inputs (raw material) is considered the first stage in the chain and is related to the supply of all inputs required to cultivate coffee and for primary processing activities (such as fertilizers, seeds, equipment, machinery and agrochemicals).

The farming and primary processing by farmers to produce parchment coffee, which corresponds to the development of the post-harvest processes such as drying, begin with harvesting of the coffee cherries. In Colombia, this process is carried out on the farms, which have different types of

equipment according to their size. Currently, this stage has 547,000 coffee growers, 96 per cent of whom are small producers with less than 5 hectares of land planted in coffee.

Medium-sized producers represent only 3 per cent of the total number of producers in the country. They have an average of 8 hectares planted with coffee for a total of 140,000 hectares in which 12 per cent of the country's coffee harvest is produced. Finally, the so-called entrepreneurial coffee growers (large farms), with areas of at least 10 hectares, own 110,000 hectares with an annual production of 2.2 million bags of coffee, equivalent to 16 per cent of the country's total production (CRECE 2016).

In the **commercialization stage**, dry parchment coffee is transported by coffee growers who have two commercialization channels through which to sell their coffee:

1. The institutional channel, formed by the FNC, which purchases the coffee with resources from the National Coffee Fund through the Coffee Growers' Cooperatives. The cooperatives then deliver the coffee to Almacafé (logistics operator owned by the FNC), which oversees the threshing and transport of coffee to the port for export or to Expocafé, an exporting company owned by the cooperatives. Currently, 33 coffee growers' cooperatives throughout the country use this channel through 488 points of purchase. The institutional channel accounts for 38 per cent of national coffee harvest sales.
2. The private channel, represented by coffee intermediaries called "pergameneros", is composed of traders who can sell and buy the same product or add some value to

the product (through, for example, drying, blending or selection). In many cases, these intermediaries are integrated with large exporters.

In the **secondary processing (threshing) process**, the husk is removed from the dried parchment to obtain the coffee kernel or green coffee for export. There are different types of coffee threshing firms. Some provide this service independently to exporters, some are owned by the exporters themselves and others are owned by Almacafé. Some coffee growers' cooperatives have recently ventured into the coffee threshing business in addition to the collection of coffee.

Exportation is carried out both by the FNC through Expocafé S.A. (which is owned by the coffee producers' cooperatives) as well as numerous private exporters. The exporters buy parchment coffee from intermediaries, thresh and then sell it to commodity traders and roasters as green coffee. In 2020, there were 246 registered exporters. The four largest exporters together accounted for 43.8 per cent of purchases, with the largest, FNC, accounting for 19.3 per cent. Increasing demand among coffee roasters for specialty coffee has encouraged exporters to work with producers to achieve the differentiated products demanded by the market. Some private exporters offer cash advances in exchange for a future supply of an equivalent quantity of coffee. These exporters have teams of specialists in the field advising coffee farmers and paying incentives for quality.

2.1 Workers in the coffee sector

Coffee farms employ an average of 730,000 people annually (CRECE 2016). Coffee-farming households represent 69.4 per cent of the workforce (some 506,000 workers). Coffee producers themselves account for almost half of the workforce (45.5 per cent), followed by unpaid family members (21.7 per cent) and paid family members (2.2 per cent). In the smallest farms, family members account for 75 per cent of the workforce while on medium-sized farms they make up only 8 per cent. Large farms depend

almost entirely on hired labour, which accounts for 30.6 per cent of workers, most of whom are daily workers on a daily wage. In the harvesting season, an estimated 395,000 people are involved in picking coffee (temporary workers, coffee farmers, unpaid family members and paid family members), 14 per cent of whom are women (CRECE, 2016).

The temporary nature of coffee farming work limits workers' access to all the statutory social security benefits, especially in those regions where the formal wage market is underdeveloped. On small farms (less than 5 hectares), the percentage share of permanent employment is only 0.9 per cent, in medium-sized farms (between 5 and 10 hectares) it reaches 6.7 per cent and in large farms (over 10 hectares) 11.4 per cent (CRECE 2016).

Although the number of jobs generated in other stages of the coffee chain (commercialization, threshing and export) is unknown, most jobs are formal with access to social security protection.

2.2 Supporting functions

Stakeholders supporting the coffee supply chain in Colombia are composed of a network of private and public organizations and institutions. A key actor is the FNC, whose main objective is to guide, organize, promote and regulate the Colombian coffee industry to ensure the well-being of coffee growers and compliance with coffee policy by all actors involved in the value chain.

As a trade organization, the FNC has two roles: 1) democratically representing registered coffee growers in the governing bodies; and 2) ensuring participation of the Government through three ministries (Treasury, Agriculture and Commerce) and the National Planning Department, in one of its most important decision-making bodies, the National Committee of Coffee Growers. The Committee consists of four government representatives: The Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Commerce and the Director of National Planning, plus the members of the Steering Committee. The regional branches, Departmental Committees of Coffee Growers, ensure the provision of FNC services to

coffee growers, implementing the programmes and projects. There are 15 departmental committees, one in each department where coffee production totals over 2 per cent of the national total.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit steer coffee growers to various support programmes for coffee production or access to subsidies or financing. Examples of such interventions are the inclusion of coffee growers in coffee income-support programmes, the rural housing subsidy policy, the provision of resources for fertilizers and refinancing programmes for the coffee portfolio.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour issue regulations and policies implementing a set of programmes on OSH. Implementation of the social security system is delegated to labour risk insurance companies (Administradoras de riesgos profesionales (ARLs), in Spanish),⁵ health promoting enterprises (Entidades promotoras de salud (EPSSs), in Spanish) and pension funds, most of which are privately owned.

The participation of coffee producers in voluntary sustainable standards has resulted in increased credibility in terms of production and exports. A total of 32 per cent of farms are said to produce coffee under a sustainable production standard. Specialty coffees account for 15.2 per cent of exports, totalling 2.1 million bags in 2016. The voluntary sustainable standards promote adoption of good agricultural, environmental and social practices, including OSH practices on coffee farms. Verification or certification of compliance is made by a third party through audits. These companies operate as independent verification agencies.

As for worker representation, formal workers' organizations are almost absent in the coffee sector.⁶ Coffee pickers and other seasonal workers, who represent most of the coffee sector workforce, are not affiliated to such organizations mainly due to the seasonal nature of the harvest and labour demand by farms. A few organizations do exist, however, representing workers in areas such as the application of agrochemicals, sowing, coffee processing and fertilizers, which provide services to the FNC and some large farms.

5 These are life insurance companies authorized by the State to operate the occupational risk insurance business and cover the expenses generated by occupational accidents and diseases. Decree 1295 of 1994 created the Administrators of Professional Risks (ARP), which Law 1562 of 2012 changed to labour risk insurance companies (Administradoras de Riesgos Laborales or ARLs).

6 For example, the workers' organization SINTRAFEC represents only FNC workers.



3. COVID-19 and the coffee global supply chain in Colombia

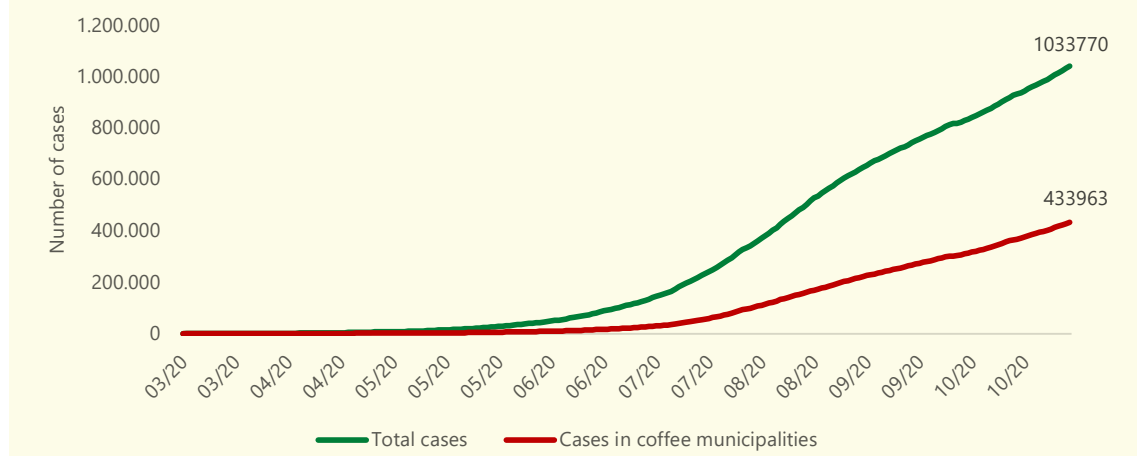
Following the declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, the Colombian Government declared a state of emergency by Decree 417 dated 17 March 2020.

From 24 March to 13 April, the Government instituted a national lockdown. Successive lockdowns were declared until 1 September 2020, when a new period of “selective isolation” began in which individual responsibility played a central role in

preventing the spread of COVID-19. Measures such as teleworking and online education continued for the rest of the year.

According to data from the National Institute of Health, by the end of 2020, Colombia had a total of 1.6 million COVID-19 cases. In October 2020, coffee municipalities reported more than 430,000 accumulated cases, accounting for 41 per cent of total cases in the country (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of total cases and cases in coffee-growing municipalities



Source: CRECE with data from the National Institute of Health

A total of 535 out of the 596 coffee-growing municipalities in Colombia had reported COVID-19 cases by the end of October 2020. The three regions selected for this study were affected as follows: Antioquia had 2,240 cases in 89 of its 94 coffee-growing municipalities; Caldas had 50

cases in all of its 25 municipalities; and Nariño had 901 cases in 31 of its 38 municipalities.⁷⁸

Coffee was one of the few sectors that was allowed to remain open and continue operations during the Government-declared health

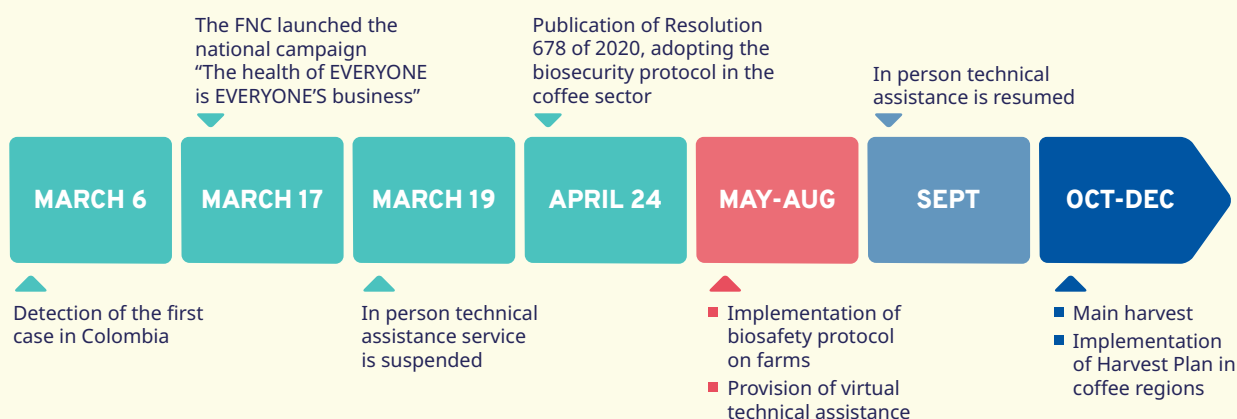
⁷ The national average of COVID-19 cases was around 1,200.

⁸ Source: Calculated by CRECE with information from the National Institute of Health.

emergency. The start of the pandemic coincided with the beginning of the first semester coffee harvest in Colombia, from March to May or June (depending on the region) in 2020. The sector, led by the FNC, responded promptly by developing and promoting COVID-19 protocols and

preventive measures and, consequently, coffee production, harvesting, sales, storage and export operations continued. Figure 3 provides an overview of the main measures adopted to support workplaces in the coffee supply chain from March to December 2020.

Figure 3. Timeline of coffee sector response to COVID-19 in 2020



3.1 Measures to support workplaces in the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 in the coffee global supply chain in Colombia

Development of regulations, protocols and guidelines

At the beginning of the pandemic, the FNC developed a COVID-19 biosafety protocol for coffee farms in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. This took the form of a booklet with guidelines for general OSH measures to be implemented in the coffee-growing sector in order to reduce the risk of virus transmission. This booklet was later adopted (on 14 April 2020) by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection through Resolution 678 of 2020, making the OSH protocol for management and control of the risk of COVID-19 specific to the agriculture coffee sector, mandatory. The coffee sector is the only

agricultural sector in the country with its own COVID-19 prevention protocol that was adopted by regulation with the following recommendations to coffee growers:

- Undertake basic care interruption of the chain of contagion of COVID-19: This includes cleaning, disinfection and handwashing measures, promotion of best practices when sneezing and coughing, restrictions on leaving the farm and measures for returning to the farm particularly after visits to a town or to areas with confirmed cases.
- Make available disinfectant solutions to all workers in different parts of transit and install atomizers with sodium hypochlorite solution that can be used to disinfect shoes, clothing and work tools by preventing the hypochlorite from coming into contact with eyes, mouth and mucous membranes.
- Ensure the use of personal protective equipment (PPE): goggles, hat, overalls, boots, mask and gloves. The PPE must be provided by the owners or persons

in-charge of the properties and training must be provided to workers on their proper use.

- Clean and sanitize with sodium hypochlorite before each meal shift for workers. Set up eating shifts to prevent crowds and ensure a distance of two meters between workers in eating areas. Ensure a sufficient and permanent supply of soap and water in the showers, kitchens, dining and washing areas for clothes during the harvest.
- Undertake preventive insulation measures. During the pandemic, it is recommended that only one family member goes into town, preferably persons under 30 or 40 years old. Upon return to the farm, shoes should be disinfected with a hypochlorite solution, hands should be washed with soap and water and clothes washed with plenty of soap and water and changed before interaction with others on the farm.

The protocol outlined specific measures for farms requiring outside labour, with recommendations depending on the origin of the workers:

- For small farms, which mainly require local labour, it was recommended that they operate with already known workers in the region who do not test positive for COVID-19. If labour shortages occur, it was recommended that they organize their work agenda, programming the execution of tasks that cannot be postponed: for example, picking coffee from the youngest and most productive lots and postponing, delegating, or, in the worst case, not picking the crop from the least productive lots.
- Coffee growers with medium and large estates, who must hire external personnel to harvest the crop, were recommended to adapt and make special arrangements on their farms by establishing isolation zones for workers with signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Additionally, they were recommended to extend harvesting to every day of the week and to shorten the harvesting schedule, thus requiring fewer people to do the work. The protocol also

gave clear instructions on the management of on-farm accommodations and barracks.

According to the protocol, coffee growers with medium and large estates were recommended to consider the following actions to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in workers' housing:

- **In workers' accommodations:** Place sheets, blankets and mattresses in the sun each day, open doors and windows during the day and have workers store their clothes in plastic bags. Consider installing isolation rooms for confirmed cases.
- **Beds:** Install beds or bunk beds in accommodations at a distance of 2 meters apart. If there is not sufficient available space, other areas may be adapted for accommodations. Only one person per bunk bed should be accommodated.
- **Toilets:** Clean toilets more frequently than usual, dry towels in the sun, encourage workers not to share towels and ensure permanent availability of soap.
- **Washbasins:** Wash them several times a day, ensure permanent availability of soap and discourage the sharing of towels for drying hands.
- **Workers:** Upon arrival at the farm and before entering their accommodations, workers should remove their clothes and wash them.
- **During the pandemic:** To prevent workers going in and out of the farm, even on days off, meals should be guaranteed on the farm during the entire week while the harvest lasts.
- **The harvesting calendar:** This should be shortened by extending the working day and including every day of the week to reduce the number of workers at any one time and to allow coffee pickers to increase their productivity and income.
- **Temperature checks:** Encourage participation of workers in temperature checks with infrared thermometers performed by local authorities.

- **Written records:** Keep records of the workers with date, name, identification number, age, last region visited, cell phone and labour risk insurance company to which they are affiliated.

In other stages of the supply chain such as coffee growers' cooperatives, threshing plants and exporting companies located mainly in urban centres, implementation of the OSH measures was based on the Ministry of Health and Social Protection resolution 666 of 2020, whereby the general biosecurity protocol was adopted to mitigate, control and manage the COVID-19 pandemic. According to this resolution, employers must provide a work environment with adequate hygiene and safety conditions and establish work methods that minimize the risks of contagion, with distancing measures applied in the workplace. Those in charge of OSH management must define, according to the activity, the most suitable PPE, which employers are obliged to provide. The resolution also considers chemical risks and establishes guidelines for the use of chemicals.⁹

The Ministry of Labour also circulated several decrees aimed at protecting the employment and safety and health of workers. The following circulars are noteworthy:

- Circular 17 of February 2020 contained the minimum guidelines to be implemented for the promotion, prevention, response and attention to cases of COVID-19.
- Circular 21 of March 2020 focused on implementing employment protection measures during the containment phase of COVID-19 and the declaration of a health emergency. Among these measures were work at home authorization, flexible working hours, early vacation and paid work authorization.
- Circular 29 of April 2020 stated that the provision of PPE is the responsibility of companies or contractors and gives a role to the labour risk insurance companies to support employers or contractors in the provision of such equipment exclusively for workers with direct exposure to COVID-19.

- Circular 64 of October 2020 contained the responsibilities of companies in the implementation of minimum actions for the identification, evaluation and monitoring of psychosocial risk factors, the promotion of mental health and the prevention of workers' mental health problems and disorders within the framework of the health emergency. It also defined the responsibilities of the labour risk insurance companies regarding the implementation of programmes to safeguard against those risk factors such as psychosocial intervention helplines.

Through Circular 17, the Ministry of Labour established minimum guidelines to be implemented at workplaces in relation to COVID-19 preparedness and response measures and case management. The main guidelines for employers included the following:

- a. establishment of timely communication channels for the notification of suspected cases of COVID-19 before the competent health authorities;
- b. implementation of an established "notification route" that includes contact details of the health secretariats;
- c. attention to the guidelines and recommendations of labour risk insurance companies;
- d. provision of suitable PPE to minimize contagion; and
- e. training for workers on proper handwashing techniques and the maintenance of clean work surfaces.

In Circular 17, the Ministry of Labour identified three at-risk groups of workers. According to this classification, workers in the coffee value chain are included in the intermediate exposure group. This group includes those workers who may have had contact with or exposure to a confirmed or suspected case in a work environment, in which transmission from one person to

⁹ In June 2021, resolution 666 was replaced by resolution 777.

another may have occurred due to their proximity.

Circular 17 gave a fundamental role to the labour risk insurance companies, the advisory and consulting entities for employers, contractors and workers affiliated with the General System of Labour Risks, as established in Articles 35 and 80 of Decree 1295 and Article 11 of Law 1562 of 2012. Given the situation and in support of the actions to prevent occupational exposure to COVID-19, labour risk insurance companies were given the responsibility to implement the following actions, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection:

- I. Apply the protocols, procedures and guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.
- II. Carry out advisory and technical assistance actions for employers, contractors and workers on biological hazards and risks, especially COVID-19.
- III. Promote the self-care of workers in safe procedures, safe working environments and healthy habits, following the guidelines for the preparation and response to COVID-19.

Labour risk insurance companies must also establish and keep records of workers at risk of direct exposure to COVID-19 and those with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 as reported by employers. This circular does not mention any sanctions or penalties for non-compliance with these obligations.

Circular 17 also established workers' responsibilities for preventing exposure to and the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces. According to the circular, workers should attend training, access and properly use PPE, practice self-care and provide accurate, truthful and complete information on their state of health.

For workers in high-risk groups (that is, at a higher risk of developing serious illness from COVID-19), the Ministry of Health and Social Protection promoted specific provisions for workers over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing comorbidities through Circular 30

of 2020. This circular called upon employers and contractors to develop and implement strategies for monitoring the health of workers or contractors, identifying the over-60 population and those with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, lung disease, heart disease, kidney disease and others that can affect the immune system (for example, transplants and cancer). People presenting with pre-existing comorbidities are to be prioritized for remote working or for alternatives detailed in Circular 33 of 2020 issued by the Ministry of Labour. This circular established employment protection measures for mitigation of COVID-19, such as the possibility of modifying the working day or obtaining work leave that can be compensated later with additional hours, in both cases in an agreed manner between employers and workers.

The Colombian Government has listed the main regulations issued regarding COVID-19 on a website dedicated to COVID-19.¹⁰

Compliance and enforcement of the regulations and protocols

Enforcement of compliance with the coffee-sector COVID-19 protocol was delegated to the municipal or district secretary of health (within mayors' offices), without prejudice to the monitoring of compliance with the obligations of employers carried out by the Ministry of Labour.

As explained by coffee industry producers, company representatives and officials, on top of carrying out inspection and surveillance activities, the municipal or district secretary of health through their secretariats have offered support to the Departmental and Municipal Committees of Coffee Growers and Producers for the implementation of the measures and protocols.

In terms of monitoring compliance with labour regulations, during the pandemic labour inspectors have been limited to "virtual visits", which has reduced their capacity to adequately fulfil their roles. The Territorial Labour Directorates, through their labour inspectors, have remained focused on the follow-up and surveillance of personnel dismissal processes in companies in urban areas (commercialization, threshing and

¹⁰ <https://coronaviruscolombia.gov.co/Covid19/decretos.html>

export companies) as their offices did not have a sufficient budget to send staff to rural areas, and following up on workers' complaints, which reportedly increased considerably in 2020. The Territorial Labour Directorates also worked to promote the formalization of informal workers in urban centres, who were considered to be the most vulnerable in the pandemic.

Of all the coffee sector companies interviewed, only one exporter reported receiving a visit from a labour inspector in their office, in the department of Caldas. None of the coffee producers interviewed reported having received an in-person visit from a labour inspector since the beginning of the pandemic.

Integration of COVID-19 in coffee harvest plans in Antioquia and Caldas

In Antioquia and Caldas, in addition to the COVID-19 protocol for coffee farms, the Departmental Committees of Coffee Growers (FNC regional offices) disseminated and implemented their "harvest plans"¹¹ with an additional COVID-19 component: coordinating activities with the mayor's office, regional health authorities, the police and the army to implement controls for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The harvest plan was an integral strategy aimed at guaranteeing the safe harvesting of coffee for the two harvest seasons in 2020 (see figure 4). To assist coffee growers during the harvest to be productive while protecting the safety and health of workers and farmers, the FNC promoted the practice of "pass retention" (leaving the coffee beans a few days longer on the tree to shorten the harvest period) to avoid the congregation of workers in the coffee lots as well as the use of tools and equipment that reduce the demand for labour.

As part of the labour-hiring strategy, the creation of local employment exchanges in the municipalities was promoted to bring in people previously employed in other economic sectors who had been laid off due to lockdowns and other business closures. This not only guaranteed

Figure 4. Harvest plan strategies



the availability of personnel for coffee picking, it also prevented the massive circulation of workers between municipalities and helped the coffee sector to contribute to the reactivation of the coffee regions. In departments that required external labour, the compliance with the protocols was guaranteed, with assistance from the local authorities.

In the municipalities, the mayor's office in collaboration with the secretaries of health, social development and agriculture, provided support to the Coffee Growers' Committees so that the coffee harvest could be carried out without endangering the health of producers, pickers and the population in general. As part of the harvest plan, the mayor's office also established joint work tables through municipal decrees with the Departmental and Municipal Committees of Coffee Growers, to prepare the municipalities for the arrival of foreign coffee pickers at the beginning of the coffee harvest. The support also consisted of setting up checkpoints at the entrance to the municipalities to ensure the disinfection of vehicles, hand-washing, registration of new arrivals and temperature-taking. Other important support activities included the establishment of groups of officials

¹¹ The harvest plan is a strategy implemented annually in some coffee-growing regions, particularly those that require a high number of coffee pickers, to put in place security measures during the harvest. For 2020, this strategy was modified to include measures for the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19.

from the mayor's office to visit the farms and guide implementation of the protocols and the rapid integration of coffee pickers (those who had previously lost their jobs) into the health system.

Two other strategies were reportedly implemented in the municipalities of Antioquia (for details see Annex 2). The first was the creation of a platform or the registration of producers and coffee pickers to help identify the farms requiring external labour and the in-coming harvesters.

Following the guidelines of the harvest plan, pickers who did not register themselves on this platform could not be employed on the farms, as the idea was to ensure the traceability of this population in case of contagion. According to a representative of the Coffee Growers' Committee in Antioquia, in practice this strategy did not work as anticipated due to: (i) poor connectivity on the farms; (ii) the fact that pickers are usually reluctant to provide personal information; and (iii) producers worried about not being able to find the workers needed for coffee picking chose to hire unregistered pickers.

The second strategy in Antioquia consisted of hiring health monitors from the departmental government through a programme created by the governor's office known as "health watchers". The health watchers consisted of a team of 40 people including doctors, nurses and OSH professionals who visited farms, monitored the implementation of measures on farms (particularly in housing and eating areas), gave recommendations to improve gaps, checked the health of the harvesters and trained producers and coffee pickers. The farm managers interviewed reported having received visits from health watchers, who made recommendations to reinforce the OSH measures instituted on their farms as well as subsequent visits to monitor implementation of the recommendations. Some interviewees from large farms in charge of implementing the protocols said that the visits were very timely, since the health watchers identified shortcomings that needed to be addressed and made sure to follow up.

In the Antioquia and Caldas regions, isolation centres were also established to provide harvesters

not from those regions with a dedicated site for quarantine and recovery in case of a suspected or positive case. In Antioquia, isolation centres were set up in two municipalities in the southwest (Andes and Salgar), the largest coffee-growing area in the Antioquia region, each with a capacity for 65 people. These centres were run by the departmental government of Antioquia, which provided medical equipment, medical personnel (nursing assistants), PPE, disinfectants and other materials necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. As of December 2020, it was reported that these centres had not been used because no picker had arrived as a suspected or positive case.

In Chinchiná, one of the main coffee-producing municipalities in the Caldas region, medium and large coffee producers requested support from the municipal administration for the implementation of measures on their farms. Thus, the mayor's office made available 24-hour online and phone channels to provide guidance on how to put in place preventive measures and identify symptoms that any coffee worker might have presented.

An additional strategy applied in Caldas, unique to this region, was to quickly get pickers who arrived in the municipality to sign up to subsidized health services if they had not already done so. The objective of this strategy was to enable these workers to quickly access COVID-19 tests where infection was suspected, as well as hospitals or health centres in case of a positive diagnosis. This strategy only applied to Colombian coffee pickers, thus excluding migrant workers with no legal status in the country.

Information dissemination and capacity-building

One week after the detection of the first COVID-19 case in Colombia, the FNC launched the campaign "The health of EVERYONE is EVERYONE'S business,"¹² aimed at coffee-growing families and residents of coffee-growing areas with the objective of preventing the spread of the virus.

Educational materials were widely distributed, mainly to coffee producers (see figure 5).¹³ These

12 More details on the campaign can be found at: <https://federaciondecafeteros.org/wp/category/la-salud-de-todos-es-asunto-de-todos/>.

13 <https://federaciondecafeteros.org/wp/piezas-graficas-la-salud-de-todos-es-asunto-de-todos/>.

materials included recommendations for coffee pickers during the harvest period and for producers during the coffee-selling stage. It also included checklists of measures to be taken during the workday for accommodation maintenance and cleanliness, for workers entering the farm and for the cleaning and disinfection of common areas such as kitchens, showers and bathrooms.

While the FNC's face-to-face technical assistance was interrupted for several months (from March to August 2020), its Extension Service maintained contact with coffee growers through phone calls, WhatsApp messages, text messages and emails. With these tools, the organization managed 1.14 million virtual contacts with coffee growers as of September 2020.

Once on-site service resumed in September, the FNC's technicians verified the status of crops and implementation of the biosafety protocol on farms, while assisting producers who had not yet started applying the COVID-19 protocol.

With support from Vision Zero Fund, the FNC also broadcast a ten-part radio soap opera

with one programme in the series dedicated to measures to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 in workers' housing during the harvest season. Moreover, four radio spots were created that included two COVID-19 prevention spots – one on the use of face masks and physical distancing and another with recommendations from “Professor Yarumo”¹⁴ for preventing the spread of the virus. Other footage was broadcast with the participation of the national Government. The representative from the Ministry of Labour who was interviewed announced the creation of a booklet guide for hazard identification, videos and support material with an exclusive section on COVID-19.¹⁵

Workers interviewed from cooperatives, threshing plants and factories reported receiving support from labour risk insurance companies and health promoting enterprises around training and dissemination of information about the virus. The labour risk insurance companies conducted at least one virtual training for employers and workers and gave them access to consultation materials, manual guides, protocols

Figure 5. Examples of educational materials aimed at coffee growers.



14 “Profesor Yarumo” is a character represented by a technician from the FNC’s Extension Service, which, since 1985 has broadcast over the radio information in simple language on good agricultural practices in coffee production and information on programmes and projects implemented by the FNC.

15 This refers to two documents: (i) [A Methodology for Hazard Identification, Evaluation and Risk Assessment](#); and (ii) a [booklet with OSH guidance](#), including a section on COVID-19.

and podcasts, among others.¹⁶ Virtual training and dissemination of information by the labour risk insurance companies also included tips for managing psychosocial risks arising from the pandemic.

Support from multinational enterprises

For the last 15 years, the coffee supply chain in Colombia has adopted an approach based on sustainability, promoting compliance with requirements for certification from the primary stage and voluntary sustainability standards. These include requirements related to labour conditions and OSH. Multinational companies have joined these initiatives through the implementation of their own codes of conduct. These codes include requirements such as the use of PPE, emergency procedures, safe handling of agrochemicals, and worker training, among others.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, some of these multinational enterprises have played an active role in supporting producers and farm workers in complying with COVID-19 protocols. Coffee buyers and exporters through their sustainability programmes supported farmers by providing training and PPE as well as implementing programmes focused on the formalization of workers.

Support for preventive measures in the value chain along with assurances of coffee supply focused on three strategies. The first was not interrupting technical assistance, which continued to be provided virtually by representatives of global buyers in Colombia. The second was the execution of projects focused mainly on the promotion of safe coffee sale processes by delivering biosecurity kits to coffee growers at the purchasing points of cooperatives and also to private buyers. This served to protect the coffee supply from possible outbreaks of COVID-19 that could result in the closure of a collection point. These projects also included the delivery of seeds for planting food on farms in anticipation

of any household food security problems.

The third strategy consisted of monitoring the evolution of the pandemic in the coffee-buying regions. Some global companies used the databases of producers that participate in their programmes for monitoring purposes and others maintained constant communication both to keep track of the spread of the virus and the supply of coffee. According to one interviewee, producers' databases were built and managed by field technicians and regularly updated through online contact with the farmer. In addition to the information traditionally contained in these databases regarding farm production data, details were added on the composition of farmers' families and the hiring of workers, suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among household members or workers, and any impact observed on production.

3.2 Occupational safety and health measures taken at workplace level to prevent exposure to and transmission of COVID-19

Measures taken by agricultural input providers

Employers in coffee supply stores were quick to react to prevent exposure to COVID-19 in their workplaces. Workers in direct contact with customers and external personnel were provided with masks, goggles and gloves. Each unit had a sanitary space with a sink and drinking water, where hand soap, single-use paper towels and containers with disposal bags were available.

Acrylic screens were installed at some service points to separate workers from customers and fumigators and quaternary ammonium solution were purchased for surface disinfection in warehouses/stores. Thermometers were also purchased to conduct temperature checks on workers and customers.

¹⁶ SURA, a labour risk insurance company with a large presence in the coffee sector, has made available [this web page](#) with information for companies and individuals.

Warehouse workers reported that temperature checks were carried out three times a day, upon arrival at work and at the middle and end of the workday. A disinfection point with 70 per cent alcohol-based gel was installed in each warehouse for use by all customers and workers.

In the coffee supply stores, the decision was taken to sell biosecurity inputs for farms. Supplies sold included infrared thermometers, quaternary ammonium, hypochlorite and alcohol. These stores also sold reusable masks¹⁷ to avoid waste generation from the use of disposable masks and with a view to enabling producers to provide this type of mask to coffee pickers and reduce their costs.

Measures taken at the farming and primary processing levels

At the farm level, all the producers consulted stated that they were aware of the biosafety protocol developed by the FNC, although its implementation differed by region, farm size, number of workers, availability of resources and the producer's perception of transmission risk.

In small farms, it was reported that implementation was based on producers knowledge and understanding of the biosafety protocol and the extent to which economic resources permitted. Some companies such as cooperatives and exporters supported small- and medium-sized producers with the supply of PPE and disinfectant. In medium-sized and large farms, there was generally a professional in charge of OSH management who supported the entire implementation process to ensure compliance with the measures. It was reported that large farms participating in the study all had an OSH management system in place, which was not the case for small and medium farms that reported not conducting risk assessments.

With smaller farms employing mostly family and local labour, they did not provide lodgings or transportation to their workers and therefore did not have to implement the specific

measures in the protocol regarding these services. In terms of other preventive measures, according to the interviews, some small farms employing workers focused on the use of masks and cleaning and disinfection activities such as promotion of frequent handwashing through posters on the walls of the house and coffee mill, use of alcohol and disinfectant before and after work and before each meal, disinfection of shoes and common farm areas such as the producer's house or the coffee mill. Conversely, measures reported in small farms employing only family members consisted of self-protection in the presence of outsiders coming to the farms (wearing masks).

On small farms that provide food to workers, it was reported that plates and cooking utensils were set aside exclusively for use by workers to prevent any mixing with those used by the household. In some large farms, acrylic displays were set up at tables and meal shifts were organized to prevent large gatherings of pickers.

On medium and large farms, which depend mainly on external labour, measures such as the use of face masks (not all farms provided PPE to workers), handwashing and disinfection of harvesting equipment and physical distancing while picking coffee (one worker per coffee plot), particularly at the time of coffee weighing, were promoted. Measures were also taken to protect workers provided with housing, although differences were found between regions. According to interviewees, coffee producers in Antioquia and Caldas were strict in the implementation of measures regarding workers' accommodations. In these two regions, in addition to carrying out disinfection, producers adapted lodgings, reduced the number of occupants per space by 50 to 70 per cent, made separators with materials such as tow (a coarse fibre) and plastic, set up spaces to isolate workers with symptoms, installed handwashing devices in eating areas, distributed gel and masks to workers, isolated food preparation areas with acrylic sheeting and carried out temperature checks every morning. In Nariño, while large coffee producers reported

17 According to the Ministry of Health, the design, materials and manufacturing methods of the masks are the responsibility of the product manufacturer in compliance with criteria, such as bacterial filtration efficiency, breathability, splash resistance and flammability, under the guidelines of the technical standard END 150:2020. The standard does not indicate the material that must be used in the masks for use in environments other than the health sector, but states that the materials must not cause skin problems and their odour must not cause discomfort to the workers.

that they separated the beds in workers' accommodations, they did not reduce the number of people housed, nor did they install elements such as acrylic sheeting, tow or sacks to reinforce isolation.

Farms of all sizes reported that enforcing compliance with the use of face masks and physical distancing in the coffee lots was difficult (see section 6 for more details).

In terms of communicating with and informing workers about OSH measures, small farms did not provide any training to workers while medium farms held only a few training sessions and had little communication with workers about such measures, according to interviews with coffee growers, agricultural workers and farm managers. Large farms communicated regularly with workers through meetings or by putting up posters on the use of masks, physical distancing, handwashing on farms and so forth, but did not implement worker training plans.

At farm level, the OSH measures applied to all categories of workers, equally covering permanent and temporary workers. It was reported that no special arrangements were made for workers in high-risk groups, such as older workers or those with pre-existing health conditions. As an official from a mayor's office in Caldas (institutional and market support functions) noted:

The arrangements and measures taken covered all workers equally. It must be noted that the implementation of measures at the municipal level was based on guidelines at the national level, which did not contemplate these types of arrangements. In fact, it can be said that they were very much aimed at urban areas and not rural areas. For example, for workers with pre-existing conditions, continued teleworking was envisaged, while for workers in rural areas, this did not apply. Additionally, farm lodgings, for example, face limitations in making these types of arrangements.

Other risks arising from the pandemic (such as ergonomic and psychosocial) were not considered in the development and implementation of OSH measures in farms, according to research participants. Coffee farmers seemed not to have been aware of any psychological risks to themselves or the farm workers. From their perspective, the

workers continued as normal and did not express any feelings of stress or anxiety. Thus coffee farmers were of the opinion that farm workers were not affected. However, from the perspective of other actors in the chain, farmers and workers on farms were affected. When people close to them became infected and even died, they felt stressed and anxious.

Measures taken at the commercialization, threshing and exporting levels

Companies in the commercialization, threshing and exporting stages of the coffee chain have put in place OSH management systems as well as bipartite OSH committees through which they have implemented government-mandated measures for all types of workers.

Through these committees, workers were instructed in the identification of symptoms and the procedures to follow in the event of suspected COVID-19 cases. The instruction covered all categories of workers –permanent and temporary – who were kept informed through electronic and print media in their workplaces.

Workers reported that they had access to information on prevention measures and also mentioned the creation of isolation zones where suspected cases would be quarantined to await further word from the health authorities.

Workers in administrative and management positions in cooperatives, threshing factories and export companies had to telework while those in production areas such as quality analysts, operators and drivers, continued working in-person while observing OSH measures such as physical distancing, disinfection, temperature checks and the use of PPE.

Risk assessments in workplaces were carried out with labour risk insurance companies to identify workers at risk due to health conditions. All those deemed to be high risk were allowed to work from home, while those considered to be low risk and needed at their workplaces were able to go to work, though adhering to biosafety measures. Other measures taken at these stages of the supply chain included modifying schedules to prevent workers from using public transport as much as possible.

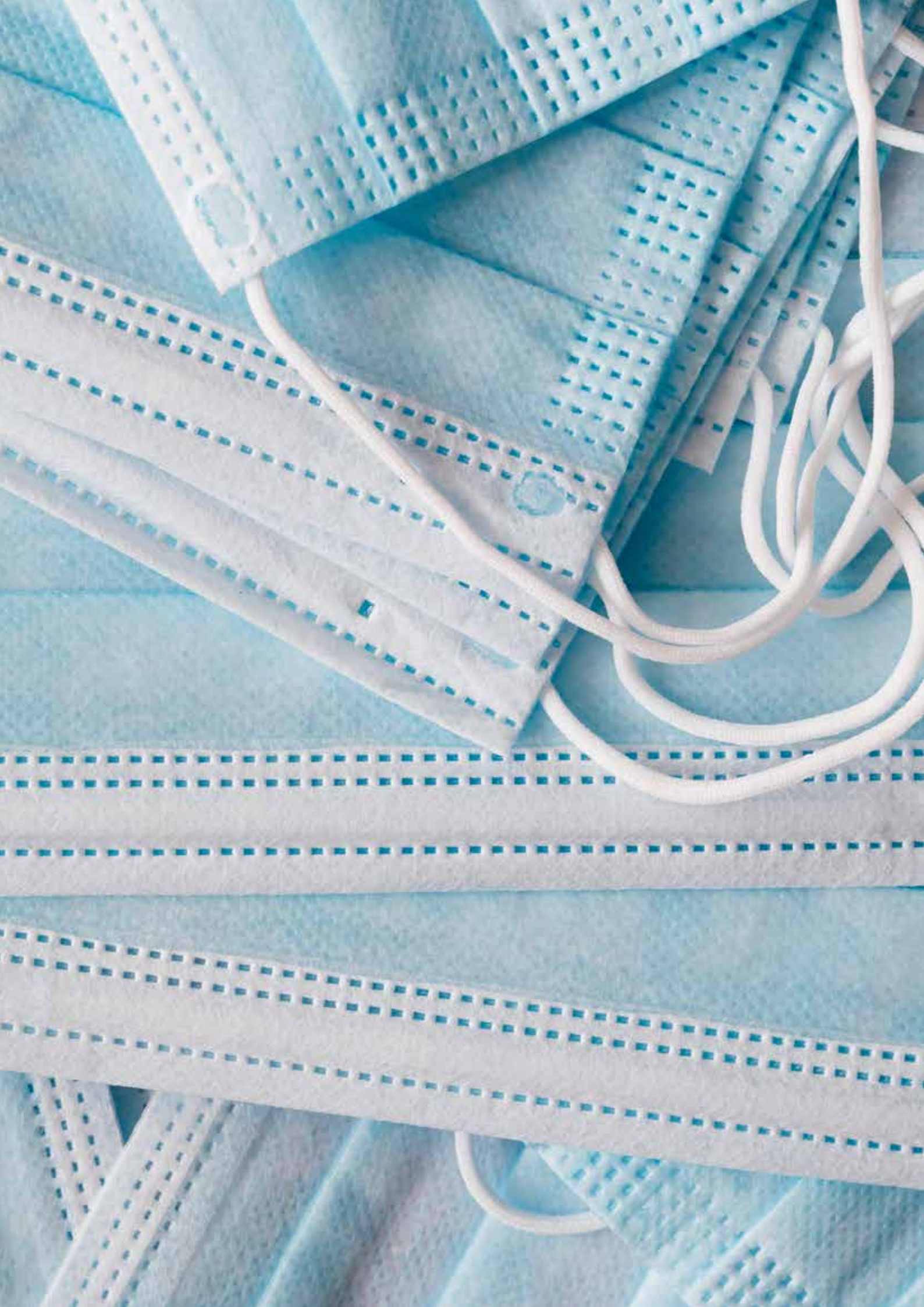
Shifts were also adjusted in freeze-dried coffee factories (increasing from five to eight hours to 18-hour shifts) to prevent crowding. Attempts were also made to address other risks such as stress and anxiety, particularly for those working from home through the promotion of activities by the Coffee Growers' Committees and factories to monitor mental health.

In cooperatives, threshing plants, factories and export companies, some workers interviewed

reported experiencing feelings of stress and anxiety. They also said that these were adequately addressed by their employers with the support of the labour risk insurance companies. Others reported that the occupational health teams included psychologists tasked with addressing these risks through, for example, videos, phone calls, chats and video calls. Workers also underwent constant check-ups to determine their emotional, psychological and physical states.







4. COVID-19: Effects on workers and businesses in the coffee global supply chain

4.1 General effects on workers

Overall, within the coffee supply chain in Colombia, the number of industry jobs as well as salaries and benefits were reported to have remained at pre-COVID-19 levels. However, during the coffee-picking seasons in 2020, coffee growers and farm workers reported a decrease in the flow of the usual number of itinerant pickers to coffee-harvesting areas. Labour shortage difficulties arising from the pandemic were partly due to coffee pickers' fears about travelling to other regions as they normally did and also to the strict restrictions on mobility in the south of the country where a large part of the temporary workers come from. Additionally, many coffee growers were reluctant to take on workers from other regions of the country.

To address the labour-shortage problem, workers from other industries who had been laid off because of business closures were hired to work during the coffee harvest season – affording many of them a way to earn income. Such was the case in several municipalities of Antioquia.

In the focus regions of this study, workers from Nariño were particularly affected since the main harvest in the south of the country

coincided with the beginning of the application of drastic health measures that prevented the free movement of people.

The economic impact on these workers was softened to some extent by government support. However, it is likely that many workers were unable to claim government assistance. For example, Venezuelan migrants who work as coffee pickers but have no official permit to stay in Colombia were much less likely to have access to this type of assistance.¹⁸

Temporary workers, in particular harvesters, were found to be the most vulnerable in the coffee supply chain in Colombia during the pandemic because of their limited access to social security and health services. A recent study by Vision Zero Fund and CRECE has shown that seasonal workers engaged in harvesting and other crop tasks are not covered by the social security system because of the temporary nature of their work and unstable income (ILO 2020b).

4.2 General effects on businesses

While some normal operations in Colombia were affected by COVID-19 lockdowns imposed to contain transmission of the virus, the pandemic had less impact than expected, according to

¹⁸ The Colombian Government launched the “Ingreso Solidario” programme in April 2020 in the context of the economic emergency caused by the pandemic. This is a monthly subsidy of 160,000 Colombian pesos (around US\$44) aimed at poor households that do not benefit from other social programmes. Thus far, there is no data available on the coverage achieved against the target set of three million households.

different actors in the coffee chain who were interviewed. In general terms, the pandemic has not had a major effect on coffee production or the continuity of the coffee business.

According to the FNC, a total of 13.9 million bags were produced in Colombia in 2020, for a value of 9 billion Colombian pesos, the highest in 20 years. The high average differential of 44.1 cents per pound paid by the market for Colombian coffee and the high output (the sixth consecutive year with output above 13 million bags) contributed to this landmark figure. The increase in the price for Colombian coffee was a key factor.

According to a report from the United States Department of Agriculture, in May 2020:

Since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Colombia, local prices have jumped to high historical levels. In March 2020, local prices increased by 25.7 percent compared to the previous month, and by 65.5 percent compared to March, 2019. This increase is motivated by higher international prices driven by stockpiling among major players that anticipate supply disruptions, and the over 20 percent Colombian peso depreciation against the U.S. dollar. This increase was reported to be due in part to coffee buyers' fear of a shortage of the coffee stock in the international market.

Conversely, according to the FNC, in 2020, Colombian coffee exports fell 8 per cent to 12.5 million 60-kg bags of green coffee from 13.7 million bags exported in 2019.

General effects on coffee farms

Coffee farming was not severely affected by the pandemic although some concerns and challenges were reported, for example, regarding labour availability, particularly during harvest peaks, compared with the previous year. However, the shortage was mitigated to some extent by workers from other sectors, as mentioned.

In small farms, producers themselves picked the coffee as they normally do, with the help of neighbours and people from nearby areas.

Since this is the case for most coffee farms in Colombia, they were not so affected by labour shortages.

Some coffee quality problems¹⁹ were also reported because, in some instances, coffee was harvested later than it should have been due to initial fears of allowing workers to enter the farms. In some apparently exceptional cases, coffee growers preferred to lose their crop (by not picking the beans) rather than allowing in external workers.

Additionally, the prices of some inputs increased as a consequence of the pandemic. According to suppliers of inputs, there were shortages of some items which caused prices to rise since most of the inputs and a good part of the agricultural machinery are imported.

Although coffee prices were high, some producers in Nariño stated that they were not able to sell their coffee at the price corresponding to their specialty coffee profile because their buyers had difficulties in exporting it. Producers, farm workers and local authorities insisted that there was "no crisis" in the coffee-growing areas relative to COVID-19 cases. The highest rates of contagion were concentrated in urban centres. With their lower population densities, rural areas provided more natural distance and space, which felt more protective. As the Secretary of Health in Chinchiná, Caldas, reported:

Throughout the health emergency, the rural area has not been affected. Ninety-eight per cent of the cases [out of all COVID-19 cases reported in the municipality] have occurred in urban areas. In rural areas, no more than 10 or 20 cases out of the 2,300 cases that we have to date in the municipality, have occurred.

However, this might be a case of underreporting. The coffee growers interviewed said that there were no confirmed COVID-19 cases on their farms, only cases of flu-like symptoms that were not reported. People with mild symptoms were most likely isolated "behind closed doors" and not flagged as potentially having the virus. Thus, authorities believe that the number of COVID-19

¹⁹ When the grain is left longer on the tree, it overripens, affecting its attributes as it generates cup problems such as ferment or vinegar. These defects are then reflected in the lower price producers receive for their product.

cases reported may have been an underestimate,²⁰ partly explained by worries among some coffee growers that their farms could be closed as a possible source of contagion. It was also said that workers were not prone to

reporting any symptoms due to a fear of losing their jobs and income. For findings on the perceived impact of OSH measures on workers and businesses in the Colombia coffee global supply chain, see section 8.

Figure 6. Qualitative impacts on businesses

IMPACTS ON BUSINESS (FARMS)			
Impacts	INTERVIEWEE		
	Small-scale producer	Medium-scale product	Large-scale producer
Reduction in available labor	●	●	●
Increased costs to implement OSH measures	●	●	●
Increase in the cost of inputs	●	●	●
Production on reduction	●	●	●
It was not possible to harvest the entire crop	●	●	●
Incidence of COVID-19	●	●	●
Interruption in inputs supply	●	●	●

Impact intensity: ● Low ● Medium ● High

General effects at other stages in the coffee supply chain

Study interviewees reported that the reduced frequency of rural public transport made the delivery of coffee difficult, especially for small producers, although this did not prevent final delivery of the crop to the cooperatives. Coffee sales by producers were not interrupted during the health emergency. The purchasing points of cooperatives remained open, however, they were subject to restrictions in terms of the number of the people permitted in. Furthermore, in some cases they were open

for only half a day or on specific days of the week. Research participants pointed out that an unexpected impact for exporters of freeze-dried coffee was an increase in exports thanks to the higher consumption of coffee, especially in Asian and European countries. This may have been because strict confinement led people to consume more coffee at home. Furthermore, home working conditions led many people to drink soluble coffee, which requires less preparation time.

²⁰ The probable underreporting of COVID-19 cases during the harvest was referenced by the national press. See <https://noticias.caracoltv.com/antioquia/recolectores-de-cafe-en-antioquia-estarian-negando-sintomas-covid-para-no-ser-aislados>.

In a sectorial dialogue²¹ that took place in May 2020, a representative from an exporters' association reported that the coffee threshing industry continued to operate without any problems, enabling the purchasing process to be maintained, although the deployment of vehicles and trucks to ports for shipment faced some problems related to the effects of lockdowns on the suspension of services such as compensating load, security measures and a lack of repairing and maintenance services.

According to a United States Department of Agriculture report from May 2020: "The supply chain has also been affected by the lockdown restrictions on travelling and cargo transportation. Suppliers, traders and intermediaries have faced delays in delivering and collecting coffee to and from the distribution centres or cooperatives, and limited schedules to access banks and other institutions have slowed down coffee operations" (USDA 2020).

21 Available at: <https://www.redadelco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Notas-meeting-caf%C3%A9-.pdf>





5. Drivers for occupational safety and health measures to prevent exposure to COVID-19 in workplaces

Existing institutional arrangements in the coffee sector which led to the rapid and coordinated institutional response at the national, regional and local levels was found to be a key driver for the development and adoption of OSH measures to prevent exposure to COVID-19 in workplaces.

In addition to government requirements, coffee producers, organizations and companies in the coffee chain reported being driven by the desire to protect lives as well as ensure productivity as lockdowns and business closures could affect the coffee harvest that was about to begin.

The existence of OSH management systems in cooperatives, threshing factories and exporting

companies and in some large farms was also reported as a key driver in implementing COVID-19 OSH measures and determining their effectiveness. Study participants said that OSH management systems enabled a rapid response, taking into account government measures but also the particularities of each company.

Furthermore, they reported receiving sufficient information about the risks associated with COVID-19 through the FNC, labour risk insurance companies and health promoting enterprises, which they were able to quickly incorporate thanks to their OSH management systems.



6. Shortcomings and constraints in developing and adopting occupational safety and health measures

6.1 Access to health services, occupational safety and health services and information in rural areas

Coffee workers faced some challenges in terms of access to health services in case of infection and to occupational health services. Although the General System of Social Security in Health (SGSSS) should theoretically cover all types of workers and economic sectors, because of the high degree of labour informality in the primary stage of the coffee supply chain, many farmers and temporary rural workers are disconnected from the system. They are rarely affiliated to the labour risk insurance companies and health promoting enterprises, and, compared to other tiers of the supply chain, they did not benefit from services provided by social security institutions during the pandemic.

In the absence of affiliation to ARLs and EPSs, coffee workers and farmers can access health services through a Government-subsidized programme (SISBEN). However, not all farmers and workers are signed up to this programme. Without social protection and health services coverage, these workers and farmers are

particularly vulnerable. This is particularly the case for migrant workers without permits who cannot access this programme or any other social protection scheme. In Colombia, Venezuelan migrant workers are often hired in the coffee sector, especially during the harvest season as pickers. According to data from Migration Colombia, there are almost 1.9 million Venezuelans in the country, of whom 680,000 already have the Special Permit of Permanence – PEP.

On the other hand, many coffee growers joined social networks or virtual groups for the very first time, while others made more use of social media platforms, through which they were able to access technical and social support. For their part, buyers and other organizations in the coffee supply chain realized that part of their support to coffee growers could be provided without having to physically travel to the farms. Consequently, virtual platforms are becoming a more common way for producers to interact with buyers and other entities that serve them.

Additionally, while many coffee growers had access to technical assistance from the FNC via virtual channels, one medium-size farmer reported challenges with accessing online training because of limited connectivity.

Coffee growers in Nariño, where smallholdings predominate, seem to have been particularly affected by the interruption of the FNC's in-person technical assistance. In the words of one Extension Service Leader in Nariño:

They are leaving aside ten districts where coffee growers are requesting the presence of the Federation. The Federation is one of the only entities that is present in many rural areas. There are other institutions that go for a while, do their project and leave, but the Federation has been present for many years and when the extension service technician is not there they feel alone in their work.

6.2 Occupational safety and health management systems

Differences regarding OSH management were found between farms and companies at other stages of the coffee supply chain. More specifically, in farms, gaps were identified in risk assessments and in compliance with OSH measures (such as wearing masks and physical distancing).

Arrangements for special categories of workers: Compared to other tiers of the supply chain, at the farm and primary processing level, no measures were taken to identify and make arrangements for workers deemed to be part of high-risk groups, such as older workers and those with pre-existing health conditions.

Other risks arising from the pandemic: Other risks such as psychosocial risks were not factored into the development and implementation of OSH measures in farms. Compared to other tiers of the supply chain, no arrangements were made to identify and manage these risks.

Consultations with workers and workers' organizations: in interviews, no mention was made of any consultation with workers and workers' organizations for the development and implementation of OSH measures for coffee farms. On the other hand, some respondents stressed the importance of good working relations between employers and workers for effective crisis management. Such insights can be helpful to improve OSH management systems and social dialogue and can lead to better overall working conditions.

Compliance with OSH measures: Shortcomings were noted regarding the effective implementation of OSH preventive measures on farms, regardless of farm size. Although workers reported being motivated to adopt OSH measures in order to protect their own health and that of their families and colleagues, it appeared that some workers were reluctant to use masks and did not always maintain physical distancing. While producers noted that attempts were made to ensure compliance with the use of masks and physical distancing in the coffee lots, difficulties arose as workers largely overlooked such protocols to the point that some workers preferred to leave and look for another farm rather than comply with requirements. One farm suspended the provision of masks because it could not get workers to wear them.

Other reports indicated that although workers acknowledged that it was important to wear masks, they found it difficult to work with them. Physical distancing was also difficult to maintain in small lots. It was not feasible in practice because in seizing opportunities to pick more coffee and improve their income, workers tended to choose plot areas with the most grains, as they would normally do.

Long-term emergency preparedness and response plans: No long-term emergency preparedness and response plans were developed. Interviewees mentioned using existing protocols as the pandemic continues. Some producers and workers pointed out that the experience they have accumulated will help to improve their preparedness to face future crisis situations. For example, effective management of the harvest periods and the different operations involved in the coffee supply chain in 2020 despite the challenges caused by the pandemic provide some evidence of the capacity to manage future emergency events.

There are also no specific long-term emergency response plans for the coffee sector from the Government. Some research participants mentioned that the FNC is likely to be working on how to integrate the lessons learned into a consolidated management plan to face crisis situations such as the one currently being experienced, but no definitive responses were provided.

At the farm level, participants said that it was difficult to think about such plans in an atmosphere of uncertainty but expressed hope that the COVID-19 vaccination strategy would allow them to continue their work without the anxiety they have experienced in recent months.

Stakeholders in other stages of the chain reported that they were awaiting guidelines from the Government on new measures for the future.

In contrast, the greater importance placed on OSH issues since the beginning of the pandemic presents opportunities for OSH improvements. One point of purchase employer reported that, in terms of OSH:

"All companies must begin to apply risk analysis and develop broader committees and knowledge of health and safety at work. [OSH] has now become one of the most important areas because it covers all health risks at work."

Some producers expressed their overall concern regarding other complex challenges affecting coffee production in Colombia apart from the pandemic. These include challenges relating to climate change, generational change and price instability, which need to be addressed as part of any future vision for coffee-growing in Colombia.



7. Effects of COVID-19 on sustainable sourcing policies of multinational enterprises

The COVID-19 pandemic did not affect supplies of Colombian coffee to multinational companies in the country. The organization of the supply chain in the regions and the joint work of the Coffee Growers' Committees, multinational enterprises, certification companies and the Coffee Growers' Cooperatives guaranteed the supply of coffee while preventing producers from income loss. Some interviewees cited the case of coffee purchases in other countries such as Peru, where there were serious supply problems and producers were harmed as a result.

Multinational companies in Colombia reportedly have no plans to modify their supply policies in terms of OSH standards, which they perceive to be very robust and which in some cases cover all stages in the supply chain: farms, cooperatives, threshing machines and wet and dry mills. Furthermore, these standards cover each of the areas where they can protect workers and coffee growers.

One of the lessons learned from the pandemic is that it is possible to rely much more on virtual communication as regards relationships with suppliers and coffee growers. Consequently, the plans of buyers include the creation of new content for training purposes and improvement in information channels through the consolidation of producer networks. As one participant from a multinational company said:

We have spent years in Colombia telling people what we do, what they have to do on their farms, and we have spent two harvests in the middle of a pandemic in which we have not seen any volume or quality effects that merit saying that we have to be day after day on the farms telling them what they have to do. People already know. There is a different perception. We have to work with them on what is really needed, not going from meeting to meeting when we already know what to do.



8. Effects of COVID-19 occupational safety and health measures: Perceptions of participants

8.1 Effects of occupational safety and health measures on workers

Both the employers and workers interviewed for this case study perceived that the measures adopted to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces have been effective.

While there is no official data on the number of COVID-19 cases on coffee farms, the heads of the Departmental Committees of Coffee Growers of the three regions reported extremely low levels of infection during both coffee harvests in relation to what was expected. The isolation centres that were set up in Antioquia and Caldas were practically unused. According to local authorities, in some farms there were cases of COVID-19 that were cared for in a timely way and without major complications. As previously explained, there is likely to be some underreporting of cases due to the fear of income loss, issues with the availability of tests (especially during the first months of the pandemic) and a lack of access to health services.

Rural workers reported feeling safe in their workplaces due to the OSH measures implemented and the “natural” distancing afforded by the farms, which acted as a shield against possible outbreaks. In contrast, older workers in rural areas felt at increased risk of contracting the virus as the pandemic spread. They expressed concern about workers who considered COVID-19 as a “distant threat” and remained complacent about complying with OSH measures.

Workers in medium and large farms highlighted the availability of equipment provided by employers, such as masks, antibacterial gels, thermometers and even oximeters. They also referred to physical distancing measures such as the assignment of coffee plots per worker during the harvesting period as well as the organization of workers' accommodations.

Workers in urban areas in other stages of the coffee supply chain indicated that they felt safe in their workplaces thanks to the OSH measures in place. They reported that, in addition to providing the necessary protective equipment, their companies implemented and monitored preventive measures with the assistance of labour risk insurance companies. A worker at a threshing plant noted that there were only two COVID-19 cases out of 48 people working in his unit.

The study participants perceived that, along with the application of OSH measures in farms and other workplaces, measures promoted by the Government to prevent crowding, such as lockdowns and curfews, contributed to preventing the spread of the virus.

On the other hand, some workers reported an increase in their workload linked to the implementation of preventive OSH measures. Rural workers such as farm administrators said the amount of work at harvest time increased because of OSH measures such as the taking and recording of temperatures and instructing pickers on preventive measures. In some large farms the harvest was also more intensive because the usual

number of coffee pickers were not available: "Almost no coffee was lost, but there were not enough people at the time when it was needed. There are people who did not work, out of fear," noted a worker at a large farm in Caldas.

Most workers in urban areas in other tiers of the supply chain with administrative functions continued to telework. Union members raised concerns about the intensity of teleworking, with the possible tendency to work beyond normal working hours. However, none of the workers consulted in these tiers of the supply chain reported feeling overworked by the changes in schedules or from working from home. Nevertheless, this issue remains to be explored in greater depth, as does the return to work under the "new normal" conditions.

8.2 Effects of occupational safety and health measures on businesses

Initially, coffee growers feared that the presence of COVID-19 in Colombia would cause loss of the harvest. As time passed and the FNC's protocol was disseminated, they realized that coffee harvesting could proceed with OSH measures in place and with local workers, including people from other industries affected by business closures.

As employers and coffee farmers reported, the OSH measures adopted helped their companies/farms to remain afloat when economic activity came to a halt in Colombia in the first months of the crisis.

Personnel working in cooperatives, threshing plants and export companies perceived that the measures adopted reduced the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in their workplaces and that without such measures many people might have been infected.

Despite the difficulties expressed by some farm owners and managers in getting coffee pickers to comply with measures such as mask wearing and physical distancing, they felt that having a COVID-19 protocol that was widely shared and communicated in simple language was a key factor in the continuity of their businesses without any major setbacks.

Conversely, medium and large producers reportedly faced higher expenses because of the OSH measures they had to implement. Medium (5 to 10 hectares planted in coffee) and large farms (more than 10 hectares), which hire the largest number of coffee pickers, generally provide temporary workers with accommodation during the harvest season. Between 20 and 180 workers were employed during the harvest on the farms that were part of this study. The need to adapt housing for these workers generated extra costs for the producers, in some instances – depending on crop area – amounting to 50 million Colombian pesos (around US\$14,000). The investment cost of complying with prevention provisions ranged from 1 million to 2 million Colombian pesos per hectare (representing up to 5 per cent of the production cost per hectare).

Other expenses assumed by large producers included meals for workers at weekends as an incentive to prevent them from coming and going and becoming a source of contagion on the farm. Additionally, OSH measures such as the provision of PPE and disinfection supplies, in some cases the payment of a person to disinfect farm areas (such as living quarters and dining rooms) as well as temperature checks, also contributed to increased expenses. On a different scale, small producers also reported an increase in expenses due to the OSH measures they had to take.

Nevertheless, employers at all levels of the supply chain, including farmers, reported that OSH measures contributed to ensuring business continuity.





9. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has shocked global supply chains and disrupted the lives of millions of workers across all sectors. This study examined the measures developed and implemented in the coffee global supply chain in Colombia to prevent exposure to COVID-19 in workplaces at all levels of the chain. The research findings have generated evidence on the drivers, constraints and gaps for the development and adoption of measures to ensure a safer and healthier supply chain and opportunities for OSH improvements.

The Colombian coffee sector responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in an effective and timely manner that allowed for the protection of workers and business continuity. Coffee sector institutional arrangements proved very important in mobilizing an effective response based on the reports of those who participated in the study. The research found a positive case of

collaboration between various institutions and has shown how such arrangements can be effective in crisis situations.

Participants in the study perceived that the measures to support workplaces and the proactive approach adopted as well as OSH measures within workplaces were effective in protecting workers' safety and health and enabling business continuity in the coffee global supply chain in Colombia.

The research also pointed to areas for improvement such as workplace OSH management and risk assessments in coffee farms, access for temporary workers and farmers to occupational health services and social protection, and the development of long-term measures to prepare for and respond to emergencies at national and workplace level.

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Annex



Annex I

List of stakeholders interviewed in the different stages of the supply chain and regions

Links of the coffee value chain	Type of stakeholder	Region / No. persons interviewed				Total
		Antioquia	Caldas	Nariño	Bogota	
Agricultural inputs	Agricultural inputs store	1	1			2
Primary production	Small-scale producer (certified)		1	2		3
	Small-scale producer (conventional)	1	1	2		4
	Medium-scale producer (certified)	1	1			2
	Medium-scale producer (conventional)	1	1	1		3
	Large-scale producer (certified)	2	1	1		4
	Large-scale producer (conventional)	1	1	1		3
	Temporary workers or day labourers	2	3	3		8
	Permanent workers	1	1	1		3
Transportation, processing and transformation	Threshing facilities		1	1		2
	Threshing facilities' workers	1	1			2
	Coffee points of purchase workers	3	2	1		6
	Exporter of freeze-dried coffee		1			1
Commercialization	Cooperatives of coffee growers	1	1	1		3
	Workers of the cooperatives	2	1	1		4
	Private buyers		1			1
Exporters	Expocafé (national public exporter)				1	1
	Private exporters		1		1	2
Voluntary sustainability standards	Global buyer A				1	1
	Global buyer B				1	1
Workers' organizations	Central Unitary Workers Union CUT				1	1
Institutional and market supporting functions	FNC - Technical management				1	1
	FNC - Social management				1	1
	FNC - Communications department				1	1
	FNC - Regional Committees of Coffee Growers	1	1	4		6
	FNC - Isolation centres for coffee pickers		1			1
	Ministry of Health/Municipal Secretary of Health		1			1
	Ministry of Labour			1	1	2
	Ministry of Agriculture/Municipal Secretary of Agriculture	1				1
	ONG Solidaridad Network			1		1
Total		19	23	21	9	72

Annex II

A successful case of collaboration to address COVID-19 in Concordia, Antioquia

While populations in urban areas of the municipality were already beginning to take measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, inhabitants in rural areas still saw the threat from COVID-19 as very distant:

In urban centres you saw people taking care of themselves, applying the protocol, implementing new models of socializing, the use of masks, sanitizers and washing. But in rural areas, you saw farmers in the soccer field playing, talking without masks, sharing drinks...They sat down to eat normally. That is to say, in the countryside nothing was happening. (Cooperative official, Antioquia.)

At the beginning of the pandemic, local authorities were not clear about how this emergency would be managed, considering the vulnerability of the rural sector and the limited technical capacities, resources and number of health professionals in the municipalities. However, the community reacted immediately by creating local committees to address the pandemic. Weekly meetings were held with coffee growers to instruct them on the OSH measures developed by the FNC and the possibility that the producers would have to implement these measures. The mayor's office participated in weekly meetings with the FNC office in Bogotá and the Coffee Growers' Cooperative.

Coffee growers and the committees of coffee growers requested help from the financial sector to implement the new measures in order to help producers avoid displacement as much as possible. The health sector was called on to determine the needs of hospitals in terms of available beds, and this information was relayed to the governor's office as part of efforts to strengthen the municipal hospital system and provide adequate isolation centres for coffee pickers. The community also mobilized to provide financial support and food for people whose incomes

were affected by the economic shutdown, a strategy called Concordia Solidaria.

At the farm level and with the help of the FNC, biosafety protocols were rolled out for the arrival of workers for the first harvest in the department, which runs from March to May. Most of the harvesters were workers from urban areas, who were laid off due to business closures. The first step in the harvest plan involved setting up work tables. Urban transport companies were enlisted to transport coffee pickers to a single site in the municipality. Upon arrival, their temperatures were taken and vital signs checked. The second step involved registration of workers through a platform created by the Government called Cosecha Segura (Safe Harvest). Harvesters were then given face masks, gel and information about how to prevent COVID-19 infection.

All those interviewed from the municipality hailed the case of Concordia as a success story in terms of managing the challenges arising from the pandemic. They attribute the success to the joint efforts of the community, the municipal administration and the coffee institutions. As one of the study interviewees stated:

The way in which they faced this challenge was due to the understanding and integration of the community, to the leadership that emerged at the time when it was needed, to the willingness and openness of both public and private institutions to work hand in hand, and to the fact that fortunately they had some resources available as an institution. The farmers understood the situation and were able to implement the programme without major setbacks and in the best possible way, since they had experience of how to manage it and where to get seeds. And they believe that it gave them an exceptionally good result. (Cooperative of Coffee Growers, Salgar, Antioquia.)

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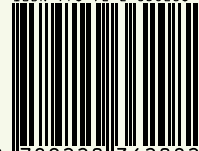


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