CONGO RISING

D.R. Congo Apr–Jul 2016

Farmers in the Democratic Republic of Congo are rebuilding.

Despite decades of intense political turmoil and violence which are still a present reality for many, there is reason to hope.

Led by the vision of our Quality Manager Beth Ann Caspersen, Equal Exchange has been building a relationship with the SOPACDI farmer co-op in Kivu for over 5 years. SOPACDI is changing the landscape, demonstrating that coffee farming is a viable livelihood in the D.R.C. again. This organization is also changing the cultural landscape and is explicitly supporting women members.

For every pound of coffee sold, they put 2 cents into a fund for women's groups. Now several years into exercising these funds, the women have chosen to purchase goats. Goats are a smart investment choice for a variety of reasons: they're hearty and able to survive in difficult conditions; their milk and meat provide sustenance for member families and can be sold for income; they reproduce quickly and provide value for years.

These women made an entrepreneurial plan: they bought 1 goat for every 3 women. By starting with shared goats, the goats will breed and within one year, each woman should have her own goat. By working together and thinking with longer-term success in mind, they are building resources that they have chosen to prioritize.

Beth Ann reflected, "I wondered what the impetus has been for increased inclusion of women in a country that has historically been male dominated and fraught with sexual violence. What has changed?" The answer was essentially "the co-op." They have played a key role in including women since 2011.

SOPACDI is proof that coffee co-operatives are in fact business organizations, and yet are also so much more.

CO-OP
SOPACDI

ORIGIN
Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

VARIETAL
Bourbon, Jamaica Blue Mountain

ELEVATION
1460+ MASL

ROAST
Light Medium

PROFILE
A sweet coffee with berry notes and aromas of cocoa and lemon zest.

Above: Women of SOPACDI's Bishange Primary Society with their goats from this program.

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