

# HARVEST REPORT COLOMBIA 2021



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# Labour shortages, prolonged crops and the highest internal prices in recent history

A couple of hours drive South of Bucaramanga, the capital of Santander is Aratoca, a quiet little town organized around a church. When we first visited the region in 2019, we reached Aratoca by bus at night and were led to the central square by friendly locals, who also kept us from accidentally stepping on a snake. In 2020, these locals were hit hard by COVID, and many were made redundant on their jobs. It's the case of **Ciro**, who used to work as a security guard at the beautiful Chicamocha National Park nearby. Now, **Ciro** can be spotted at the entrance of Hacienda Cafetera La Pradera, checking the temperature of everyone coming in.

Unlike in previous years, La Pradera has been employing a large number of local people this season. All across Colombia, medium to large farms rely heavily on seasonal workers from other parts of the country to pick cherries and do maintenance work. Each farmer has their own story of how COVID turned their lives upside down (it's been widely reported [here](#) and [here](#)) since the government introduced a lockdown in March, which lasted 3 months, and travel restrictions, which are still in place in some areas.



# Gems of the season

## North Colombia

**CO-119**: La Pradera's organic washed Castillo was a favourite last year and it's even better now. It is lemony with a hint of floral and toffee in the aftertaste. Try the farm's natural tabi (**CO-120**) and washed Gesha (**CO-124**) too!

**CO-136**: Also an organic Castillo, this lot from Finca Santa Maria is complex with notes of grapes, apple, peach and a hint of floral. Acidity ranges from malic when hot to lactic when cool.

**CO-129**: This honey from Finca La Esperanza has it all: it's sweet, jammy and citric. Honey-like in body and with an acidity that tastes like lemon juice, it also packs notes of blueberries and a hint of booze.



## Central and West Colombia

**CO-131**: Anserma has attracted roaster's attention with their tasty blends in the past and now you can also try their micro-lots. This natural Scarlet profile is just like candy. It combines notes of raspberry, coconut and banana with a lot of funk!

**CO-114**: This tabi from Jairo Arcila is a rare find. With sour cherry, kiwi, green apple and rum in the cup, it really shows what Cofinet in Armenia is best known for: crazy good coffee.

**CO-104**: Want exclusive coffees? The Java micro-lot from Cafenorte is exclusive as it gets with only 1 bag available. It tastes like violets, jasmine, apricot and red berries. Perfect for a special occasion and delicate filter brews.

**CO-66**: This is not Coopcafees highest-scoring lot but has a beautiful flavour profile at a good price. It's a fruit bomb, packing punchy notes of raspberry and passion fruit with a touch of wine and sparkling acidity.

If you need larger volumes of more standard coffees, check Cafenorte's **UGQ**, the **Anserma blends**, **Cofinet's regional blends** and La Pradera's **Media Luna**.



# A new work dynamic

Oscar Daza Bautista from La Pradera invested a great deal in 2020 to build new lodgings for workers including space for them to self-isolate. The *andariegos* did come in August, but they left in October when La Pradera is supposed to kickstart its main harvest. Unusual rain patterns had led to irregular flowerings. These, in turn, led cherries to mature in a somewhat patchy way. Uneven maturation is harder to pick and Oscar expects to see only ripe fruit in the bag at the end of the day. Not being able to pick large volumes fast enough to maximize their earnings, the *andariegos* abandoned the farm.

A now frustrated Oscar had to turn to an inexperienced local workforce to move forward with the harvest. “Our salvation was the people who worked in the region and the surrounding municipalities like Villanueva and Barichara on crops like beans and tobacco. Also, we brought in people who worked in Chicamocha park and doubled the number of female pickers in Finca Santa Maria,” explain Liliana Sanchez of La Pradera. They welcomed around 250 people at the farm and trained them all.

Liliana estimates that if initially 70% of the picking was done by *andariegos* and 30% by locals, now it's the other way around. She explains that La Pradera has been investing in infrastructure in the last 4 years and that with the new lodgings their investment topped US\$ 100.000.







“The issue with having people from the community is that they wouldn’t spend the night at the farm, making the new housing idle and forcing us to further invest in trucks to subsidise their transportation to and from the farm,” Liliana explains.

Farms like La Pradera are helping to boost local economies in Colombia and showing the positive impact coffee can bring to their communities. Having to adapt to fast-changing conditions is nothing new to coffee farmers and eventually, their efforts paid off. The quality of La Pradera’s coffee is even shinier than before. Credit to the post-harvest team, including Oscar’s brother Hector and Don Alfredo. Their specialty micro-mill has two new additions to improve quality and bring new efficiencies in these trying times: an electronic colour sorter and a machine to sort the coffee by weight.

On top of COVID, the weather was atypical in Colombia last year. The Summer of 2019–2020 was extra hot and long, delaying the rainy season in one month. In Central Colombia, this had a bigger impact on labour shortages than the pandemic itself. “Borders didn’t close in Caldas and Risaralda where we are based but the flowerings came so late in 2020 that the lowland (1.300 m) and highland (1.800 m) harvests happened at the same time,” says Felipe Rincón Cárdenas of Cooperativa Agropecuaria y de Cafes de Especialidad de Colombia (Coopcafees).



# It's all about the flowering

With the main harvest of 2020 delayed, coffee trees were still loaded with cherries during the flowering period. “The *traviesa* [the first harvest of the year in Colombia, which produces less volume than the second one and goes from March to June, also known as *mitaca*] will be smaller this year because there was less space for the flowers to blossom but the coffee will be of good quality,” Felipe predicts.

Another partner in West Midlands of Colombia, Alejandra Girón from Cooperativa De Cafetaleros Del Norte Del Valle (Cafenorte), in the North of Valle del Cauca, reports similar issues in their area: “The climate has behaved irregularly in our region without any prolonged periods of either rain or drought. This means we didn't have concentrated flowerings but rather a greater number of low volume ones. We are expecting a year with a normal production in terms of volume, however with prolonged harvests.”

Both Felipe and Alejandra report a year of really good quality in 2020, which should continue this year. According to Felipe, a large volume of coffee in the country overall was graded within or below the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros (FNC) basic performance factor or **factor de rendimiento**. The factor indicates the amount of parchment needed to fill a 70kg bag of Excelso grade . The base factor for a standard good coffee is 94 (i.e. 94kg of parchment are needed to generate a 70kg bag of milled green). Felipe tells us there have been many coffees under 90, which is an excellent performance and it means producers are paid premiums.







# The best internal prices in years

For the 1.700 coffee growers who are members of Cafenorte, a cooperative with 57 years of experience, 2020 was mainly a very good year. Smallholders usually rely on family and community labour during the picking season and were less affected by the pandemic restrictions than larger farms. “The number of workers on our farms was the same as always,” says Alejandra. For these farmers, 2020 was a great year. For the first time in many years, prices in Colombia were above the estimated cost of production of COP 780.000 (US\$ 204) according to the FNC. “The producers are very optimistic because this has been one of the longest periods of sustained good prices in recent years and their hope is that it carries on,” Alejandra explains.

Internal prices for coffee in Colombia have been at their highest in 2020. The devaluation of the Colombian *peso* against the dollar – above 20% at its peak – was caused by both the pandemic and a dive in the price of oil and inflated the price for a *carga* of coffee (1 *carga* means 125kg of parchment and is how growers sell coffee locally). According to Felipe, prices ranged from 800.000 COP (US\$ 230) per bag of 125kg of parchment to 1.300.000 COP (US\$ 308) per bag. For comparison, in 2018 and 2019 prices had been as low as 600.000 COP (US\$ 173). As the majority of commercial-grade producers sell directly to the FNC, who reported a basic buy rate of 1.142.233 COP (US\$ 299) in October 2020, when the main harvest in Central Colombia started.



“The prices people were getting for a regional washed Excelso were almost the same as we get when we export coffee directly,” says Felipe. “This helped the country a great deal and coffee was a very important sector to boost our economy. The downside is that some farmers didn’t work on special processes in 2020 because of the internal prices. The FNC has a buying centre or cooperative in each coffee town. One could simply walk around the corner, deliver coffee and get paid, whilst exporting is a process that takes months and has a financial cost. It wasn’t the case for Coopcafees because we look at the longer-term and respect our relationships but it’s happened a lot,” says Felipe.

According to him, COVID led to the cancellation of many international contracts as buyers could no longer afford high prices for coffee. Luckily, the internal market could absorb those coffees and producers were not heavily affected. Alejandra also tells us that the increase in prices led many producers to not honour contracts that had been previously negotiated. “In 2019, many growers in the country had fixed their prices in futures contracts because prices were too low. When the time came to deliver the coffee, prices were 35% higher than the fixed rate. This led to non-compliance on the majority of those contracts,” she says.





# Juggling the two worlds

Producers selling to the international market, like the ones offering on Algrano, have had to juggle more with prices in 2020. “The domestic market is very competitive, generating a price boom in the country. This implies a constant improvement in our marketing strategy to mitigate the country’s internal costs and to meet buyers expected prices,” says Alejandra. “Oscar made his processes more efficient and looked for clients for all sorts of coffee, including the by-products, but we still had to sacrifice our margins this year because of all the additional costs,” explains Liliana of La Pradera.

Despite the effects of the pandemic for buyers, Cafenorte, Coopcafees and Hacienda Cafetera La Pradera are among producers and organizations that kept investing in the international market despite the high internal prices. They believe long-term partnerships with roasters can make their business more sustainable. “We need to work to maintain these long-term partnerships and need to help each other even if we make less money. It’s about not losing money and focusing on the long-term,” says Liliana.

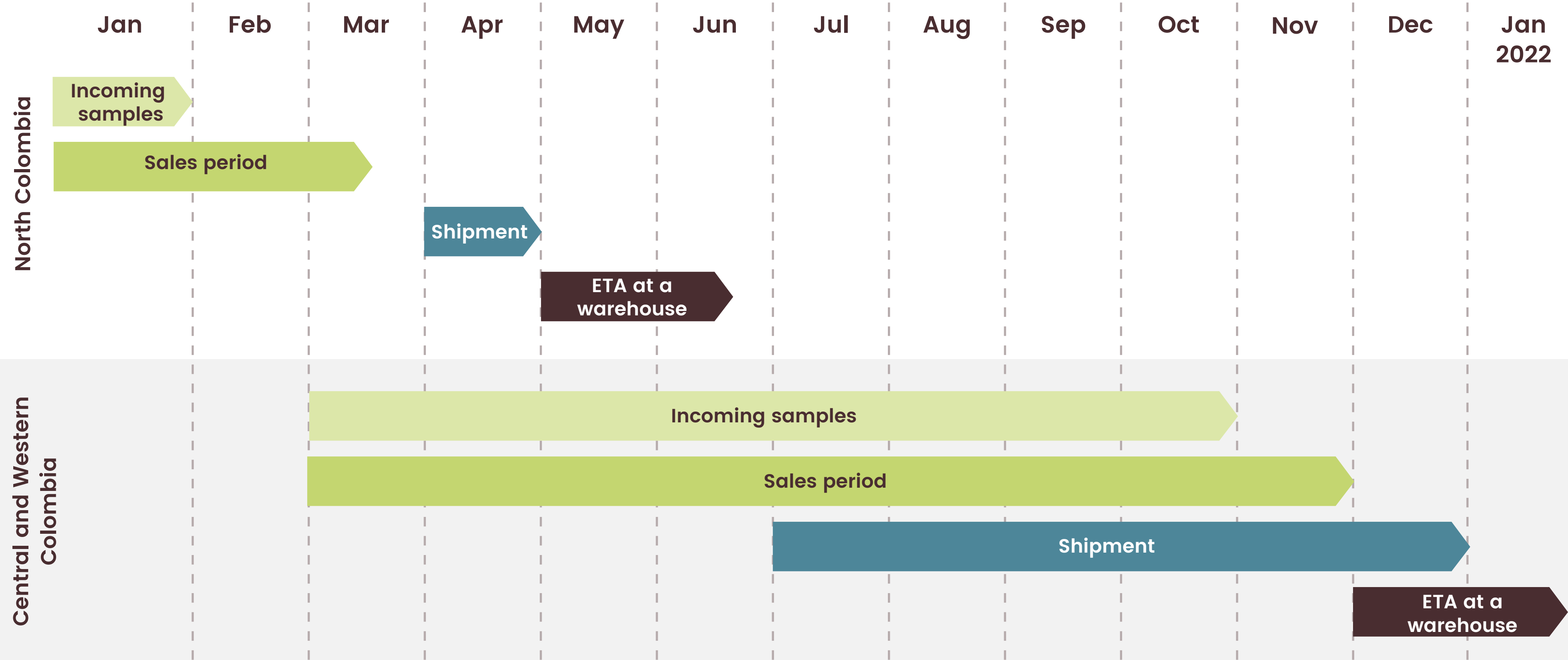
All three companies continue investing in processing and quality to cater for the market: La Pradera is harvesting exotic varieties on a new farm called La Fortuna and hoping to introduce a small

cold fermentation machine to the micro-mill, Cafenorte is installing a system to clean residual water from processing that will impact directly 200 producers and is also strengthening the offerings of micro-lots, and Coopcafees is training members on fermentation and investing in new technology to measure the humidity of parchment.





# Important dates for shared shipments



For a more detailed view check [algrano.com/sourcingplanner](https://algrano.com/sourcingplanner)



# Partners at origin

Algrano has developed a strong network of partners in Colombia during multiple visits of our team to the country. In these trips, we were able to meet like-minded growers and cooperatives focused in quality and also innovation. Slowly, these partners have become better and better at marketing their work through the platform, offering coffees that have proved to be favourites of many roasters and their customers.

Our partners are based in 3 departments of the *EJE Cafetero* or Coffee Axis, the biggest producing region in the country: Caldas, Risaralda and Quindío. The North of Valle del Cauca, which borders Quindío, is the home of Cafenorte, one of our key allies in consolidating containers and who can offer exporting services to producers in other parts of the country. Algrano also has partners in Cauca, Santander and Magdalena.

Together, these producers offer a wide variety of coffees from blenders to high-end micro-lots and from chocolatey full-bodied cups to citric and fruity profiles.





# Hacienda Cafetera La Pradera

**Owner:** Oscar Daza Bautista

**Location:** Aratoca, Santander department

**Farm size:** 105 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 1.700m to 1.900m

**Varieties:** Red Bourbon, Castillo, Colombia, Tabi, Gesha, Mokka, Wush Wush, Maragogipe

**Certifications:** Organic, Rainforest Alliance, Bird-Friendly, Con Manos de Mujer

**Harvest:** September to February

**Shipping with Algrano\*:** April

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Located next to the Chicamocha Canyon, the second-largest canyon on the planet, Hacienda Cafetera La Pradera is referred to by the Daza Bautistas as a “coffee paradise”. It is home to diverse timber and fruit trees which provide shade for the coffee plants and also protect many bird species against the intense Santandarian sun.

\* Shipping dates refer to consolidated shipments. For dedicated containers and orders not covered by this time-frame please contact your sales manager.







Oscar Daza, third generation, is the head of the farm, following in the footsteps of his father Mr. Héctor Daza. Oscar has slowly transitioned the entire farm's production from conventional to organic. La Pradera is built on strong family values with respect for their environment, the community and a strong approach to quality, having stood out in 2019 with one of the best coffees in the North Colombia Cup of Excellence.

The family's dedication to quality started when Oscar and his brother Héctor Jr. received coffee training and education at the prestigious Fundación Manuel Mejía and later at CENICAFE (National Center for Coffee Research) where many different coffee varieties were being developed. The brothers began planting Castillo and Colombia and today also have a big production of Tabi and a smaller crop of Gesha, Mokka and Wush Wush. The farm has its own specialty wet mill with an eco-pulper, an optical colour sorter, weight sorting machines, raised beds and mechanical dryers.



# The Santander Coffee Cluster

**Producers and farm names:** Paola Diaz Castillo of Finca La Esperanza (Confines), Hilda Mejia and Alvaro Ramírez Jáuregui of Finca El Sauce (San Gil), Felix Alberto Torres Morantes of Finca Hoyo Frio (Curiti), Joel Villalta of Grupo Forestal (Aratoca), Ricardo Gonzáles and Lina María Africano of Finca Las Margaritas (Confines)

**Location:** Near the Cordillera de Los Cobardes (The Cowards Mountain Chain) and the Chicamocha Canyon, Santander department

**Farm sizes:** Between 10 and 74 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 1.550m to 1.910m

**Varieties:** Castillo and Colombia are cultivated by all. Some members of the Cluster also grow Yellow Colombia, Tabi, Gesha, Bourbons, Laurina, Pache and Pacamara

**Certifications:** Only Grupo Forestal is organic certified; Finca El Sauce farms organically without certification

**Harvest:** September to January

**Shipping with Algrano:** April, through Hacienda Cafetera La Pradera

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The Cluster is not a cooperative but rather the result of cooperation between a group of entrepreneurial coffee producers in Santander with the objective of finding better markets for their coffees and improving general awareness of the region among buyers. Oscar from La Pradera is also a member of the Cluster and helps other producers with quality control and logistics.

**The group Cluster was formed in 2016** with the support of the Bucaramanga Chamber of Commerce, which created a strategic committee on green and roasted coffee as well as innovative projects (such as the production of energy drinks and bars made of cascara!), facilitating meetings, training and product-execution for the group.

The birthplace of coffee in Colombia, Santander lost its protagonism to Central and Southern producers after the Guerra de Los Mil Días (Thousand Days' War). Today, Santander is the 9th department in order of coffee production in Colombia. In the last century, the Northern states grew through organic agriculture encouraged by the FNC as a commercial strategy. Now, the family-owned *fincas* are exploring the specialty wave and reclaiming their status as a high-quality producing region.



# Cooperativa de Cafetaleros del Norte del Valle (Cafenorte)

**Manager:** Julian Gonzalez

**Location:** North of Valle del Cauca, West Colombia, with office based in Cartago

**Producing towns:** El Águila, El Cairo, Argelia, Versailles, Toro, Ansermanuevo, Cartago, Obando, La Victoria, La Unión, Ulloa and Alcalá

**Average farm size:** 3 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 1.400 m to 2.000 m

**Varieties:** Castillo, Colombia, Caturra, Java, Gesha, Supremo, Bourbon

**Certifications:** UTZ and Fairtrade

**Harvest:** Main harvest September to December and *mitaca* February to June

**Shipping with Algrano:** April to September

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Cafenorte is a key partner of Algrano in Colombia. They work with full transparency and traceability in a strong growing region and also provide exporting services to other producers in the country even if they are not members of the cooperative. They play a facilitator role in logistics just as Algrano but on the origin side. The cooperative was created 57 years ago and has 1.700 associated producers in 12 regions of the North-West of Valle del Cauca (listed on the previous slide), a region where the soil is enriched by the ashes blown by the eruption of nearby volcanos such as Nevado del Quindío and Santa Isabel, which are no longer active. Cafenorte supports local family-run farms and has established a number of projects to improve their living standards and the ecosystem. With vast hydric resources and bordering a cloud forest, the farms here house a wide diversity of flora and fauna which are preserved by the agroforestry systems of production established by coffee growers. Social projects include educational support (including a fund to provide college education to the children of farmers), training in coffee production and giving the surcharge of specialty buyers directly to smallholders. The Fairtrade premiums received by the coop have been invested in soil analysis programs to increase the productivity of the farmers through better management, protection for growers to wear when applying fertilizers and pesticides on the farms etc. Currently, Cafenorte is investing in a project to clean residual water from wet processing and will impact hundreds of producers.



# Cooperativa Agropecuaria y de Cafés de Especialidad de Colombia (Coopcafees)

**Manager:** Felipe Rincón Cárdenas

**Location:** Manizales, Caldas department

**Producing towns:** Manizales, Chinchiná, Neira, Manzanares, Anserma, Risaralda (in the Caldas department), Armenia (Quindío), Santa Rosa de Cabal and Pereira (Risaralda)

**Members:** 20, with farm sizes ranging from 6 to 70 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 1.300 m to 2.000 m

**Varieties:** Castillo, Colombia, Caturra, Gesha, Bourbon, Typica, Catiope

**Certifications:** None

**Harvest:** Main harvest September to December and *mitaca* February to June

**Shipping with Algrano:** April to September

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Coopcafees has always surprised us with the high-quality of their coffees, especially micro-lots and special preparations. The cooperative is focused on long-term partnerships with international buyers and fixed prices in order to avoid the market fluctuations and achieve sustainability for its members. It was created in 2018 as a joint effort between 20 coffee entrepreneurs in the *EJE Cafetero* with the goal of promoting specialty coffee and trade outside the commodities market whilst providing the training and technical support needed by farmers to produce high-quality coffee and generate added value.

Coopcafees is constantly investing in the education of its members and the improvement of quality oriented practices, such as developing fermentation protocols and using advanced technology to measure humidity not only of green coffee but also parchment. Associated farms, such as Finca Laderas del Tapias, have produced coffees used in many competitions. David Coelho, from Portugal, used a natural Castillo from Laderas del Tapias for his signature drink at the 2016's World Barista Championship. One of their Geshas was chosen by Marco Poidomani, two times Italian champion of Coffee in Good Spirits, to showcase at HostMilano 2019.



# Cooperativa de Caficultores de Anserma

**Manager:** Luis Miguel Garcia Arango

**Location:** Anserma, Caldas department

**Producing towns:** Anserma, Risaralda, San Jose, Viterbo and Belalcazar, all based in Caldas *Bajo Occidente* (South West) region

**Members:** 2.130 smallholders, with farm sizes averaging 2.4 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 1.400 m to 1.800 m

**Varieties:** Castillo and Caturra

**Certifications:** Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance and UTZ

**Harvest:** Main harvest September to December and *mitaca* February to June

**Shipping with Algrano:** April

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Anserma is a non-profit organization in the South West of the Caldas department. It was established in 1967 to support producing families in the region by efficient marketing and selling of their coffees.







They do an excellent job! Anserma developed two regional blends to suit roasters looking for a more traditional cup and also for a fruit-forward intense coffee. They also prepare micro-lots selecting only cherries of a cultivar of Castillo developed by Cenicafe called Castillo Naranjal.

Anserma is strong on promoting their members with a very active presence on social media, especially YouTube. They are constantly sharing short interviews with a “Farmer of the week” or educational videos about soil analysis, reforestation, how to DIY a filter to protect water springs and more.

One of their main projects, *Todos al Agua* (All for Water), is focused on cleaning and preserving water resources. The project was created to solve a common problem of smallholders, who were reporting their children were constantly becoming ill due to contaminated streams. Anserma also encourages the protagonism of female producers, around 30% of their membership, and organizes quality competitions to disseminate better farming practices.



# Red Ecolsierra

**Manager:** Victor Cordero

**Location:** Santa Marta city, Magdalena department

**Collection points:** Bonda, Isabel, San Pedro, San Javier, Palmor, Aracataca and Santa Rosa, all around the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range

**Members:** 352 smallholder families with an average farm size of 3 hectares

**Altitude range:** from 700 m to 1.900 m

**Varieties:** Castillo, Caturra, Colombia and Typica

**Certifications:** Fairtrade and Organic

**Harvest:** November to January

**Shipping with Algrano:** April

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Red Ecolsierra was founded in 2001 with a focus on improving the livelihoods of farmers in the region at the very North of Colombia, which received little investment from the government, and promoting an agricultural model that protected the environment.







Their strongest offers are regional blends, such as the Oropéndola FTO, the Café de Conservación organic and the Macana, which is created to reflect subregions of Magdalena around the coop's collection points. In recent years it has also been possible to source single-farm micro-lots from members of the cooperative, including honey micro-lots.

The associated farms grow coffee in a unique environment: they are right next to the Caribbean sea and yet high enough for coffee plants to adapt thanks to the elevation provided by the Sierra Nevada, one of the highest coastal mountain chains in the world, which rises to peaks as high as 5.700 m above sea level. The forests which cover the higher slopes of the mountains are a natural habitat for incredibly rich biodiversity. Due to the intense insolation, coffee needs to grow under the shade of trees to be a sustainable crop, so all coffee is cultivated in a woodland-like environment that serve as shelter for endangered animal species, prevent erosion and protect sources of water.



# Cofinet

**Managers:** Carlos Andres and Felipe Arcila Salazar

**Location:** Armenia, Quindío department

**Farm size:** 50 hectares

**Altitude range:** 1.700m to 1.800m

**Varieties:** Tabi, Bourbon, Castillo, Colombia, Caturra, Typica

**Certifications:** Organic, Fairtrade

**Harvest:** February to June and September to December

**Shipping with Algrano:** April and December

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Cofinet is new to Algrano and started offering coffees for the first time in the end of 2020. The company is the exporting arm of the farm and processing centre La Pradera in Armenia, owned by the Arcila family. Cofinet exports not only the coffees they produce at La Pradera but also regional blends from different parts of the country. Jairo Arcila, the father of Carlos and Felipe, has been working for decades with Racafé, Colombia's main exporter, and has a vast experience in coffee.







The family's knowledge and network facilitates the exporting process and allows them to source coffees from several departments, such as Huila and Tolima.

The Arcila brothers, who run Cofinet, are young and innovative, always investing in new processing methods to produce new and crazy profiles. They didn't have a straight path to coffee: both of them have backgrounds in engineering and worked as such before falling in love with coffee in Australia. The company has a fully integrated chain there and partners with Algrano to offer coffees directly to European roasters. Cofinet is committed to rewarding quality and pay an average of 15% above the local price for parchment for their regional blends, 30-35% to the "regional plus" blends and between 50% and 70% more to micro-lots.



# La Marianela Estate

**Owners:** Mr. Hernán Dorronsoro and his son Pablo Hernán Dorronsoro

**Location:** Piendamó town, Cauca department

**Farm size:** 150 hectares

**Altitude range:** 1.650m to 1.800m

**Varieties:** Caturra and Catimor

**Certifications:** None

**Harvest:** April to June and November to January

**Shipping with Algrano:** July to September

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A family-run estate located in the North of Cauca, a region known as the Popayán Plateau, La Marianela's history goes back to 1988. The Dorronsoro family owns 5 farms in the area, the main one being La Marianela. They are surrounded by the volcanic mountains of Coconuncos and the Nevado del Huila volcano. The ashes blown by such volcanoes helped create the fertile soils where the Dorronsoros planted Caturra and Catimor trees.







La Marianela is also abundant in water springs and creeks which help to create ecological corridors that have allowed the healthy growth of coffee and served as shelter for the wildlife. The farm prides itself for producing fruit-forward coffees with intense sweetness and a sirupy body. Though most coffees produced here are washed, La Marianela's natural micro-lot is widely popular with roasters for its complex fruitiness and alcoholic notes. Pablo, second generation coffee producer, is a young and innovative farmer and represents La Mariannela at Algrano. He received an IKAWA in 2020 as part of a crowdfunder organized by us with collaboration with roasters and IKAWA.



# Discover the coffees from Colombia

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