

PROFILE COAPROCL

The village of Copan Ruins is located in the North West of the Department of Copán. Discovered in 1570, the Maya site of Copan is one of the most important sites of the Mayan civilization. The archaeological site once functioned as the political, civil religious centre of the Copan valley. It was also the political centre and cultural focus of a much larger territory that covered the southeast area of the Mayan territories.

The town of Copan Ruins is close to Guatemala and the Chortis live both in Honduras and Guatemala. The Chortis are one of the indigenous Mayan peoples and have Copan Ruins as their cultural centre. Chortis religion is based on admiring and adoring nature through rituals dedicated to the gods of the Earth and the Wind.

Today the archaeological site of Copan Ruins is the principal tourist attraction of Honduras and visitors come to the town from all over the world. While there, they also have a chance to savour some of the best coffee in Western Honduras. In the cooperative COAPROCL (Cooperativa de Productores Orgánicos de Copan Limitada), its members have been faithful to the religious traditions of their ancestors. The cooperative is one of the pioneers among coffee growers in Central America to cultivate organically grown coffee on the hills surrounding Copan Valley. Made up of just over 40 members the cooperative has managed to establish and maintain direct links with coffee importers in Holland, the United States, Australia, and Ireland. The women members of the cooperative have been particularly active in developing a brand of ground roasted coffee, Guacamaya, in the local and regional market. The brand is named after those fabulously multi coloured large parrot birds that greet visitors as they enter the archaeological site.

The cooperative has fallen on difficult times as a result of the onset of the coffee rust disease throughout Central America in 2011 and 2012. Many of its members had their coffee area production almost wiped out as a result of the disease. Alfredo Morales, an ex President of the cooperative and a firm disciple of organic cultivation went from 300 bags of parchment coffee in 2009-2010 harvest 2010 to just 44 in harvest 2011-2012. The reasons are manifold for such devastation but the cooperative and its members have fought back bravely in the last few harvests. They have managed to maintain their customer base while improving their members' yields through investment in the small farm holdings.

This has been done by embarking on an extensive plantation renewal programme for all its members, securing funds via a Honduran Ministry of Agriculture programme known as COMRURAL and by some upfront negotiating with the local banks! The cooperative has dedicated all its Fairtrade income from the last number of years to supporting their members in the renewal of their coffee plantations.

Delmis Paz, daughter of a founding member of the Board of Management acknowledges that the last number of years have presented significant challenges

to the cooperative and its members. “We have had to find new ways to work together in order to be able to continue to operate as a cooperative. One of the “blessings” of the rust disease is that it forced us to replant almost all our coffee. In that process, in order to try and reduce costs, all members helped each other by organizing a rota to carry out the work related to replanting. This has helped us to rediscover some of the values that guided my father when he and 3 or 4 others first established the cooperative in 1999. The Fairtrade premium income has been key to implementing the replanting programme, which is now giving positive results for the income of our members.”

Basic data:

Date of establishment: 1999

Date Fairtrade Certified: 2002

Number of members: 44 (32 men and 12 women)

Varieties: Ihcafe 90, Lempira, ICATU

Potential Volume Capacity: 184 Metric Tons of Green coffee

FLO ID: 895