

Conservation of Ethiopia Forest Coffee through value addition

Participation in SCAJ2019

The richly biodiverse forest areas in southwestern Ethiopia are known as the birthplace of Arabica coffee. Local people living in this forest have traditionally collected fruit from naturally grown coffee trees to create Forest Coffee, which is drunk and enjoyed locally as well as sold to provide income and livelihoods. The JICA's technical cooperation project in the Belete-Gera Forest in Ethiopia, where AAI has been engaged, aimed to develop a mechanism that can harmonize sustainable forest use and the preservation of this natural forest as Arabica's origin. Through the technical cooperation, the Forest Coffee Producers conserved forest and applied appropriate management techniques to enhance product quality to create coffee that can be exported to Japan.

Ethiopia is the sixth largest coffee producing country in the world, and the export of Arabica coffee is a main source of foreign currency. The Ethiopian government is encouraging the planting of improved varieties of coffee, which produce more fruits than those of Forest Coffee, to increase exports. Due to the influence of these policies in recent years, expansion of coffee cultivation areas and improved varieties for the purpose of increasing the coffee yield have become remarkable. Even though the project has mainly worked with the government agency responsible for forest conservation, there are various government and private stakeholders involved in coffee export and marketing. In discussions with them, they made the following comments on the subject of Forest Coffee - "Since Forest coffee is low in yield, chemical fertilizers should be applied or coffee producers should replant using improved varieties" and "Forest Coffee is poor quality coffee suitable for local farmers and but not adhering to standards that make it suitable for export." We were surprised to see that the value of Forest Coffee was not fully recognized even by coffee sectors within Ethiopia.

To improve the situation, the project organized a symposium "Ethiopian Wild Coffee as a Gift to the World" in Addis Ababa in March 2019. More than 100 participants related to coffee sectors from government agencies and private companies gathered to share thoughts on the situation and challenges facing Forest Coffee's management and increasing its value. Furthermore, we supported the exhibition of Ethiopian coffee as well as Forest Coffee at the World Specialty Coffee Conference



Ethiopian Ambassador and coffee exporters at the exhibition booth of SCAJ2019

and Exhibition (SCAJ2019) held at Tokyo Big Sight where we aimed to expand the sales channel of Forest Coffee in Japan and make it an opportunity for Ethiopian stakeholders to recognize its true value.

At the exhibition booth, the project offered Forest Coffee for tasting alongside various other Ethiopia coffees presented by participants from the Ethiopian Coffee Exporters Association (ECEA). Some AAI staff also participated in the booth management and were overwhelmed by the success of the SCAJ event. There were so many visitors in three days, and there were some Japanese buyers interested in trading in Forest Coffee and asking for details such as prices and shipment methods from Ethiopia.

In the SCAJ2019, two seminars were also held; "Attractiveness of Ethiopian Coffee" and "Initiatives toward specialty of Ethiopian Forest Coffee." In addition to experience and achievements of the project for Forest Coffee, the uniqueness and potential of Ethiopian coffee were introduced by Ethiopian experts and government officers. In both seminars, we were able to get positive responses from the many participants who attended and raised interest in Ethiopia and Forest Coffee. In addition, some Ethiopian officers said, "we discovered that Forest Coffee is special and valued in the world." Through planning and participating in those events, the common understanding has been strengthened for promoting Forest Coffee by protecting the precious natural forest where Arabica coffee first originated.



Tasting and cupping of Forest Coffee were offered at the booth