

PROYECTO RECOLECTORES

THE PICKERS PROJECT



Coffee production is a labor-intensive activity involving a large and diverse workforce. It is difficult to pinpoint the total number of farmworkers in coffee due to several factors, including the seasonal nature of farm work, widespread informality of employment, the rural nature of coffee production, and the frequent registration of only male heads of household (despite the employment of spouses and children).

In Colombia, harvesting coffee each year takes more than 150,000 people. Nearly all the picking is done by hand, on steep mountainsides, as low-paid piecework. Existing outside of the formal economy, coffee pickers are not only underpaid, they are almost always employed illegally according to national and international labor laws, lacking benefits and social security. This makes it virtually impossible for them to get out of poverty or to provide a decent livelihood for their families.

WHEN IT COMES TO OCCUPATIONAL RISK, 97% OF THE COLLECTORS DO NOT HAVE ANY ASSURANCE.



Systemically low prices combined with low production capacity (a little over 1,500 kg of green coffee per farm on average) rarely provide enough income for farmers to support their own families, let alone their pickers. Complicating matters further, farmers must pay pickers at the beginning of the harvest when they have yet to monetize their crop, creating severe cash flow issues.

In 2017 we started the pilot in Nariño for what would become “The Pickers Project” (TPP) with the intention of normalizing the crucial and highly-skilled cherry collection work by providing training, at times childcare, and mostly a more secure and dignified work environment. Several years later, in 2021 we founded Manos al Grano, a not-for-profit organization with the objective of hiring a larger group of pickers full-time, providing them with benefits, healthcare, legal payment through a banking entity, and ongoing training. Today, we work with 50 allied farmers in northern Huila in the municipalities surrounding the capital city of Neiva, where our foundation is headquartered. As of late last year, we counted 57 allied pickers throughout this department.

INVESTING IN THE PICKERS INITIATIVE CONTRIBUTES TO:

- FARMERS ABILITY TO NAVIGATE LABOR SHORTAGES WHILE REDUCING THEIR EXPOSURE TO LABOR INFRACTIONS
- INCREASING PICKER'S PAY AND BENEFITS, BRINGING THEM INTO THE FORMAL ECONOMY
- ALLEVIATING FARMER'S CASH FLOW ISSUES
- DEPLOYING PICKERS TO PARTICIPATING FARMS
- PAYING FARMERS PREMIUM PRICES FOR COFFEE
- PRODUCING AND SELLING COFFEE THAT RESPECTS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LABOR LAWS
- INCREASE THE QUALITY AND VALUE OF COFFEE



IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE INITIATIVE OR REQUEST A SAMPLE, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR RELATIONSHIP MANAGER OR WRITE US AT

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