

Ethiopia's Forest Coffee An Illustrated Guide



Practical information about five
forest-coffee-producing zones: *Illubabor, Jimma,
Kaffa, Bench Maji, and Bale*



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* As this guide was going to press, Bench Maji zone was reorganized, and the cooperatives and mills profiled here are now part of the new Bench Sheko zone.

Foreword

Every year, Ethiopia's reputation for high-quality coffee grows, and it is exciting to see that coffee connoisseurs around the world are increasingly familiar with Ethiopia's unique origins and flavor profiles. However, as *Ethiopia's Forest Coffee: An Illustrated Guide* makes clear, our country still has some secrets to share with the coffee industry.

Ethiopian coffee was born in the forest, and to the surprise of many, it continues to live there. These coffee forests are a unique and valuable resource, providing sustainable livelihoods for thousands of families and serving as a natural genetic bank for future generations of coffee connoisseurs. Protecting them is therefore of paramount importance, and it is a responsibility that falls to all of us.

We invite you to be a part of that process. By creating a sustainable and profitable market for Ethiopia's forest coffees, we can help to preserve these unique resources for generations to come. I am thrilled that you are reading about these unique origins, and I hope that you have the opportunity to taste many of the coffees described in this guide — I'm confident that you will love them.

Sincerely,

Dr. Adugna Debela

Director, Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority

The Origin of Origins

Western Ethiopia is the birthplace of Arabica coffee



Long before coffee was cultivated around the globe, before it became one of the world's most traded commodities, and before it became the backbone of industries and economies, the plant grew wild in Ethiopia's dense forests.

It still does. Ethiopia's remaining coffee forests serve as a natural genetic bank for Arabica varieties, protect biodiverse habitats, and sustain the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers who harvest the extraordinary coffees that

grow wild there. But these forests are under threat from a growing population that needs access to timber and agricultural land.

The communities that depend on the forests are organizing to protect these vital resources. Working together as Participatory Forest Management Committees (PFMCs), community members are establishing and enforcing rules for how the forest can be used. Cooperatives are building awareness among their members about how to protect the woodlands. And governments—local, regional, and national—are promoting more responsible uses for the forests.

The coffee industry can also play a role in preserving these forests. By creating a premium market for the distinct, high-quality coffees that come from the forests, the sector can create a strong incentive for communities to protect them.

In conjunction with Partnerships for Forests, a project funded by the United Kingdom government, TechnoServe is working to raise awareness of these extraordinary coffees. *Ethiopia's Forest Coffee: An Illustrated Guide* is an important part of this initiative. The first edition provides practical information about five forest-coffee-producing zones—Illubabor, Jimma, Kaffa, Bench Maji, and Bale—and profiles some of the people who harvest this coffee.

**We hope to bridge the distance
between coffee producers
in Ethiopia and coffee lovers
around the world.**





Sudan

Ethiopia

Addis Ababa



Illubabor

Jimma

Kaffa

Bench-Maji

South Sudan



Yemen

Djibouti

Somaliland

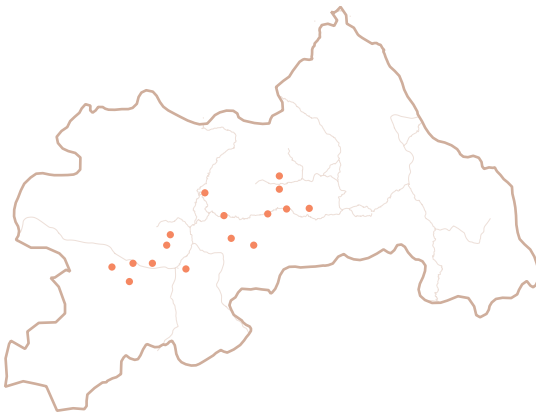
Bale

Somalia

1



8° 18' N 35° 35' E



The Yayu forest is a hotspot for biodiversity, recognized as a UNESCO biosphere reserve since 2010.

Illubabor

Home of the Yayu Forest Biosphere

The forest hosts scores of bird and animal species, and the streams and creeks that flow down the hillsides feed tributaries of the Nile River. The forest also protects a natural genetic bank of Arabica coffee varieties, which grow wild in the shade provided by the towering trees.

The Yayu Biosphere Reserve represents the natural wealth of Illubabor Zone, a region of southwestern Ethiopia where the woodlands play an important role in the livelihoods and traditions of hundreds of local communities. But population growth and the expansion of agriculture have threatened this natural and cultural landscape.

Now, local PFMCs are working to preserve the forest by finding better markets for its most valuable resource: wild coffee. With improved processing, the region is now producing forest coffee that displays complex and varied taste profiles.



Like Ethiopia's other protected forests, Illubabor's Yayu Biosphere Reserve is divided into three parts: a transition area, a buffer zone, and a core area. Farmers can cultivate coffee trees in the transition area, but in the buffer zone and core area, they are only able to harvest coffee from the trees that grow wild.

For more information contact:

Tibebu Tadesse, General Manager, *SorGeba Multi-Purpose Union*

Email: tibebutds@gmail.com

Hamuma Cooperative

Organizing to protect

2 ↴

Tesfaye Geleta is a chairperson of the Hamuma Cooperative in Halu Woreda of Illubabor. Hamuma Cooperative members share a common mission to join together and enter competitive coffee markets. Wild, forest-grown coffee is the main source of income for farmers and motivation to protect the forest from deforestation and other threats.

In 2017, farmers in the village of Hamuma came together to form a cooperative. They were looking to earn higher incomes from the coffee cherries they grew in their gardens and harvested wild from the forests that blanket the surrounding hillsides. They've worked together to improve the processing of their coffee, and the high quality that has resulted is helping them reach new markets.

Now, they're organizing again, this time to protect the forests that serve as their most important resource. The farmers in the community are creating a PFMC to establish and enforce rules for conserving the woodlands.



2

3



According to PFMC leaders like **Demeketch Asefa**, involving the community in conservation efforts is the best way to protect the forests and the livelihoods of local farmers.

3 ↴

The village of Hamuma is located in the Halu Woreda of Illubabor. Leaders from both the Hamuma Cooperative and the PFMC, which is still in the process of officially forming, share a deep respect for the forest and a common goal of helping members to strengthen their incomes without damaging the forest.



Demeketch Asefa

Engaging Women in Forest Conservation

Demeketch Asefa is both a leader of the new PFMC in Hamuma and a member of the women's savings and credit cooperative. As the PFMC grows, she plans to encourage more women from her community to join.

The formation of PFMCs across Illubabor shifts responsibility for protecting the forest from the local government to the farmers who own the land.

Illubabor



Regional Map



Metu

Kitabir

Loko Saya

Ale Buya

Baro

Homa Didu

Santa Bikilo

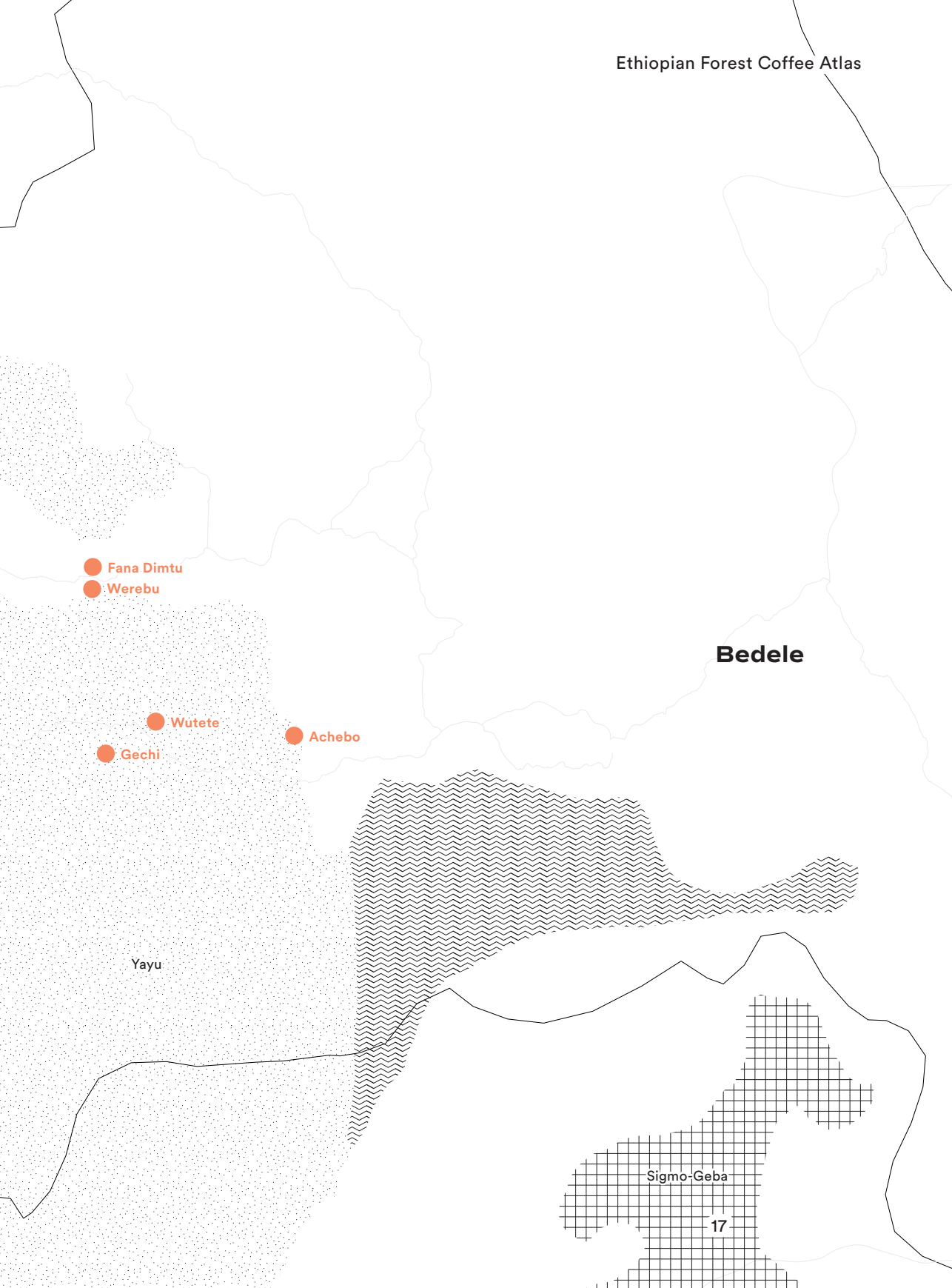
Kundi Gagi

Hamuma

Dika Gibe

Didebe

Sibu-Tole-Kibo



Fana Dimtu
Werebu

Wutete

Gechi

Achebo

Bedele

Yayu

Sigo-Geba

Cooperatives & Private Mills

A

Achebo Cooperative

Yayu Woreda
↗ 1,655 m

Washed (84.3)

Chocolate/apple/citrus fruit/creamy/lemon/
slightly nutty/smoky/spicy/vanilla

Ale Buya Cooperative

Metu Woreda
↗ 1,600 m

Washed (83.1)

Brown spice/chocolate/fruity/soft/sweet

B

Baro Cooperative

Hurumu Woreda
↗ 1,769 m

Washed (84.2)

Fruity/berry/brown spice/chocolate/orange/sweet

D

Didebe Cooperative

Halu Woreda
↗ 1,770 m

Washed (85.7)

Chocolate/caramelized/creamy/floral/fruity/herbal/
lemon/overall sweet/spicy/winey

Dika Gibe Cooperative

Ale Woreda
↗ 1,699 m

Washed (83.8)

Chocolate/caramelized/fruity/balanced/banana/
citrus fruit/floral/herbal/sweet

F

Fana Dimtu Cooperative

Doreni Woreda
↗ 1,864 m

Washed (84.1)

Chocolate/butter/caramelized/cereal/floral/fruity/
lemon/nutty/orange/sweet/sugary

G

Gechi Cooperative

Yayu Woreda
↗ 1,549 m

Washed (82.6)

Nutty/brown spice/fruity/spice

H

Hamuma Cooperative

Halu Woreda
↗ 1,253 m

Natural (82)

Nutty/clove/chocolate/floral/tropical fruit/spicy

Homa Didu Cooperative

Metu Woreda
↗ 1,586 m

Washed (82.8)

Chocolate/brown spice/caramelized/citrus fruit/
clove/fruit juice/mocha/sweet

K

Kitabir Cooperative

Nopa Woreda
↗ 1,655 m

Washed (83.5)

Chocolate/spicy/tropical fruit/floral/apple/lemon/
herbal/grapefruit/citrus fruit

Natural (84)

Pulpy/mocha/yogurt/cheese/orange/apple/floral/
spicy/winey/creamy/herbal/fruity/nutty/chocolate

Kundi Gagi Cooperative

Ale Woreda
↗ 1,734 m

Washed (84.2)

Citrus fruit/nutty/apple/brown spice/herbal/
chocolate/pipe tobacco/sweet/tea rose

L

Loko Saya Cooperative

Hurumu Woreda
↗ 1,253 m

Washed (82.95)

Chocolate/cardamom/lemon/tropical fruit/clove/
vanilla/spicy

S

Santa Bikilo Cooperative

Hurumu Woreda
↗ 1,800 m

Washed (87.65)

Sweet/floral/lemon/brown spice/chocolate/
citrus fruit/lemon juice/mint/orange/prune/spicy/
vanilla

W

Werebu Cooperative

Doreni Woreda
↗ 1,834 m

Natural (85.4)

Brown spice/chocolate/fruity/herbal/nutmeg/spicy
/ winey

Wutete Cooperative

Yayu Woreda
↗ 1,599 m

Washed (84.2)

Fruity/lemon/caramelized/chocolate/fermented
fruity/spicy/sweet/vanilla

Natural (80.44)

Nutmeg

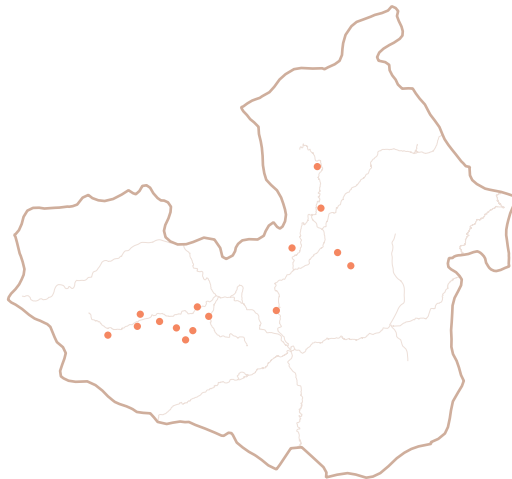






4

7° 40' N 36° 50' E



One of the secrets to the success of Jimma's specialty coffee sector is the dense, high-altitude forest that covers much of the region.

Jimma

Sought-after origins

In recent years, Jimma has emerged as one of Ethiopia's most sought-after origins, famed for exceptionally high-quality coffee. This coffee boom has brought new economic opportunities to the region.

One of the secrets to this success is the dense, high-altitude forest that covers much of the region, providing ideal growing conditions for a multitude of wild varieties that lend distinct flavor profiles to many of the zone's coffees. Maintaining the quality of Jimma's coffee therefore depends on protecting the forests, and no one knows that better than the farmers in the region. That's why cooperatives across Jimma are implementing a wide range of sustainability practices and raising consciousness among their members about the importance of conserving these natural resources.

4 ↴

While Jimma's forests are one of the possible origins of Arabica, the zone's name was synonymous with low-quality coffee due to poor processing. The dramatic expansion in the number and expertise of wet mills operating in the zone over the past decade has helped to unlock the quality of these coffees, turning them into globally recognized origins.

For more information contact:

Asnake Nigat, Manager, *Kata Muduga Cooperative Union*

Email: anigat@katamudugacoffee.com

Fikadu Dhugassa, Manager, *Limmu Union*

Telephone: +251 91 755 2057

Yukro Cooperative

Finding a place on the coffee map

5 ↴

A street scene in Wanja Kersa kebele, where Yukro cooperative is located. The specialty coffee boom in Jimma has led to an increase in commercial activity in many communities, as well as increased investment in vital infrastructure like roads, bridges, electricity, and potable water.

A decade ago, Yukro wasn't on the coffee industry's map. Farmers in the region have harvested coffee cherries from their gardens and the surrounding forest for centuries, but traditional home processing robbed the coffee of its natural quality. The farmers were only able to sell their cherries to local traders for domestic consumption, and they earned low prices for their crop.

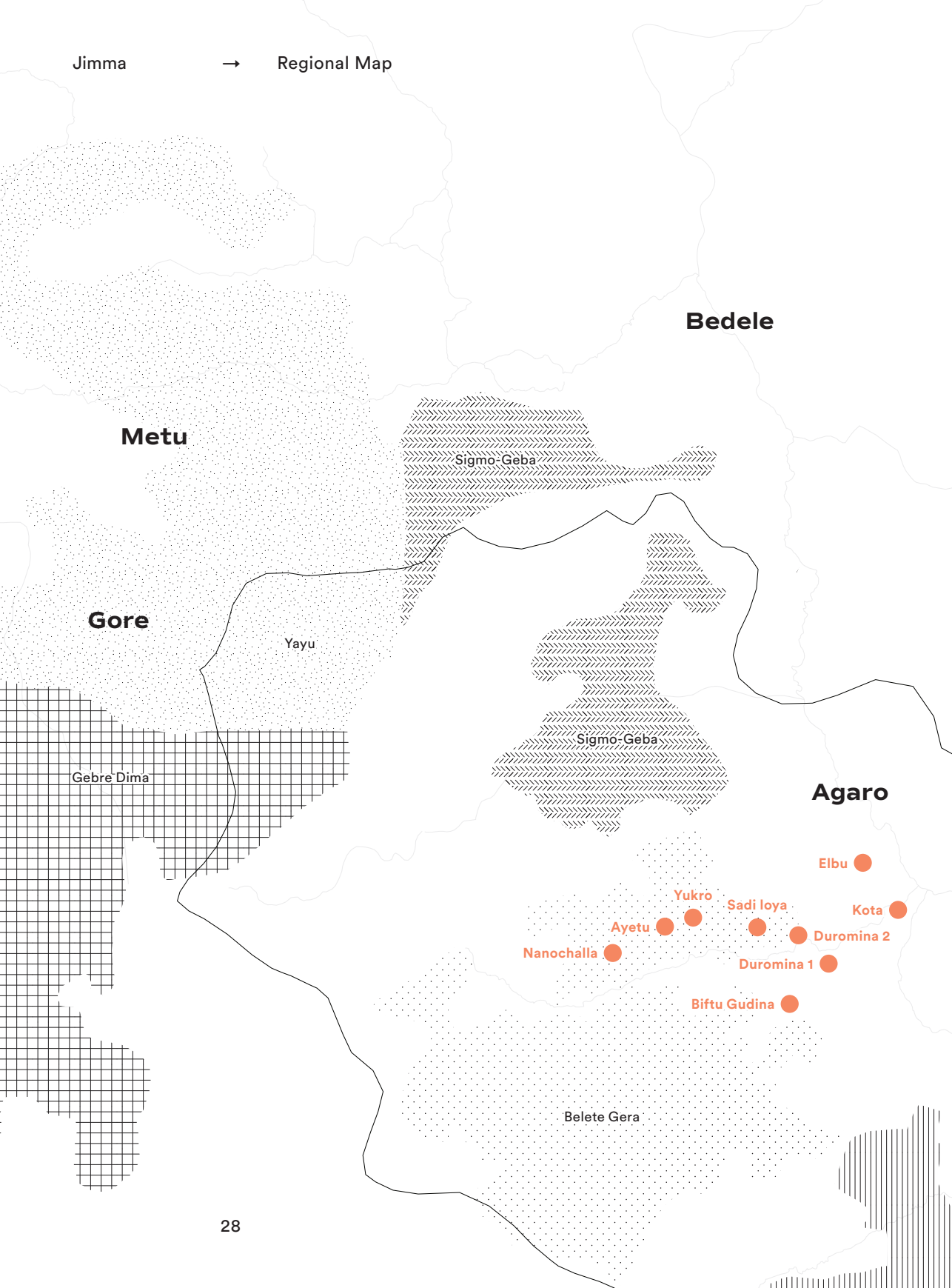
That began to change in 2010, when TechnoServe helped the farmers to reactivate the local cooperative and build a wet mill. With training on agronomy practices like selective harvesting as well as how to properly run the wet mill, the farmers in Yukro were soon producing exceptional coffees. And the world noticed: specialty roasters around the globe began purchasing the cooperative's coffees.

This has provided better opportunities for farmers like Burtukaan Yalem. Burtukaan, a mother of eight, is so enthusiastic about the cooperative that she decided to serve as the secretary of its loan committee, and she tries to inspire other women to join Yukro.



With training on agronomy practices like selective harvesting as well as how to properly run the wet mill, the farmers in Yukro were soon producing exceptional coffees.







Kiltu Cheba

Tiro-Boter-Becho

Gudina Walin

Kechewo Tirtira

Tencho

Shemekt

Fahem

Babiya-Fola

Jimma

Cooperatives & Private Mills

A

Ayetu (formerly Rosa)

Gera Woreda
↗ 1,904 m

Washed (85.1)
Floral/lemon juice/chocolate/spicy/lemon/
grapefruit/citrus fruit/caramelized

B

Biftu Gudina Cooperative

Goma Woreda
↗ 1,926 m

Washed (85.9)
Chocolate/caramelized/apple juice/floral/lemon/
perfume/spicy/sugary/sweet/vanilla

D

Duromina Cooperative

Goma Woreda
↗ 2,089 m

Washed (85.6)
Floral/balanced/bittersweet/chocolate/brown spice/
chocolate/citrus fruit/fruity/lemon/lemon juice/
nutty/pipe tobacco/spicy/sweet

E

Elbu Cooperative

Goma Woreda
↗ 1,777 m

Washed (84.4)
Spicy/dark chocolate/creamy/chocolate/lemon/
floral/herbal/complex/juicy

F

Fahem

Limu Seka Woreda
↗ 1,900 m

Washed (84.75)
Chocolate/floral/herbal/smoky/spicy/cumin/
cardamom/nutmeg/lemon

G

Gudina Walin Cooperative

Limu Seka Woreda
↗ 1,680 m

Washed (84.19)
Cinnamon/chocolate/orange/pointed acidity/
lemon peel/citrus fruit

H

Halal Trading

Gera Woreda
↗ 1,912 m

Washed (83.9)

Cinamon/citrus fruit/herbal/floral/tropical fruit/
chocolate/lemon

K

Kechewo Tirtira Cooperative

Limu Kossa Woreda
↗ 1,697 m

Washed (84.25)

Honey/caramelized/cereal/citrus fruit/fruity/
tropical fruit/apple/lemon/mango/floral/banana/
chocolate/lemon juice/smoky/orange/apple/
yellow ripe fruit/herbal/sweet

Kiltu Cheba Cooperative

Limu Kossa Woreda
↗ 1,764 m

Washed (83.07)

Floral/nutty/salty/fruity/cereal/vegetal/chocolate/
cardamom/buttery/winey/tropical fruit/lemon/
bright/citrus fruit/juicy

Kota Cooperative

Goma Woreda
↗ 1,900 m

Washed (84.0)

Honey/caramelized/vanilla/herbal/floral/
citrus fruit/tropical fruit/chocolate/lemon/apple/
mango/creamy body/good acid/juicy/
long aftertaste

N

Nanochalla Cooperative

Gera Woreda
↗ 1,998 m

Washed (84.8)

Lemongrass/lemon juice/honey/balanced/floral/
spicy/light herbal/sweet/tropical fruit/fruity/
lemon/citrus fruit/chocolate/apple/pointed acidity/
orange/caramelized/sugarcane/nutty/cereal

S

Sadi Ioya Cooperative

Gera Woreda
↗ 1,882 m

Washed (84.75)

Floral/spicy/lemon/sweet/long aftertaste/soft/
citrus/winey/chocolate/honey/tropical fruit/nutty/
cereal/fruity/salty/balanced/juicy

Shemekt

Limu Kossa Woreda
↗ 1,761 m

Washed (84.22)

Cardamom/floral/parchment/fruity/dark chocolate/
winey/lemon/floral/chocolate/herbal/creamy/
spicy/orange/smoky/clove

T

Tencho Cooperative

Limu Kossa Woreda
↗ 1,630 m

Washed (84.19)

Chocolate/spicy/lemon/tropical fruit/grapefruit/
tea/peach/herbal/balanced/caramelized/sweet/
delicate/cereal/honey/mocha/lemon peel/peanut/
smoky/fruity/nutty/winey/floral/soft/citrus/milk/
rose/cardamom/salty/lemon juice/creamy

Y

Yukro Cooperative

Gera Woreda
↗ 1,893 m

Washed (84.8)

Spicy/floral/fruity/lemon/sweet/caramelized/
balanced/long aftertaste/vanilla/cardamom/clove/
creamy/herbal/chocolate/smoky/milky/juicy/citrus



Kaffa



6

7° 16' N 36° 14' E



Every year, thousands of farmers across Kaffa still harvest wild forest coffee.

Kaffa

The legendary cradle of coffee

A local legend holds that coffee's invigorating properties were first discovered by community members in the thick, highland forests of Ethiopia's Kaffa zone. The connection between these communities, their woodlands, and the crop remains strong to this day: every year, thousands of farmers across Kaffa still harvest wild forest coffee.

Today, Kaffa's forests stand as a unique natural resource. Recognized as a UNESCO biosphere zone since 2010, the woodlands house more than 300 mammal species, including lions, hippos, baboons, colobus monkeys, and bush pigs. A quarter of Ethiopia's bird species also reside within the biosphere, and the region is considered an Important Bird Area.

The forests are a crucial source of livelihoods to residents of the remote, rural communities of Kaffa zone. They harvest wild honey, cardamom, long pepper, and other products from among the trees. For community members, however, it is coffee that serves as the forests' greatest treasure, and they know that preserving the woodlands is the only way to protect it.



In Chiri Cooperative, in the Kaffa zone, generation after generation has harvested wild coffee from the forest, and protecting the woodlands is a widely held community value. "That's the culture of Kaffa," explained cooperative chairman Terefa Abeba.

For more information contact:

Firehiwot Getahun, Manager, *Kaffa Forest Coffee Cooperatives Union*
Email: fgetahuns@yahoo.com



Mulunesh Kapito

A Champion for Gender Inclusion

In southwestern Ethiopia, women face a number of obstacles to equal participation in the coffee value chain, so it's an impressive accomplishment that women form nearly half the membership of the Ufa cooperative. Some of the credit rests with Mulunesh Kapito, a member of the cooperative's management committee and one of its most active recruiters. "Whenever I meet women along the road, in the market, or in their homes, I tell them about the benefits of joining the cooperative," she explains.

Ufa Cooperative

Capitalizing on the forest

7 ↴

It is estimated that some 5,000 varieties of wild coffee grow in the forests of Kaffa. That makes this zone, like the others in southwestern Ethiopia, an important reserve of genetic diversity for coffee. If the forests are properly protected, future efforts to breed new coffee varieties will be able to draw upon these unique genetic resources.

8 ↴

Amanuel Trefe harvests wild coffee from the Gabrebecho forest in the Kaffa zone of Ethiopia. “We were handed the forest by our parents, and we must maintain it,” explained the young man. He serves as the accountant of the Ufa cooperative, which markets coffee from the forest, and is a member of the local PFMC.

The Ufa Cooperative’s new washing station sits on a hillside overlooking the nearly 1,300-hectare Gabrebecho forest in Decha, Kaffa. The setting is not a coincidence: 70 percent of the coffee delivered to the cooperative comes from the forest.

Since 2010, the members of the cooperative have also been organized into a community-wide PFMC. Previously, members of the community were able to indiscriminately cut down trees and remove timber; now, they must submit an application to the PFMC’s management committee before extracting anything from the forest.

Community members harvest a number of products, like honey and long peppers, but coffee remains the most important forest resource, accounting for 80 percent of the community members’ earnings from the woodlands. The cooperative’s washing station, constructed in 2017, is an effort to extract more value from this coffee. Ufa’s leaders hope that improved earnings from the sale of washed coffee will allow them to purchase more of the coffee harvested in the surrounding area — providing community members with higher incomes and a stronger incentive to protect the forest.

7



8

Kaffa



Regional Map

Sele'Anderacha

Gebre Dima



Girma Eshetu

Godere

Yeki

Tepi

Sheko

Mizan Teferi

Agaro

Belete Gera

Medfegna

Kecha

Wodiyo

Keja-Keta

Kuti

Tega

Cheraba

Diri

Michiti 2

Michiti 1

Zingaje

Woshi

Keya-Kelo

Beha

Gedam

Bonga

Chiri

Yeyibeto

Ufa

Goba Gesa

Cooperatives & Private Mills

B

Beha Cooperative

Decha Woreda

↗ 1,927 m

Washed (86.05)

Floral /lemon/spicy/caramelized/chocolate/
delicate/jasmine/lime/mixed fruit/ nutmeg/
overall sweet

Natural (84.69)

Brown spice/spicy/caramelized/chocolate/
slightly citrus fruit/floral

C

Chiri Cooperative

Decha Woreda

↗ 2,886 m

Washed (80.4)

Chocolate/sugarcane/citrus fruit/nutty/peanut/
floral

Natural (83.4)

Floral/black pepper/spicy/caramelized/creamy/
chocolate

Cheraba Cooperative

Gimbo Woreda

↗ 1,687 m

Washed (80.4)

Chocolate/sugarcane/citrus fruit/nutty/peanut/
floral

Natural (83.4)

Floral/black pepper/spicy/caramelized/creamy/
chocolate

D

Diri Cooperative

Gimbo Woreda

↗ 1,707 m

Washed (87.05)

Fruity/butter/chocolate/delicate/herbal/honey/
spice fruit/sweet

G

Gedam Cooperative

Decha Woreda
↗ 1,902 m

Natural (81.58)
Fruity

Girma Eshetu

Kefa Woreda
↗ 1,899 m

Washed (85.3)
Lemon/lemon peel/floral/juicy/orange/
tropical fruit/sweet/banana/creamy
Natural (85.6)
Floral/herbal/sweet/dark chocolate/lemon/
tropical fruit/winey

Goba Gesa Cooperative

Decha Woreda
↗ 2,128 m

Natural (80.8)
Grapefruit/spice/dark chocolate/floral/creamy

K

Keya-Kelo Cooperative

Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,614 m

Washed (84.15)
Floral/citrus fruit/herbal/spice/winey
Natural (84.8)
Fruity/spicy/nutty/dried fruit

Kecha Cooperative

Gewata Woreda
↗ 1,796 m

Natural (81.6)
Chocolate/spicy/clove/dark chocolate/creamy/
citrus fruit/smoky/salty

Keja-Keta Cooperative

Gewata Woreda
↗ 1,819 m

Washed (83.23)
Floral/spice/brown spice/cardamom/fruity/
red pepper/spicy
Natural (85.25)
Fruity/cardamom/delicate/floral/nutty/spicy/
sweet/winey

Kuti Cooperative

Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,797 m

Washed (82)
Spicy/floral/citrus fruit/apple/creamy/orange/
lemon/fruity/chocolate

M

Medfegna Cooperative

Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,764 m

Washed (84.47)
Nutty/citrus fruit/floral/fruity

M (continued)**Michiti Cooperative**Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,872 m

Washed (83)

Rose/citrus fruit/chocolate/lemon/creamy

Natural (82.6)

Smoky/fruity/lemon/grapefruit/vegetal/spicy/
clove/chocolate/floral**T****Tega Cooperative**Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,856 m

Natural (84.69)

Chocolate/nutty/fruity/honey/winey

U**Ufa Cooperative**Decha Woreda
↗ 1,856 m

Washed (83.2)

Ripe lemon/chocolate/spicy/cardamom

Natural (83.3)

Spicy/fruity/yogurt/sugarcane/nutmeg/lemon/
chocolate/tropical fruit**W****Wodiyo Cooperative**Gewata Woreda
↗ 1,664 m

Washed (83.3)

Cereal/dried dates/dry fruity/raisin/spice/sweet/
vanilla

Natural (84.4)

Chocolate/citrus fruit/floral/spicy/sweet

Woshi CooperativeChena Woreda
↗ 1,750 m

Washed (85.33)

Floral/fruity/herbal/spicy

Natural (81.94)

Chocolate/smoky

Y**Yeyibeto Cooperative**Gewata Woreda
↗ 1,838 m

Washed (84.7)

Chocolate/floral/nutty/peanut/spice/sweet/winey

Z**Zingaje Cooperative**Gimbo Woreda
↗ 1,810 m

Washed (84.45)

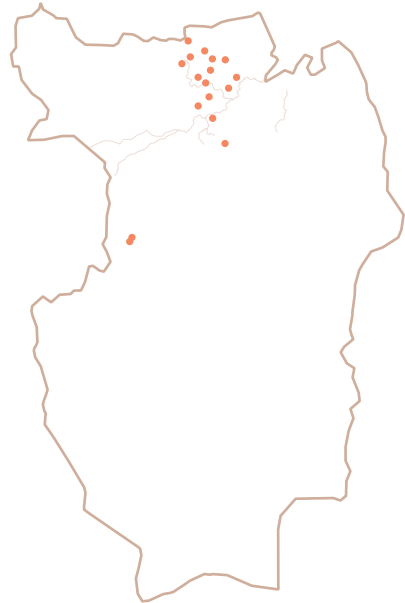
Spicy/chocolate/creamy/fruity/lemon/spice/sweet





9

7° 0' N 35° 35' E



“We are living in the forest, working in the forest, and depending on the forest,” said Tayyese Tesfaye, chairman of the Gizmeret Multipurpose Cooperative.

Bench Maji

A region in transformation

Bench Maji's coffee sector is going through a transformation. The zone, located in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region in southwestern Ethiopia, has enjoyed a lower profile than the country's higher profile origins. But that is likely to change soon.

Blessed with a good climate, productive soil, diverse plant genetics, and rich forests, Bench Maji has the necessary conditions to produce excellent coffee. For many years, however, that quality was lost in processing, with the majority of the zone's forest-grown coffee cherries being sun-dried on tarps on the ground. Starting in 2018, the Bench Maji Cooperative Union and Partnerships for Forests have been working with local cooperatives to address the issue. A number of cooperatives have bet on improved quality, investing in centralized drying stations to produce sun-dried coffee for the specialty market. They join a small number of cooperatives and private washing stations that were already producing high-quality coffees for the specialty market.

Community members understand the importance of protecting the zone's forests. As the investment in quality results in stronger market opportunities for the zone's coffee growers, the incentives to protect the forest only increase.

9 ↴

Currently, most of the specialty coffee produced in Bench Maji is naturally processed at centralized drying stations.

However, a number of cooperatives in the zone have expressed interest in constructing wet mills so that they can produce washed coffee and diversify their offerings for the specialty market.

As this guide was going to press, Bench Maji zone was reorganized, and the cooperatives and mills profiled here are now part of the new Bench Sheko zone.

For more information contact:

Abiyot Dadi, Marketing Development Manager, *Bench Maji Cooperative Union* / Email: abiyotd2010@gmail.com

Fanika Cooperative

Restoring the Sheko Forest

¹⁰ ↴

Fanika is one of a number of cooperatives in Bench Maji zone that has recently implemented centralized drying in order to market high-quality, natural-processed coffee. The cooperative employs dozens of workers who diligently ensure that the coffee cherries are dried evenly and correctly.

¹¹ ↴

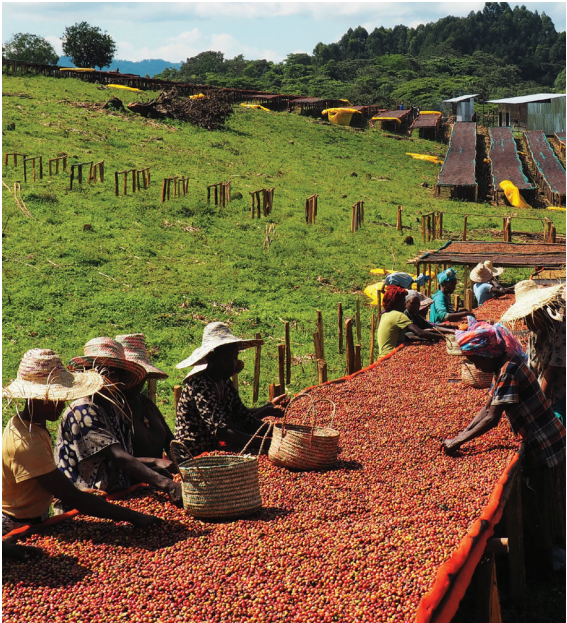
Staff from Partnerships for Forests and the Bench Maji Cooperative Union provide technical advice on best practices for coffee processing. This has led to a dramatic increase in the quality of coffee being produced in the region.

When 31 farmers came together in 2012 to create the Fanika cooperative, their idea was not to preserve and restore the surrounding forest. They just wanted to earn a better living from the coffee crop. But they quickly learned that they couldn't do one without the other.

For years, tracts of the Sheko Forest were cleared to make way for maize and sorghum fields. But as the forest shrunk, it threatened the livelihoods of coffee growers who depended on the thick canopy to provide shade for their gardens and provide a home for wild coffee trees. Members of the cooperative decided to take action: they gathered the community together to establish rules for the forest. Farmers stopped clearing land and started to reforest areas that had previously been clear cut. Now, the forest is coming back to life: residents even report that elephants, believed to have vanished from the area a decade ago, have returned.

Today, the cooperative's 216 members are working to find more profitable markets for their unique, natural-processed forest coffee.

10



11





Wosenech Koyse

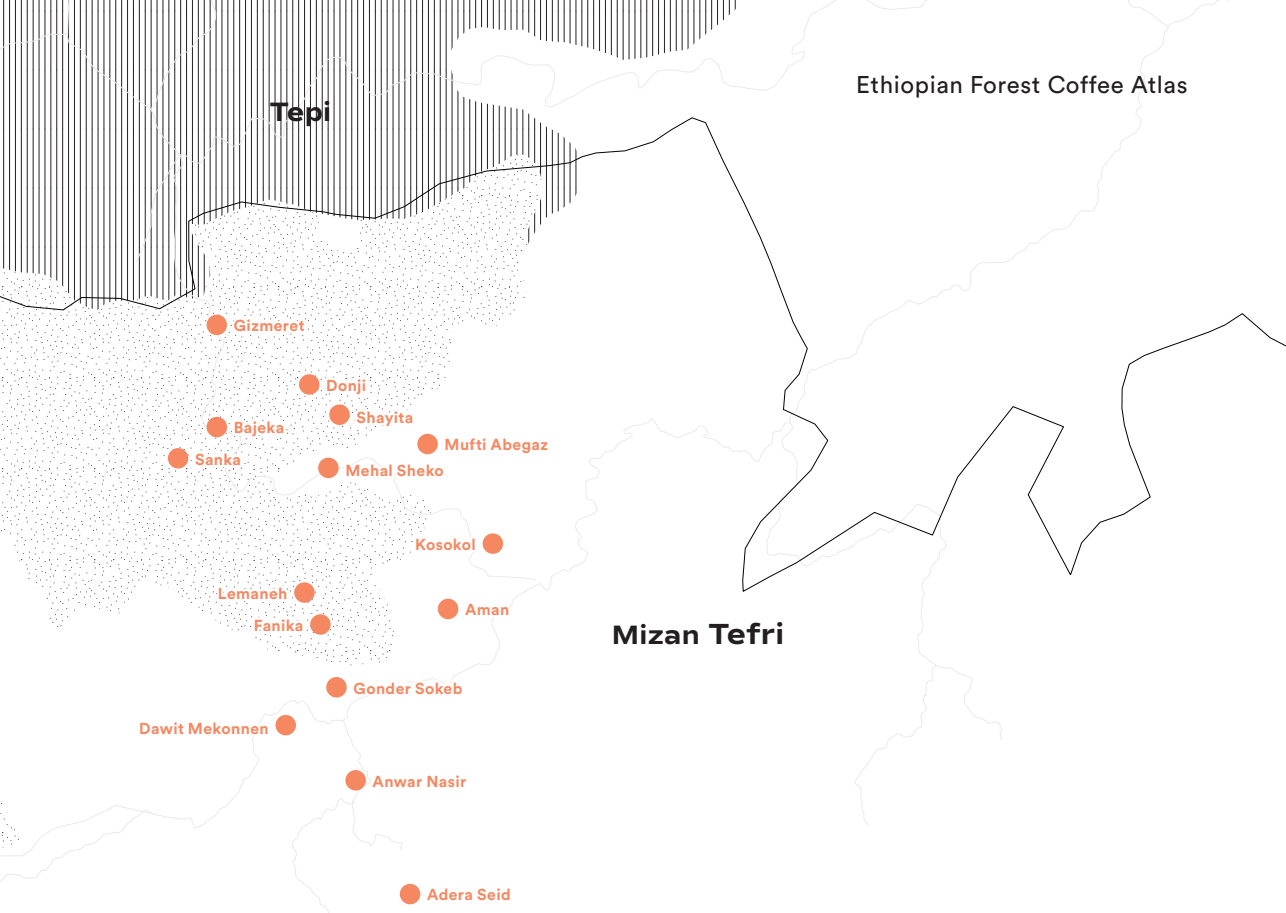
“I want them to get master’s degrees!”

Wosenech Koyse learned to harvest coffee by watching her parents. Today, she is a member of the Fanika cooperative and harvests and sells semi-forest coffee. Previously, she sold her coffee to private traders for low prices, but now she earns a better price from the cooperative. She is using the income to send her five children to school, and she has big dreams for them. “I want them to get master’s degrees!” she said.

Bench Maji

→ Regional Map





Cooperatives & Private Mills

A

Adera Seid

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,603 m

Washed (83.9)

Chocolate/biscuit/brown spice/buttery/
caramelized/citrus fruit/clove/grassy/orange/sweet/
smoky/spice

Aman Cooperative

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,381 m

Washed (81.8)

Herbal/black pepper/smoky/chocolate/lemon peel/
tropical fruit/nutty

Anwar Nasir

North Bench Woreda
↗ 1,553 m

Washed (83.5)

Chocolate/floral/vanilla/biscuit/brown spice/
caramelized/cardamom/creamy/fruity/herbal/
overall sweet/spicy/sugarcane

B

Bajeka Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,330 m

Washed (85.2)

Chocolate/herbal/biscuit/black tea/buttery/
caramelized/fruity/honey/overall sweet/smoky/
spicy

D

Dawit Mekonnen

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,600 m

Washed (84.6)

Spicy/cardamom/cedar/cinnamon/lemon/herbal

Donji Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,709 m

Natural (82.7)

Fruity/grapefruit/spicy/creamy/dark chocolate/
smoky

F

Fanika Cooperative

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,338 m

Natural (82.1)

Smoky/cardamom/cereal/nutty/spice/sweet

G

Gizmeret Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,069 m

Washed (83.8)

Floral/chocolate/apple/brown spice/caramelized/
cardamom/cereal/citrus fruit/delicate/lemon/
overall sweet/sugar/sweet/vanilla

Gonder Sokeb

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,303 m

Washed (82.5)

Smoky/herbal/spicy/cedar/citrus fruit/pungent

K

Kosokol Cooperative

North Bench Woreda
↗ 1,331 m

Natural (83.9)

Spicy/citrus fruit/herbal/nutty/spice/sweet/rose tea

Kundesä

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,580 m

Natural (83.1)

Floral/nutty/lemon/smoky/peanut/spicy/creamy/
fruity

L

Lemaneh PLC

South Bench Woreda
↗ 1,650 m

Natural (83.1)

Fruity/juicy/grapefruit/chocolate/herbal/pulpy/
spicy/lemon/creamy/spicy/buttery

M

Mehal Sheko Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,569

Washed (85.4)

Overall sweet/spice/apple/caramelized/cardamom/
chocolate/citrus fruit/floral/fruity/honey/
lemon

Mufti Abegaz

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,449

Washed (82.1)

Spicy/chocolate/lemon/citrus fruit/orange/jasmine/
herbal/tobacco

S

Sanka Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,068 m

Natural (83.5)

Smoky/dark chocolate/lemon/sugar/herbal/vegetal/
nutty

Shayita Cooperative

Sheko Woreda
↗ 1,622 m

Washed (82.2)

Chocolate/floral/vanilla/biscuit/brown spice/
caramelized/cardamom/creamy/fruity/herbal/
overall sweet/spicy/sugarcane



12

7° 0' N 39° 59' E



In the Hareenna Forest, coffee grows wild and offers a source of income for local communities.

Bale

Conserving natural resources, from the mountains to the forest

12 ↴

Currently, most of the specialty coffee produced in Bench Maji is naturally processed at centralized drying stations.

However, a number of cooperatives in the zone have expressed interest in constructing wet mills so that they can produce washed coffee and diversify their offerings for the specialty market.

The famous Bale Mountains National Park, which hosts some of Ethiopia's tallest peaks, was established as a national park in 1969 to preserve its biodiversity and the habitat it provides to unique species, and the park drives tourism to the region. The southwestern slopes of the Bale Mountains are covered by a thick carpet of trees, and it's here, in the Hareenna Forest, that wild coffee grows beneath the shade of the forest. This organic coffee grows naturally without the aid of pesticides or fertilizers.

For generations, community members have hand-picked and sun-dried the wild coffee from the forest where they live. Cooperatives and private traders have been hard at work improving the quality of the harvested coffee, creating exceptional flavor profiles, and strengthening the market for Bale's forest coffee will increase the incentives to protect these important natural resources. Community members understand the importance of protecting Bale's forests. "Trees can live without people, but people cannot live without trees," said Abdul Hasak Adem, chairman of the Badhatu Kunbi Cooperative and PFMC.

For more information contact:

Abduri Hussein Nuro, Board Chairman, *Garen-Bale Forest Protection & Utilization Cooperative Union* /

Phone: +251 91 328 0209

Fayissa Tsegaye, Manager, *Burka-Yadote Farmers'*

Cooperative Union / Phone: +251 09 332 32 972,

+251 09 189 22 416 / Email: feyitse2020@gmail.com







Tayer Malim-Sali

“Our coffee is a gift!”

Tayer Malim-Sali, a Magnate cooperative member and former chairman, has harvested forest coffee his entire life. “Growing up, I have seen coffee and forest living together,” he says. He knows the appeal of his organic wild-grown coffee to international markets and even visited Italy, Spain, and Dubai after exporting his coffee there. For Tayer and others in his community, the forest is more than just a source of income. In times of illness, people drink coffee with honey and use a mixture of coffee grounds and honey as a topical treatment. “Our coffee is a gift,” he says.

Magnate Cooperative

Preparing the next generation

13 ↴

Women play an active role in Magnate Cooperative as they are often more committed to implementing the best practices learned in trainings and are better at advising other women in the community. Some women will also represent their families at trainings and share what they have learned with their husbands. Munissa Haji Usman Bati is pictured with her husband Tayer Malim-Sali and the coffee they have harvested from the forest surrounding their home.

Coffee is woven throughout daily life and culture in the Bale region: it accompanies early morning prayers, is served to neighbors after resolving a conflict, and forms a traditional part of marriage proposals. For members of the Magnate Cooperative, forest coffee is also the only source of income. It's the means by which farmers can feed their families, construct homes, and send their children to school.

The Magnate Cooperative is working hard to help their community improve the quality and value of their coffee. The cooperative facilitates forest management trainings and leaders share knowledge with the greater community, like reaching out to youth at the village's sports club where they play volleyball and football. Magnate Cooperative chairman Jeyilan Haji Kedir is focused on improving the quality of the coffee produced by members while protecting the forest for the future. "Our hope and our plan is to sustainably manage this forest and its coffee," he says, "and hand it over to future generations."

“Our hope and our plan is to sustainably manage this forest and its coffee and hand it over to future generations.”

13





Sheik Hussein

Robe

Ginir

Goba

Dolo Mena

● Deyu

● Oda Dima

● Ila Mekanissa ● Habubi

● Waltai Gudina

● Irba

● Biftu Kankicho

Cooperatives & Private Mills

B

Biftu Kankicho Cooperative

Delomena Woreda
↗ 1,544 m

Natural (80.94)
Chocolate/fresh pea

Bedhatu Kumbi Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,575 m

Natural (82.2)
Nutty/chocolate/leafy greens/spice/spicy

D

Deyu Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,495 m

Natural (82.13)
Brown spice/citrus fruit/nutmeg/spice/rose tea

G

Gutiti Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,489 m

Natural (83.33)
Nutty/caramelized/lemon peel/apple/orange/
creamy/citrus fruit/spicy/herbal/lemon

H

Habubi Cooperative

Delo Mena Woreda
↗ 1,735 m

Natural (81.94)
Nutty/chocolate/cereal/herbal/oatmeal

Hurufa Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,735 m

Washed (84.8)
Creamy/spicy/citrus fruit/orange/dark chocolate

I

Ila Mekanissa Cooperative

Deho Mena Woreda
↗ 1,535 m

Natural (83.19)
Citrus fruit/nutty/smoky

Irba Cooperative

Deho Mena Woreda
↗ 1,544 m

Natural (81.69)
Cereal/fresh/fruity/nutty/perfume

K

Kumbi Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,575 m

Natural (83.0)
Floral/spicy/herbal/clove/citrus fruit/lemon/fruity/
dark chocolate/creamy

M

Magnate Cooperative

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,517 m

Natural (83.88)
Lemon/chocolate/winey/apple/grapefruit/spicy/
citrus fruit

O

Oda Dima PFM

Deho Mena Woreda
↗ 1,785 m

Natural (83.44)
Herbal/floral/citrus fruit/lemon/spice

W

Waltai Gudina Cooperative

Deho Mena Woreda
↗ 1,654 m

Natural (86.19)
Perfume/floral/fruity/herbal/spice/spicy

Welmal PFM

Harrena Buluk Woreda
↗ 1,618 m

Natural (85.56)
Brown spice/chocolate/dried fruit/fruity/spicy

Criteria and procedure for cupping

The cupping of the coffees included in this guide was carried out by cuppers from the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority, Ethiopia Commodity Exchange, CoQua and selected independent cuppers — including Dawit Daniel, who sadly passed away in June 2020.

At the beginning, peak, and end of the harvest, samples were collected from wet mills and farmer groups receiving technical support from Partnerships for Forests, as well as a sample of other cooperatives and private traders who source coffee from forest and semi-forest areas. Several regions that produce forest coffee, including Sheka and West Wellega zones, were not sampled due to security reasons.

During sample collection, sun-dried or parchment coffee was gathered from all bags in the coffee store, mixed together, and a 1-kilogram sample was reserved for cupping. In total 3 kilograms were collected per location throughout the harvest. The coffee was cupped and scored using the Specialty Coffee Association protocol, based on the SCAA Green Arabica Coffee Classification System (GACCS) version Spring 2000 and the SCA Defect Handbook, published on April 2, 2004.

Acknowledgements



Photography
Pg 53–54, Clint McKoy
<https://unsplash.com/@clintmckoy>

Pg 55, Mark Babin
<https://unsplash.com/@marcbabin>





The Origin of Origins



First Edition
2019/2020

