

# Impact Spotlight

Alto Mayo Conservation Initiative  
Q3 2021



**EVER  
LAND**

**CONSERVATION  
INTERNATIONAL**





## Training the next generation of skilled coffee cuppers in the Alto Mayo

COOPBAM is a certified fair trade and organic coffee cooperative with more than 500 members who have made a commitment to sustainably use natural resources within the Alto Mayo Protected Forest, as well as a commitment to net zero deforestation. Members of COOPBAM operate in the northern part of the project area, which provides vital fresh water to downstream communities and is home to many threatened and endemic plant and animal species.



COOPBAM's goal is to continuously improve the quality of its members' coffee so that more of the coop's coffee can achieve top "cupping scores" and earn premium pricing in the specialty coffee markets. Coffee cupping is a standardized approach used by the coffee trade to taste and evaluate coffee as objectively as possible; grades are given to coffees by certified samplers called Q-graders. COOPBAM uses Q-graders to help improve coffee management year by year, a result reflected in the cupping scores. As part of the project's long term strategy to achieve durable forest conservation, the project is also promoting Q-Grader's certification for COOPBAM youth. During this first phase of training, two young members have been selected to enhance their cupping skills over the next months, which will be tested in the first semester of 2022 to become COOPBAM's first "home grown" Q-graders.





## Key activities

To become a Q-Grader a candidate needs to complete 9 training sessions, delivered by the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI). Q-Grader certification is a challenging process; certification means the coffee cupper is highly skilled and can precisely identify many specific quality attributes of coffee. COOPBAM is in the process of meeting the requirements to enable CQI to deliver the 9 sessions. This includes improving the facilities of the coffee lab and having at least one dedicated Q-Grader in place. The project is investing into the facilities and new equipment and already has engaged the Q-Grader who is training the two young members of the cooperative to start taking the course in January 2022. In order to be accepted into the course, the two candidates must pass an initial test, for which they are being prepared; the test evaluates the candidates' skills in preparing coffee samples, noting their characteristics, and capacity to identify different smells in the coffee.





## Meet the coffee graders



**Name:** Victor Hugo Julón Ramos

**Age:** 17

**Community:** Aguas Verdes

**How has your experience with the Q-Grading course been so far?**

*"Good. I have learned more about analysis, which is good. For example a good cup of coffee should have 90*

*points. That's excellent, it has a better body. I have also learned to find flaws in the physical analysis / evaluation of the coffee."*

**What are your future ambitions?**

*"To become a better taster, to compete at national and then international level. To strive to improve myself and achieve my goals."*

**How has the project impacted your life, your family and your community?**

*"A lot. I have shared what I have learned. My life has improved, the cooperative has given me the benefit of knowing more and gaining experience."*

**What is your message to the world about the importance of protecting the Alto Mayo?**

*"Forests are the essence of life, and trees should not be cut down, especially to plant coffee; there are better ways of doing it that makes your coffee even better."*



**Name:** Jean Carlos Cabanillas Ramos

**Age:** 17

**Community:** Aguas Verdes

**How has your experience with the Q grading course been so far?**

*"Actually, really good because we have learnt many things that I did not know and I feel very thankful for the cooperative for having given me this opportunity."*

**What are your future ambitions?**

*"To become a great, professional taster like Jorge Morocho and to keep learning many more things about coffee."*

**How has the project impacted your life, family and community?**

*"Very good because I have shared my experience as a trainee with many other friends and many have shown a lot of interest to learn more about it."*

**What is your message to the world about the importance of protecting the Alto Mayo?**

*"My message to the citizens is that we must protect and conserve wildlife because it is vital for conservation and by protecting our forest nature would be much better off."*



## Milestones

Training for Q-Grader certifications demands special efforts from the project to improve coffee lab conditions, such as renewing equipment and building a classroom suitable for the courses needed to achieve Q-Grader status.



- ✓ The project has its own Q-grader professional in its team who is teaching COOPBAM cuppers and is leading the coffee lab certification process to offer the 2022 Q-Grader program.
- ✓ At the end of the year, the project will submit the request for getting the certification for the coffee lab and engage with CQI to move forward with the courses. If everything moves forward successfully, this will be the first initiative of its kind in a protected area.

The project will also be meeting with regional government members who are interested in seeing how together this initiative can be expanded in other regions, to amplify the project's impact and to increase conservation activities in the coffee sector.



## Current news

2021 has been the most challenging year for COOPBAM since it was founded. It is the first time that coffee prices “in the street” (the local markets) have reached higher than the Cooperative’s and within the COVID context, it is testing membership’s fidelity. This unusual situation, in which the local market price exceeds the international specialty coffee price, seems to be a temporary phenomenon engendered by the pandemic and its impacts on the supply chain for inexpensive Brazilian coffee in particular. The project is paying close attention to this new trend and will re-strategize should this continue.

One short term strategy to ensure membership of the cooperative is the improvement of cupping skills. Cupping skills are key to maintaining commercial links with specialty markets which is why the project has prioritized investing into this initiative. The more COOPBAM’s coffee production is linked to specialty markets, the less pressure there will be to install new coffee plantations in the standing forest and the more likely that members will choose to export their coffee through the cooperative.



**FALCON  
COFFEES**

**COOPBAM**

30 / 846 / 2242

WASHED PERU ARABICA

COFFEE GRADE 1

FALCON Ref: P190512

KGM: 1000016887

KGM PO# 400004081

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# The future



Cupping is a new job alternative for coffee youth in Peru and the project is investing in enabling conditions to create a successful Q-Grader program in Alto Mayo. This will be the first of its kind in the northern part of Peru and the hope and ambition of this initiative is to increase the quality of coffee at the landscape level to avoid any installation of new coffee plantations in higher forests. Success will look like Alto Mayo being recognized as a quality coffee location in the region.