

# A Taste of Laos

*July 16, 2020*



## Welcome.

Thank you for joining Coffee Quality Institute for a virtual coffee tasting. This invitation-only event will introduce you to Laos' specialty coffee sector and demonstrate some of the work that is being done in Laos to improve the quality of their specialty coffee products, build relationships with farmers and producers and impact livelihoods.

We are asking YOU to be part of this event because of your role in the specialty coffee industry. As a buyer, roaster or café owner (or maybe all three), you have an important role to play in “new origin” development through listening, providing feedback and asking questions. Consider this your virtual CQI Coffee Corps™ assignment!

CQI is organizing this virtual coffee tasting as part of the Creating Linkages for Expanded Agricultural Networks (CLEAN) project funded by USDA and implemented by Winrock International with the Lao Department of Agriculture (DOA). CQI's good friend and Q Instructor Tim Heinze will be our able guide, and in addition to the shared experience of tasting together, you'll learn more about coffee in Laos, the CLEAN program, and you'll be able to ask questions and share opinions.

This coffee kit contains 4 samples of Lao coffees, with instructions on how you can participate in the virtual tasting. These samples are a result of two CQI cupping panels, one led by Yimara Martinez Agudelo at Sustainable Harvest, and one led by our host Tim Heinze, and they were roasted for this tasting by Joe Wenbo at J Café in Portland, Oregon.



**Thank you for joining us for this exciting look at Laotian coffee.**

In your Virtual Tasting kit, you have the following:

- 4 x bags of roasted coffee (approx 50g in each bag)
- 1 x Third Wave Water Mineral Supplement

We have put together some basic instructions to assist you in making this experience enjoyable for you and your team. We know coffee tasting is nothing new to you, and we have tried to make this as easy as possible. While we would have loved to have been able to taste and discuss these coffees in person, these are unique times and we find ourselves being creative in how we enjoy these experiences together. As such, we have tried to eliminate certain differences that can occur with people preparing their brews in different regions and under different circumstances.

We ask for everyone to follow an SCA Cupping Protocol when preparing their coffees. This means a ratio of 8.25g of coffee to 150ml of water and a standard cupping grind size. Before the event begins, we encourage you to prepare your materials and cupping area so that there is no delay or distraction for you. Coffees can be weighed in 2 cupping vessels, but please do not grind until you receive our direction at the top of the program.

Please don't forget to boil your water in advance so that you won't waste time waiting. To maintain consistent water usage for all attendees, we have provided you with one sachet of Third Wave Water mineral supplement. This sachet should be mixed with 1 gallon of distilled water and shaken thoroughly. Go ahead and prepare this ahead of the tasting event.

At the beginning of the tasting there will be brief introductions and we will provide directions about when to prepare and taste the coffees. During the event we will hear from farmers and learn a little about the CLEAN program and Laos coffee production. As we conclude we will come back and have a discussion about the coffees. Please make sure to take some notes on your evaluation of the coffees, how you might see them being utilized by you or your customers, and then any questions you might have about Laos coffee.

We are grateful for your participation and excited about the future of coffee in Laos. The hard work and future opportunity we believe is clearly evident in the coffees you will experience. We are looking forward to a great time together! Prepare your spoons and see you on July 16.



## About Coffee Quality Institute

Since 1996, Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) has worked to improve the quality of coffee and the lives of people who produce it. CQI offers training and technical assistance to arabica and robusta coffee producers, and other individuals in the supply chain, to increase coffee quality, value and production volumes. CQI programs, business solutions and innovative approaches to economic sustainability allow producers to not only improve their income today but also make investments for the future of their households and communities.

Since 2003, CQI has worked with a diverse portfolio of public and private partners on a multitude of value chain improvement programs in coffee producing areas of Central and South America, East Africa, Indonesia and Asia. CQI has also completed over 1,000 training assignments worldwide and our Coffee Corps program has matched hundreds of industry experts with farmers and associations at origin to share good practices, allowing producers the best information with which to manage their crop.



COFFEE QUALITY  
INSTITUTE®



## About this program

For this virtual tasting, CQI is working with the *Creating Linkages for Expanded Agricultural Networks* (CLEAN) project funded by USDA and implemented by Winrock International with the Lao Department of Agriculture (DOA).

Winrock International is a recognized leader in U.S. and international development, providing solutions to some of the world's most complex social, agricultural and environmental challenges. Inspired by its namesake Winthrop Rockefeller, Winrock's mission is to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity and sustain natural resources. Winrock is a nonprofit organization that implements a portfolio of more than 140 agriculture, environment and social development projects in over 46 countries.

Focused in Vientiane and on the Bolaven Plateau, the CLEAN project in Laos is working to improve farmer livelihoods and expand the trade of agricultural products. In light of the importance of coffee in farmer incomes on the plateau, CLEAN seeks to improve the production and marketing of specialty coffee from the region in improve the Lao coffee sector.



# Jing Jhai

*Focus on farming*

The Jing Jhai Coffee Cooperative (JJCC) is an organically assembled group of more than 300 families, from 21 different villages, two provinces, and six different ethnic groups. These diverse groups work together to produce some of the finest specialty coffee in South East Asia and certainly the most delicious coffee of Laos.

The community-driven cooperative practices and manages hyper-traceability, with each individual member's coffee being tracked and traced from tree-to-cup; there are no middlemen. The "Ex-Works" system ensures that purchase price translates directly to smallholder income. This system not only enhances ethical businesses to market "beyond fair trade" or "beyond direct trade" relationships to consumers, but most importantly guarantees that the premiums paid by consumers is the premium received by each dedicated producer.

Jing Jhai Coffee has operated experimental, pilot, and scaling programs, since 2013, which focus specifically on specialty-only coffee production and zero-waste production protocols called CASCARA (e.g. Coffee and Animal Sustainable Chains via Alternative Recycling Approaches).

*Samples A and B*



These programs have been recognized, duplicated, and implemented in multiple regions and countries by multiple INGOs in the coffee sector. Jing Jhai Coffee works to eliminate waste streams from coffee production whilst dramatically enhancing smallholder socioeconomic and ecological livelihood in the process.

Members of JJCC are farmers-now-trainers, who have been nationally recognized, as the premier producers of Laotian coffee, often finding themselves as the selected trainers for national coffee production programs, in cooperation with the government and international NGOs in all regions of coffee production of Laos.

Whilst small, Jing Jhai Coffee Cooperative is the group of visionary farmers which exemplify the smallholder, innovative spirit to push the limits of quality in this “undiscovered” origin.

Contact details for Jing Jhai Coffee Cooperative: Ms. Laty Keopiensy mobile +8562099941972 – [Hello@filanthrope.org](mailto>Hello@filanthrope.org) – Fi-lan'thro-pe, Mr. Wock & Ms. Laty





# Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative

*Focus on farming*

The Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative's (CPC) mission is “to improve the quality of life of coffee smallholders of the Bolaven Plateau and to fight against poverty in the area.” They represent coffee producers of the Bolaven Plateau at the government level, within the coordination bodies of the Lao coffee supply chain at domestic and international levels and for all activities related to coffee. They provide members with technical assistance in all aspects of coffee production and support them in all aspects of coffee marketing and promotion.

Spread over three districts (Paksong, Laongam and Thateng) and 47 villages, the 1,053 smallholders' families that make up the CPC have an average of four hectares of plantations. These men and women have found, through the cooperative, a means of a decent living from their work and have taken charge of their own destiny and that of their communities.

*Sample C*







The strength of the CPC and its members is the quality of its coffees. By controlling the entire production chain, from plantation to cup, the cooperative can provide its customers with high quality coffees still unmatched in Laos. Benefiting from modern infrastructure and trained in wet processing techniques by specialists from France and El Salvador, the cooperative's members are now able to meet the demands of the international market, both in terms of quality and production volumes. Compliance with strict specifications, from harvest to processing, has allowed members of CPC to win recognition and the trust of its customers. Producing the only Fairtrade (FLO) and organic (EU, IFOAM and NOP) certified coffee in Laos, the cooperative is exporting about 1,300 MT of specialty coffee yearly.

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#### AWARDS:

2012 – “Laos Best Coffee Exporter”  
2018 – ASEAN Business Awards Laos 2018 “Large enterprises excellence Award”  
2019 - ASEAN “Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Leadership Award”

# Bolaven Farms

*Focus on Circular  
Value Chain*

Bolaven Farms, which operates in Laos and Papua New Guinea, is a social enterprise to monetize the intrinsic quality of the coffee cherries, and to democratize wealth in favor of smallholding coffee growers.

Quality cherries are supplied by approximately 1,100 families from villages including Nonlouang, Mak Gor, Huaye Khong which are located in the Bolaven Plateau, comprised of mainly Laven and Khamu tribes living in two distinct districts at approximately 1,100 and 1,300 meters above mean sea level.

Catimor and old stock Robusta are cultivated by natural farming and are, therefore, organic by default. Future plans include organizing the communities for organic certification.

*Sample D*



Bolaven Farms' wet and dry mill is rated to produce 5-7 FCL of Specialty Arabica and 4-5 FCL of Fine Robusta per season.

Bolaven Farms has invented and patented "Proceso Puro," a circular coffee process chain that is quality-driven and earth-friendly. This is a good alternative to traditional coffee process which tends to create wastewater high in biochemical oxygen demands, contaminating watershed and soil. Proceso Puro is a working circular economic model mindful of environmental impact at origins as well as sustained socioeconomic transformation for smallholding coffee growers.



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# Laotian Coffee

The Laotian coffee industry traces back to about 1920, when French settlers started plantations on the Bolaven Plateau, and picked up around 1930 when the colonial government developed a road to the highland town of Paksong. Farmers planted bourbon and typica trees and exported fully washed coffee to France. Indigenous residents of the plateau began planting coffee around 1940, but conflict in the region escalated in the 1950s, impacting production. Coffee leaf rust and recurrent frosts led remaining farmers to replace many arabica trees with robusta, which was typically dry processed, saving farmers labor and water. Although not officially an active front in the Vietnam war, the Bolaven Plateau did suffer from the conflict, as American planes dropped significant amounts of bombs in the area where craters still dot the countryside and unexploded ordinances still remain.

After the end of the war in 1975, Laos' Communist government began the collectivization of coffee production and marketing on the plateau, creating production and trading cooperatives that controlled the industry. Robusta production dominated because incentives were aligned to prioritized volume over quality. Economic liberalization began in the late 1980s which allowed for the private sector to enter the Laotian coffee industry. Two development projects — the World Bank's *Laos Upland Agricultural Development Project* (LUADP) and the *Projet de Développement Rural du Plateau des Bolovens* (PDRPB) from the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) — supported the rehabilitation and expansion of coffee plantations, reintroduced washed processing, and introduced improved robusta and catimor varieties from Costa Rica to the plateau, setting the stage for the Laotian coffee sector today.

Since 2005 there has been a sector diversification of the coffee sector in southern Laos, resulting in a variety of business models. Production is dominated by smallholder farmers planting areas averaging 2.5 hectares per household, often scattered on several non-contiguous plots of land.



# Laotian Coffee

*continued*

However, the plateau now hosts at least twelve large plantations, most between 200 and 300 hectares but with the two largest land concessions going to Thailand's Paksong Highland and Olam's local affiliate, Outspan Bolovens, with 2,900 hectares and 1,400 hectares respectively. A variety of official and informal cooperatives are also present, ranging from the Bolaven Plateau Coffee Producers Cooperative (CPC), a Fair Trade and organic certified cooperative, and Jhai Coffee Farmers Cooperative (JCFC), which has a long history and well-established buyers, to newer creations like Jing Jhai Coffee Cooperative. Large and small-scale buyers from Vietnam and Thailand dominate the Laotian trade, with additional coffee exported to Europe, the United States, and East Asia. Farmers report an increasing number of small-scale buyers from East Asia who are willing to pay high prices for specific varieties or small lots processed to particular specifications.

Coffee production is concentrated in southern Laos, on the Bolaven Plateau. The gateway to the area is lowland Pakse, Laos' third-largest city. Paksong is the primary population center on the plateau, approximately 50 kilometers up a recently repaved road. Coffee businesses, mills, and warehouses are located along this road, just off of it, or just past Paksong.

Coffee is grown at altitudes of 400 to 1,400 meters, primarily in Champasak province along with smaller plantings on the edges of the plateau in Salavan, Sekong, and Attapu. Arabica cultivation begins as low as 800 meters and goes up to 1,400 meters — anything higher is considered too high a risk of frost. Maximum elevation on the plateau is 1,700 meters but land higher than 1,100 meters is limited. Robusta is found from 400 meters up to 1,400 meters, most densely below 800 meters but with significant planting at high altitudes, a result of the large-scale robusta planting in the 1970s and 1980s.

# Laotian Coffee *continued*

Coffee is exported from Laos via two main border crossings, to Chong Mek for destinations in Thailand and the port at Laem Chabang for international shipping, or to Bo Y for destinations in Vietnam. A small but increasing amount of coffee is also grown in northern Laos, including in Luang Prabang, Hua Phan, Xiangkhouang, and Phongsaly provinces, in part promoted by international donors and NGOs as an alternative to opium production. According to the Laos National Coffee Board (CNCL), production in Phongsaly has been promoted specifically for its proximity to Chinese production areas.

Statistics around coffee production in Laos are inconsistent. The Coffee Sector Export Roadmap indicates that Laos exports 80% robusta and 20% arabica while the Lao Coffee Association reported exports of 13,415 metric tons (MT) of robusta and 13,641 MT of arabica in 2016 and 9,555 MT of robusta and 19,942 MT of arabica in 2017. One large exporter estimates that southern Laos produces 15,000-18,000 MT per year of arabica and 12,000-15,000 MT of robusta. The International Coffee Organization (ICO) reports relatively steady production, hovering just over 30,000 MT total in the past decade.

Regardless of specific numbers, it can be safely said that Laos produces and exports significant volumes of arabica and robusta. Based on planting trends and government and NGO promotion, the proportion of arabica is probably increasing, particularly when including production in northern Laos.

# Contacts

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# Our host

Tim Heinze specializes in coffee production, processing, and supply chain management. For ten years, he has worked to see the implementation of a farmer-centric, regenerative coffee supply chain focusing on improving coffee production and processing outcomes, product quality control, cupper training, business management, and export logistics. He is currently Sucafina's Director for Papua New Guinea, where he oversees and manages the operations for the entire country. Tim is a founding partner of Yunnan Coffee Traders, a specialty coffee trading company that works directly alongside Yunnan coffee farmers to grow, process, and produce the highest quality Yunnan coffee. He is also the former owner of Hani Coffee Company, which supplied high quality roasted coffee to the Chinese market. In addition, he is a founding partner of HuskeeCo, creators of a durable ceramic alternative made from coffee husks. Tim holds teaching credentials for the Specialty Coffee Association in green coffee, sensory, roasting, and barista. He is also a CQI accredited instructor for both the Q Grader as well as Q Processing programs. Tim has worked as an instructor and trainer for CQI on origin projects in China, Myanmar, the Philippines, and the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as instructed across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the US. Tim is currently working on his Masters of Agriculture from Texas A&M University, has a Bachelor of Arts from Howard Payne University, and a Chinese language Certification from Yuxi Normal University.

*Myanmar*



**LAOS**

*Vietnam*

**Vientiane**

*Thailand*

More than 95% of national  
coffee production in Laos  
is from the Bolaven Plateau  
in the southern portion  
of the nation.

**Bolaven  
Plateau**

*Cambodia*