



**FIELD
SURVEY
INITIATIVE**

PILOT PROJECT
REPORT 2020



Strong Women = Strong Coffee

JAWiC (Jamaican Women in Coffee)

JAWiC is proud to represent Jamaica as the national chapter of the International Women's Coffee Alliance (IWCA), since April 2019. We seek to connect women in coffee, to recognize their contributions to the industry and to empower a sustainable, equitable future. By developing and nurturing a supportive community, the women of JAWiC use our collective strength to catalyze positive change in the coffee industry.

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List of Acronyms

CIBOJ

Coffee Industry Board of Jamaica

JACRA

Jamaica Agricultural Regulatory Authority

JAWiC

Jamaican Women in Coffee

RADA

Rural Agricultural Development Authority

JAWiC in the Blue Mountain
coffee fields with women
producers





Background

As one of Jamaica's traditional export crops, coffee is recognized as a vital export commodity, with the industry accounting for one of the island's largest earnings of foreign exchange. Jamaica produces around 0.1% of global coffee traded, yet it remains a key player within the international speciality market as the producer of one of the best tasting and most expensive coffees in the world — the Blue Mountain coffee.

Furthermore, with 85% of the coffee industry being supported by smallholder farmers, it forms an integral part of rural livelihoods and contributes significantly to the national economy. In 2015 and 2016, coffee represented 83% of traditional agricultural exports for the island, with the Japanese market remaining unmatched as the largest buyer of Jamaican coffee.

Over the years, the Jamaican coffee industry has engaged in efforts to improve the productivity and quality of coffee being cultivated so as to achieve greater economic returns. Even though globally, it has been acknowledged that women perform the majority of the work in coffee growing communities, interestingly for Jamaica, there has not been any research which approached the operation of the coffee industry through the lens of gender.

There are approximately 4,518 registered coffee farmers across the island, however, approximately 1,215 (27%) are women. Furthermore, around 94% of these women operate within the Blue Mountain region, while only 6% operate in the High Mountain region.

However, by placing women's empowerment and gender equity/equality as core elements of JAWiC's strategic plan, our intention is to disrupt the status quo, by actively pursuing solutions to the challenges facing Jamaican women in coffee.



Pilot Project Description

The main aim of the pilot study was to capture exploratory data towards developing a basic understanding of the women in coffee, and the challenges they face within the coffee industry. It was important to discover this local context, thus setting the stage towards examining their vulnerabilities, perceptions, livelihood experiences, and adaptation strategies.

The pilot project focused specifically on the activities of women in coffee from the Blue Mountain region.

Objectives

- To explore the livelihood experiences and challenges of female coffee farmers in the industry, such as access to farm inputs, training, credit, market information and leadership opportunities.
- To establish the presence of JAWiC within the coffee farming communities of the Blue Mountain region.
- To discover preliminary data on the barriers that disadvantage women coffee farmers

Methodology

In 2019, extending from July–September, JAWiC undertook a pilot project across the Blue Mountain coffee-producing region. The survey developed, was designed to be exploratory, so as to capture vital information for a full-scale research project, as well as its feasibility.

The survey incorporated both closed-ended and open-ended questions on household characteristics, demographic data, farming activities, institutional support and challenges. Specifically, the use of open-ended questions allowed participants to freely share their experiences in the coffee industry, provided valuable insight on conditions in the industry, and also highlighted crucial components of the larger study that were not previously considered.

The questionnaire was then integrated into Salesforce. This is an online Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool and platform that assists organizations in efficiently managing their client information or database, data analytics and visualization.

The Jamaica Agricultural Regulatory Authority (JACRA) provided JAWiC with a list of registered women coffee farmers, from which individuals were contacted to gauge their interest in participating in the survey.

The project was self-financed, and conducted by board members of the organization. Therefore, based on logistical considerations, availability of participants and board members, weather conditions, and funding, data was collected through phone interviews and fieldwork. Even though phone interviews offered some level of convenience, it was also

important to meet participants in the field. This contributed to establishing the presence of JAWiC in these communities and informing the women of the mission of the organization, of which many were receptive.

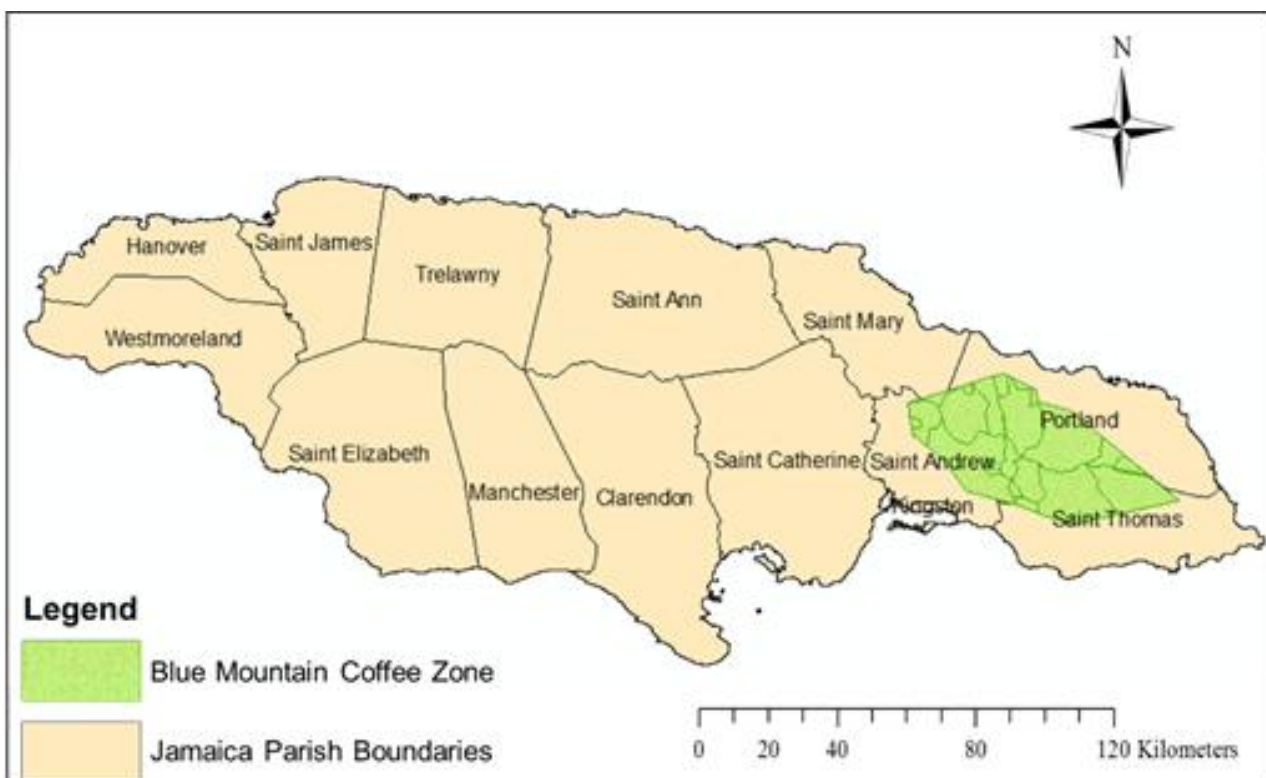


Figure 1: Illustration of the Blue Mountain coffee producing region

A total of 67 women were surveyed from the parishes of St. Andrew (26), St. Thomas (25), and Portland (16) — see Figure 1. The data collected from the pilot was analyzed via Salesforce and the results presented at International Coffee Week 2019 in Brazil.





Findings and Discussion

The survey engaged 67 women in coffee from the parishes of St. Andrew, St. Thomas and Portland. Figure 2 shows the distribution of sampled participants, and details the communities from which the surveys were conducted. It was important to also capture the altitude of these coffee-producing communities, especially since altitude has been acknowledged as an important agro-ecological parameter for coffee growth, fruit development, and flavour profile of beans.

This is due to its relationship with climatic conditions. Higher altitudes accommodate cooler temperatures, and cloud cover which facilitates the slow maturation of the bean, thus contributing to the flavour profile and quality of the coffee. Coffee grown at lower elevations, are often categorized as lower quality compared to those grown at higher elevations.

In Jamaica, coffee growing spaces occupy altitudes which range from lower quality coffee at 130ft to higher quality coffee at 5,669ft.

However, for this study, the altitude of Blue Mountain communities from which participants were surveyed, ranged from 1,929ft-4,005ft.

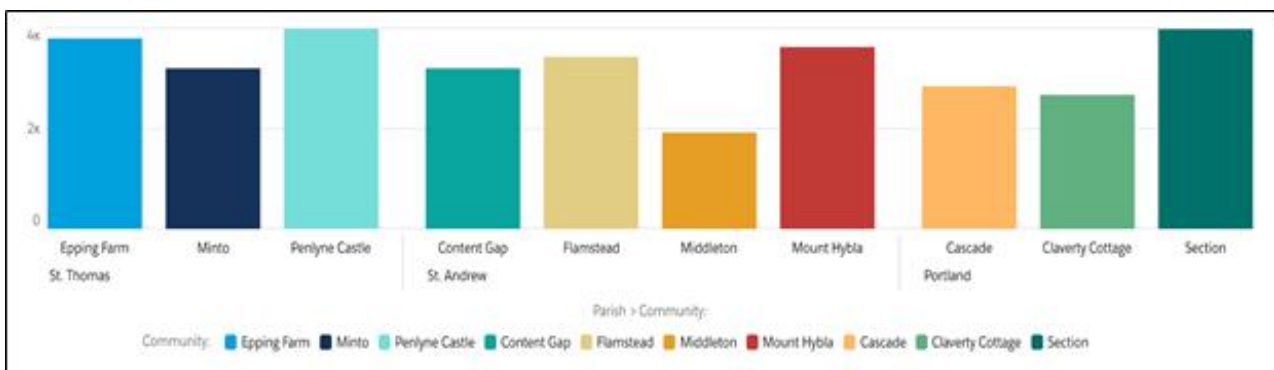


Figure 2: Altitude of Blue Mountain coffee-producing communities surveyed

The community of Penlyne Castle, St. Thomas (>1,200meters/4000feet)



Livelihood Characteristics of Women in Coffee

Generally, the mean age of women surveyed was 52, with the minimum age being 26 and the maximum being 86 years of age. Among the sample, 69% classified themselves as mainly coffee farmers, while others played multiple roles within the coffee industry, specifically a combination of farmers, pickers, and selectors.

The educational status within the sample was varied, with the majority (52%) of respondents having secondary schooling as their highest level of educational attainment. Other categories included primary school level (30%) and tertiary level (13%), while 3% admitted to not receiving any form of education.

With regards to the main sources of income, 82% of participants acknowledged coffee farming as their main source of income for their households. However, even though the majority of the sample depended on coffee farming, 94% of the respondents admitted to its insufficiency in meeting their family's needs. Hence, incomes were supplemented by other activities such as cash crop farming, which included fruits, vegetables and root tubers.

Similarly, respondents also admitted to rearing livestock such as chickens and goats. Other activities which played a vital role in financing their household included child care, housekeeping, and civil servant jobs such as nursing, and teaching, among others.

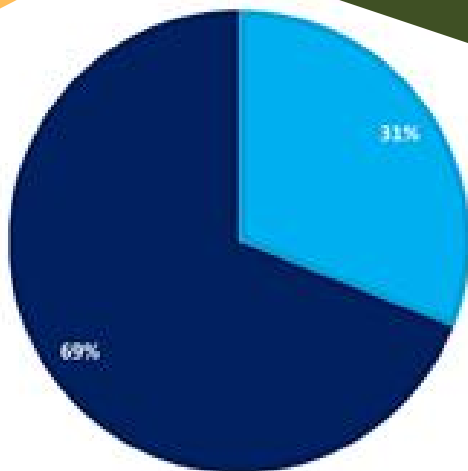
Interestingly, 33% of the sample acknowledged their participation within the coffee industry was due to it being the only option available to them, while 30% stated that their involvement in coffee production was based on family tradition. Other respondents' involvement (25%) was to initially improve their finances, while only 3% based their participation on their love for farming and coffee production (see Figure 3).

Fully, 69% of respondents stated that they had not

received any training in farming, while 31% acknowledge some level of training through State institutions such as the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), coffee processors, and/or the Coffee Industry Board of Jamaica (CIBOJ) — now JACRA. However, of the respondents who did not receive any training, the majority (48%) had gained knowledge about coffee farming simply through trial and error.

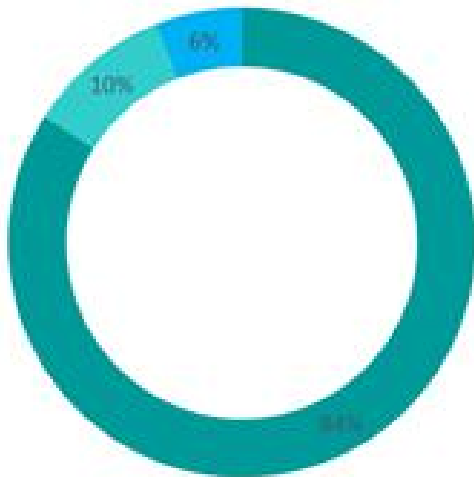


Figure 3: The educational status of women in coffee and their reasons for participating within the coffee industry



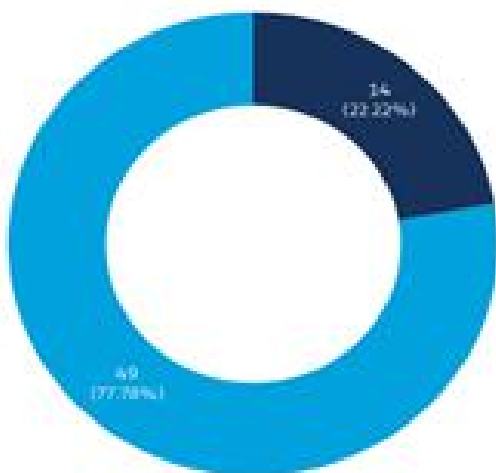
■ Yes ■ No

Training of women in coffee



■ 1-2 ■ 3-4 ■ 5-6

Number of coffee farm plots



● No ● Yes

Increase in coffee production over last 5 year

Conversely, 36% stated that they had acquired this knowledge through their parents, while others were assisted by friends, and family who were already in coffee farming. The survey also found that the average farm size for coffee production was 2.53 acres, while the total acreage under coffee development within the sample amounted to 169.25 acres. Fully 84% of women were farming on 1-2 plots of land (see Figure 4).

Ideally, an acre of coffee plants can produce over 150 boxes of coffee during the harvest season; 1 box equalling 60lbs of cherry coffees. However, the study revealed 54% of respondents were producing 30 boxes of coffee or less.

Figure 4: Statistics on training, coffee plots farmed on, and the perceived level of production by women in coffee

Furthermore, in terms of land ownership, 52% of the women surveyed did not own the land they farmed on. Oftentimes land farmed is considered as 'family land' — meaning that it has been passed down through generations. Therefore, land title documents are usually absent. This is significant as it suggests that these women do not have a legal document to prove land ownership, and hence will be challenged in accessing loans or assistance from financing institutions.

Fully 78% of the respondents surveyed acknowledged that they did not experience an increase in their coffee production over the last 5 years. Farmers stressed that this was due to the low farm-gate prices being paid by coffee processors, thus limiting their ability to maintain farm care.

According to one farmer, *"when the price was good, I had cut down on farming cash crops and focused on the coffee. I had more money to take care of the farm, but now that the price has decreased I plan to return to cash crop farming again"*. Praedial larceny was also highlighted as a challenge which hindered coffee production. One farmer stated, *"[I] took over uncle's farm [and] started to take care of it, like manure and fertilizer so it start to increase, but I've been experiencing praedial larceny"*.

It must be noted that many of the respondents were also unaware and/or uncertain of their production levels. This may have been primarily due a lack of documentation and record keeping of farm activities and management.

Conversely, 22% of those who experienced an increase in production, stated that this was due to increased efforts to maintain their farm, and implement proper agronomic practices. Some of these practices included the application of fertilizer, manure, pruning coffee trees, and cleaning the farm. For example, one farmer stated that, *“because of better treatment with fertilizer and cleaning, more trees started to bear”*. Other respondents attributed their production increase to planting more coffee stands, implementing measures to buffer the impacts of climate change, due to increased attention to its impacts on their coffee farm.

In terms of the marketing of coffee, the industry is shaped

by the presence of several private coffee processors. These are highly integrated organizations which not only produce, process and export coffee, but also determine the farm-gate prices for coffee farmers. During the harvest season, cherry coffees are reaped and carried to depots. These are the collecting stations of various private coffee processors where cherry coffees are sold. The majority of the sample surveyed sold their coffee to several coffee processors, including Coffee Traders, Jamaica Coffee Corporation, Mavis Bank Coffee Factory, Jamaica Standard Products and the Wallenford Coffee Company.



Challenges Facing Women in Coffee

The pilot survey revealed that women within coffee producing communities have been experiencing several challenges, some of which have influenced their perceptions on continuing their participation within the industry. Perceptions often reflect the reality, and lived

experiences of individuals. Therefore, an awareness of these insights are vital in understanding the challenges being experienced, and how they have shaped the local livelihoods of women in coffee.

- **Economic**

One of the main challenges highlighted by 75% of respondents was the low farm-gate price being paid by coffee processors.

Generally, farmers' dependency on a continuous international demand for their coffee, and the price determined by local coffee processors, can significantly impact their livelihood. For example, a decrease in price can be accompanied by great socio-economic consequences.

During the 2019/2020 cropping cycle, women coffee farmers identified their farm-gate price as a range between JMD\$3,000-\$4,000 per box of coffee cherries (approximately USD\$22-\$30). This was noteworthy, especially when compared to the 2015/216 crop cycle when farm-gate prices ranged between JMD\$8,000-\$10,000 (approximately USD\$70-\$87). This was a result of the scarcity of coffee cherries in the local market due an outbreak of the coffee leaf rust disease.

This was a result of the scarcity of coffee cherries in the local market due an outbreak of the coffee leaf rust disease. However, the outbreak has since been tempered within some communities, thus somewhat stabilizing local market demand, and lowering the price for cherry coffee. According to a farmer, "*\$4000 for a box of coffee is meagre, meagre, meagre*". Farmers complained of the low price being inadequate to simultaneously maintain the operations of their farm, and sustain their household. Generally, high production costs have characteristically become an economic feature within the coffee industry.

This is especially significant, as contrary to past operations within the industry, farm inputs currently remain unsubsidized by the government. According to a farmer, *“in the past it [coffee] was enjoyable for us as the money was there and we were much happier; the price decreased now, so we’re not happy anymore”*.

Another farmer acknowledged that, *“[I have] been in coffee for over 30 years and it has been a good experience, but now the decrease in price makes it difficult; the price on coffee is not enough to pay pickers, maintain the farm and provide for myself and family”*.

The island’s coffee industry is typically labour intensive, and oftentimes require workers to ensure that farms are maintained during the growing season, the harvest period, and as well as during post-harvest conditions.

In maintaining the coffee farm, labour costs and farm inputs/equipment appear to capture the highest financial costs borne by farmers. However, the recent challenges with low farm-gate prices have hindered the ability of farmers to adequately invest in these resources. Several farmers stated that, *“labourers require higher prices than we are getting for the coffee”*, and *“it has been a struggle, since there is no money to pay pickers the coffee so it goes to waste”*.

Also, due to immense financial difficulties, women in coffee often become increasingly dependent on any available savings. One farmer acknowledged that,

"[I] can't buy farm input and pay persons to maintain the farm due to the low price on coffee, so I usually have to dip into my pocket to maintain the farm".

Another challenge faced by women in coffee is the double burden they have to bear throughout their livelihood. Respondents acknowledged the difficulty faced in not only managing farming activities, but also sharing their time to manage household chores and expenses. This double burden is often compounded by the limited availability of funds, especially during times of unexpected hardships.

In relation to the latter, respondents highlighted the current challenge of financing medical issues, and sending children to school. According to a respondent, *"before the drop in price, I was able to*

send daughters to college and was able to sustain my livelihood; now it's a struggle [as] most of the money has to pump back into the farm [and I] cannot maintain both farm and house".

Another acknowledged, *"I have a son that is a pilot that I sent to school out of the coffee farm; so it [coffee farming] was something that was good and to see that I had to give it [coffee farming] up is a bad thing".*

- **Climatic**

Financial challenges have also been compounded by changing climatic patterns, and the impacts of pests and diseases. It is difficult, and somewhat impossible to separate the impacts of climatic and economic challenges, as

both have dually affected the livelihoods of those dependent on the coffee industry. The unavailability of financing have hindered the ability of farmers to combat various climatic stressors and outbreaks. Hence, the period for timely interventions and recovery is often impacted. Several respondents made mention of drought conditions which have led to inconsistent production and poor coffee quality.

According to some respondents, drought conditions have led to poor cherry coffee development, and what is termed as 'light coffee'. This occurs when the coffee bean is unable to mature due to the plant's failure to supply sufficient nutrients to cherry coffees, thus preventing bean development. The impact of pests, and diseases to cherry coffee and its bean also produces 'light coffee'.

These cherries are often unsatisfactory to buyers and/or processors and are discarded, hence reducing the volume of coffee which could have been sold by farmers, resulting in a financial loss.

Respondents acknowledged an increase in the cost to maintain their coffee farms, especially with regards to the use of expensive agrochemicals to treat diseases such as the coffee leaf rust and/or the American disease. Others mentioned the unavailability of farm equipment, stating that *"it is hard, because the farm needs to be sprayed and I don't have a spray pan; I have to rent from someone else and pay JMD\$500/per day to use it"*.

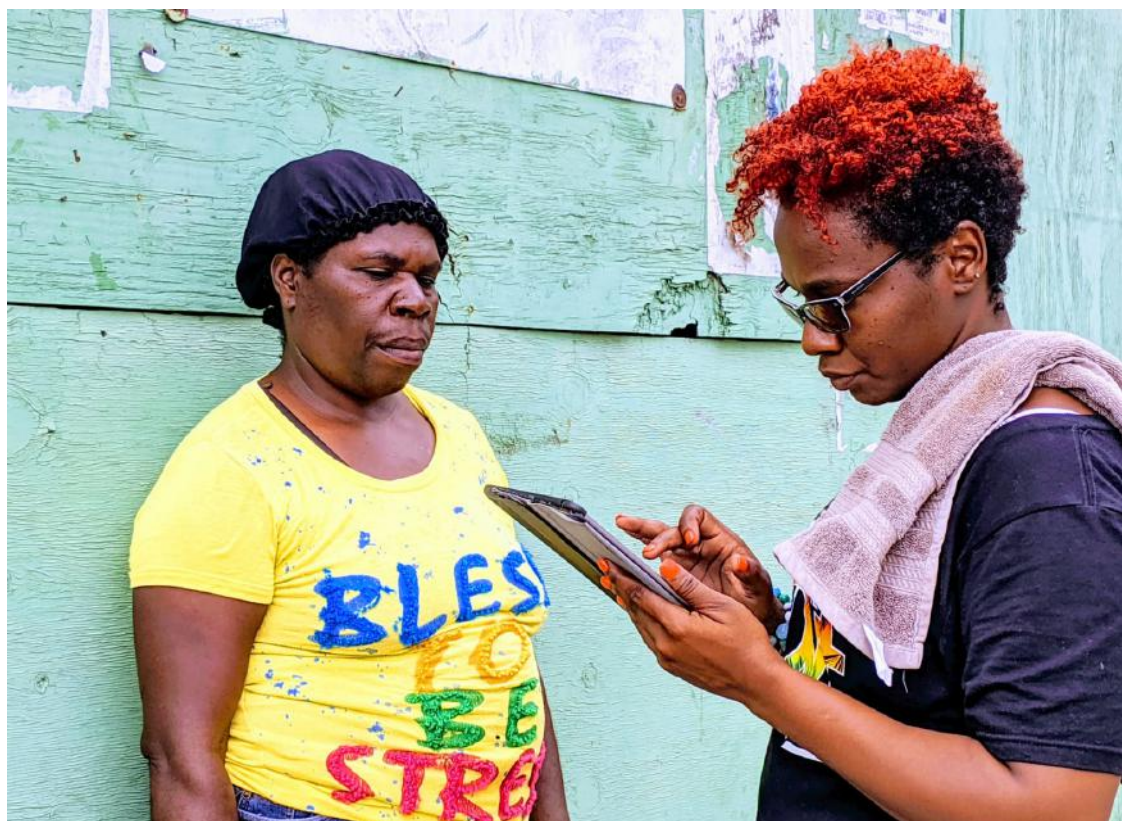
Another respondent acknowledged that, *“it [coffee farming] was more fun, and more profitable before, but not so much these days; I think the price and the disease has made it unattractive”*.

- **Social**

Generally, the material resources, basic infrastructure, and technologies forms an important requirement for the maintenance of livelihoods. However, the respondents surveyed revealed several

challenges in accessing the provision of basic physical resources within their communities. One of the main difficulties highlighted was the extremely poor road conditions. These Blue Mountain women coffee farmers have to manoeuvre hilly terrains to reach their farms, which often results in high transportation costs.

JAWiC conducting field survey with Blue Mountain women coffee producers



This not only impacts coffee production by hindering the transport of available farm inputs, but it also impacts the harvesting process as some farmers found it difficult to transport their cherry coffee to depots. Respondents who engage in farming cash crops for added income, also highlighted the difficulty in transporting perishable produce to the local market. According to one farmer, *“the poor road condition is a major problem, because I would plant cash crops, but I have no means of taking it to the market due to the lack of transportation and poor roads; sometimes the crops end up being spoiled”*.

Another respondent acknowledged that *“[the] road is a major challenge; it is very expensive to travel in this area”*. However, poor road infrastructure not only impacts the operation of the farm, but

also poses a challenge for the elderly and those with vulnerable health conditions. According to a respondent *“currently my mother is sickly and cannot get to go to the doctor since transportation is so expensive”*.

Respondents also acknowledged the challenge in accessing water to supply their farm and household needs.



Generally, these rural communities have been limited by their dependence on rainfall for continued coffee production. Furthermore, there has been little progress in improving access to technological developments such as irrigation systems, as farmers remain burdened by financing. According to one farmer, *"[the] water system is very bad in the community; [I] need help to develop the water system to get it on the farm"*.

Several of the respondents also made mention of the difficulty in accessing formal social resources or assistance. They acknowledged that support services within the coffee industry has been limited, thus resulting in participants within the sector being forced to manage multiple socio-economic, climatic, and financial constraints on their own.

Specifically, the women surveyed, highlighted a level of disparity with regards to assistance from advisory officers associated with both government agricultural organizations, and private coffee processors. According to one respondent, *"people [wider industry stakeholders] more want to help the men or look to the men"*.

This disparity also extends into accessing resources, technical training, engaging in opportunities which allow upward mobility in the coffee value chain, and as well as the ability to occupy spaces of leadership within their communities.

According to a respondent, there is a *“lack of recognition, lack of resources such as training, workshops and mentorship; overall there is a lack of support”* for women in coffee throughout the industry. Others shared their experience of the gender dynamic within the industry, where one respondent perceived the lack of support extended from labourers in the field, to high level stakeholders who regulate the local coffee industry.

A farmer acknowledged where, *“men want to be the ones to tell you what to do; when they come in to work they want to tell you what to do; JACRA is biased and think women don't know anything”*. These findings depict a gender dynamic where women perceived their contribution to the coffee industry as ‘lesser than’, compared to their male counterparts.





Management of Challenges & Future of Women in Coffee

Even though the majority of respondents depended on coffee farming as their main source of income, the uncertainty surrounding this

livelihood strategy has encouraged some farmers to engage in other income-generating activities.

Generally, farmers who engage in multiple livelihood strategies are able to provide a safety net for themselves, and their households during difficult periods. Many of the respondents engaged in cash crop farming. This not only diversifies their incomes, but also secures their household food reserves.

According to one farmer, *“low price, so low money to put back into the farm; [I’m] not able to finance myself so [I] have to do cash crop and sell at Coronation Market”*.

However, even though there are those who have been able to survive these challenges, there remains a sense of discouragement among the women coffee farmers. The deterrent and dissuasion to continue their livelihoods within the coffee industry are often due to their inability to reap the investment (financial, physical, and temporal) made into the growth and production of the crop. Several respondents highlighted these sentiments below:

“need to be strong to be a coffee farmer”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

“[I] want to keep doing it [coffee farming], but it’s challenging”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

“[I] enjoy the farming activity as it provided for my family; now reduced prices have made me disheartened and [I] need to find my own markets to sell directly”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

“[I] feel discouraged, and that coffee farming is a waste of time”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

As a result of these attitudes, many perceive a negative outlook on their future role within the coffee industry, especially as their livelihoods have become increasingly challenging to sustain. Furthermore, 51% of the women stated that they would prefer not to have their children a part of the coffee industry. According to a farmer, *“it [coffee farming] was better in the past, but as time goes by we realise it is getting worse and worse”*.

However, despite these sentiments, there were women (42%), who were not against their children continuing in coffee farming. Therefore, there were respondents who remained hopeful that the coffee industry will experience a turnaround, and were therefore willing to continue operating within the coffee industry:

“I have to make it work even though nothing is on coffee; [I] have children going to school so [I] have to make it work”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

“I don't intend to abandon coffee because the price may increase on it”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)

“We don't have any other income so we have to keep doing it”, (Blue Mountain Woman Coffee Farmer 2019)



Conclusion

There is a lack of research and empirical data on the role of women within Jamaica's coffee industry. The pilot study conducted revealed that women face multiple constraints in operating within the coffee industry. These include, accessing markets, purchasing farm inputs, hiring labour, possessing land ownership, and lack of training activities.

It is imperative that these constraints are alleviated for

equal and equitable participation of women in coffee to be recognized. JAWiC is strategically positioned to encourage this process to improve livelihoods, increase the quality and quantity of coffee production, and facilitate sustainable development within coffee-growing communities.



Recommendations

- **Implement a baseline study to collect empirical data on the gender gap within Jamaica's coffee industry.**

There is a lack of empirical data surrounding the general profile of women in the coffee industry, the role they play within the coffee value chain, and the challenges they face. This has in turn led to an absence of key information on gender equity and equality in

Jamaica's specialty coffee industry. Therefore, a baseline study comprising an extensive data collection initiative needs to be undertaken, where empirical data will shed light on the state and function of women within Jamaica's coffee-producing spaces.

This initiative is important as it would provide a foundation of evidence-based research on which JAWiC can actively pursue appropriate solutions which align with the

organization's strategic plans to empower women along the coffee value chain.

Therefore, by better understanding and meeting the needs of women, JAWiC will be able to design solutions that improve their participation in the coffee value chain, improve the production and quality of their coffee for local and international markets, improve livelihood outcomes, adapt to climate change impacts, facilitate women with the power of a collective voice, while uplifting them as leaders, and policy shapers within their own communities and the industry.

Furthermore, in pioneering this investigation, the project will also expand the knowledge base of other local organizations interested in improving their contribution to

gender relations, specifically through their policies, activities and ventures.

Since the pilot study only focused on capturing preliminary data, specifically on women in coffee, the male perspective was excluded. Therefore, to really understand the 'gender gap' through an examination of gender equity/equality, it is also recommended that this larger baseline study surveys both men and women in coffee. With this comparative analysis, it will be possible to understand the disparities in their experiences as active participants in the coffee industry. The comparison will also provide empirical evidence on the factors which differentiates women in coffee compared to men.

Finally, even though the Blue Mountain coffee-producing region is recognized as economically valuable, and hosts 94% of women coffee farmers, the baseline study should also extend beyond this region to include the operation of those within the High Mountain coffee-producing region. This will provide an opportunity for the experiences of women within an often neglected coffee-producing region to be captured.

- **Improve market access for women in coffee**

The low farm-gate price offered to coffee farmers was one of the major challenges discussed. This was also linked to inadequate access to local and international markets. It is important for JAWiC to build a network of potential buyers by

establishing its presence at the world's largest coffee events, while strategizing better ways to market women's coffee locally. One of the main avenues to achieve this, is to ensure that the quality of Jamaican coffee meets the standards of international specialty coffee.

Therefore, it is also recommended that JAWiC implements an educational drive to inform women on how to identify and produce superior coffee, first by teaching the fundamentals of quality control, followed by training opportunities for improving coffee quality.

- **Improve access to farm management within coffee producing regions across the island.**

Farmers are considered as agricultural entrepreneurs. However, for women coffee farmers, many are uncertain of their production volumes, and the monetary value of their investments. Therefore, it is essential for JAWiC to facilitate capacity-building initiatives through training and workshops. These are intended to improve financial literacy, record keeping techniques, and general business management of coffee farms — all of which play a vital role in maintaining their productivity and sustainability.

- **Improve knowledge on climate change and coffee sustainability**

The livelihoods of Jamaican coffee farmers are being severely impacted by reduced yields and increased pest and diseases brought on by changing climatic conditions. In order to assist women in coffee to maintain their production, JAWiC will need to design transformative opportunities which will support their livelihoods, and build their adaptive capacity against the impacts of climate change. Hence, ensuring the sustainability of coffee culture for current and future generations.

- **Create community leaders to maintain linkages at the grassroots level**

The lack of opportunities, recognition, and the ability to occupy positions of leadership have led to Jamaican women in coffee being underrepresented within their communities, and the coffee industry at large. Therefore, while fundamentally giving women the power of a collective voice, it is essential for JAWiC to develop training and mentorship opportunities, to uplift leaders and policy shapers within the coffee community.

Appendix

JAWiC in the Field



Appendix

JAWiC in the Field





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