TPSA Coffee Buyer Missions to Gayo Highland in Aceh Province

The Canada–Indonesia Trade and Private Sector Assistance Project (TPSA) project successfully organized two coffee buyer missions in August and November 2017. Six buyers from Canada participated in a mission to the Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah districts of Aceh province, Indonesia, to visit five TPSA-selected coffee producers.

The TPSA project’s five selected Indonesian coffee producers hosted six buyers from Canada. Nusa Coffee Company from Vancouver went on a buyer mission from August 18 to 21, 2017, and a second mission took place from November 13 to 18, 2017, with Bean North Coffee Roasting from Whitehorse, Just Us! Coffee from Nova Scotia, Cooperative Coffee and Lenoir and Lacroix from Montréal, and Los Beans Trading Inc. from Vancouver participating. The Minister of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia took part in both missions, as did key TPSA partners.

The Canadian buyers met with five Gayo Arabica producers in the Aceh province of Indonesia. Each producer was carefully evaluated and selected by the TPSA team, using factors such as their business story, coffee quality, and management practices. Prior to the mission, TPSA and Canadian coffee consultants conducted a matchmaking process, pairing the business profiles of the producers with demand from potential Canadian buyers. Some of the buyers had previously imported Gayo Arabica coffee, but had not had an opportunity to directly observe all of its production stages. These missions helped buyers gain a better understanding of the significance of coffee production to the livelihood of farmers and the culture of the people.

Buyer Mission Overview

During the two missions, TPSA visited five coffee producers in the Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah districts of Aceh province: Arinataga Cooperative, Orangutan Coffee Lestari, Redelong Organik Cooperative, Meukat Komuditi Gayo, and Kokowagayo Women’s Coffee Cooperative. Presentations by each producer offered buyers a better understanding of their business profiles, such as the number of farmers, the size and number of coffee plantation areas, the certification process and premium fee distribution to farmers, their export capacity and availability, and their...
social and environmental practices, including agriculture practices.

Cupping sessions were held to demonstrate the unique aroma and taste of Gayo Arabica coffee. All TPSA coffee partners worked cooperatively to organize two professional cupping events. The August session was conducted by Arinagata Cooperative at their office, where Nusa Coffee Company was pleased to have the opportunity to taste and discuss the coffee profiles with producers. Liza Wajong from Nusa Coffee indicated that this was her first opportunity to experience the unique taste and aroma of Gayo Arabica coffee at its source. More importantly, she said that the buyer mission offered valuable time to discuss opportunities for coffee trading with each of the producers.

A cupping session was also held during the second buyer mission in November. A certified professional cupping provider, Gayo Cupper Team, was brought in to conduct the session in Takengon, Aceh Tengah. There was a discussion of the cupping results, and feedback was provided, which producers found very useful. Burhanuddin Salim from Redelong Organik Cooperative said that this kind of event is one of the extraordinary benefits provided by TPSA.

The TPSA project also arranged for the buyers to visit a coffee plantation and processing facilities, to see first-hand how quality is protected during processing. The buyers observed red coffee cherry picking, plantation soil, composting production, pulping, fermentation, drying, sorting, and packaging. Several unique means of coffee processing, such as natural, honey, and full-washed, were demonstrated.

Gayo coffee is more than a commodity for trade: it is part of the local culture. Coffee has been planted in the Gayo Highlands since 1908, primarily in Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah districts. The name “Gayo” originates from the Gayo ethnic group and language, and the majority of the Gayo ethnic group are farmers.

Because local history and culture is so integral to Gayo coffee, the buyers were welcomed with a local dance called the Saman prior to the cupping.
session. They were also introduced to local poetry and cuisine and took a sightseeing trip to nearby Danau Laut Tawar lake.

“This is my first trip to Sumatra, Indonesia. The people are friendly, the scenery is beautiful, and the coffee, Gayo coffee, is wonderful. We have been roasting Sumatra Gayo coffee for a number of years and it has been really great to try Gayo coffee from the different coffee co-ops that we visited. We visited five co-ops, and there are both similarities and differences between them. The coffee has good body, which is what the customer likes. I am excited to go home and share with my clients both the coffee and the stories about the amazing farmers that grow the coffee.”

—HELEN VOOGD, CO-OWNER
Bean North Coffee Roasting Co. Ltd., Whitehorse

While in the Gayo highland, the buyers also had the opportunity to meet with local government representatives of the Bener Meriah and Aceh Tengah districts. These meetings provided stakeholders with information on the purpose of the buyer mission and the buyers’ business profiles in Canada, including opportunities for Indonesian coffee producers in the growing Canadian coffee market.

At the end of the visit, TPSA invited the Community Foundation for the Protection of Gayo Coffee to speak to buyers about the fact that Gayo coffee has been trademarked to protect its unique cultural and historical character. A representative of Meukat Komuditi Gayo, a coffee producer, trader, and auction-house operator, explained the auction system in which higher-quality Arabica Gayo coffee is traded.

Finally, the buyers visited Gayo Coffee Research, an agency established by the Ministry of Agriculture to support the research and development of Gayo coffee, where they learned more about the variety and the history of Gayo Arabica development. At the research facility, each buyer was invited to plant a coffee tree to remind them to return to Gayo in the future.

Next Steps
Following the buyer mission in August 2017, Nusa Coffee Company conducted a cupping session in Vancouver with their roaster network, using coffee beans from TPSA producers as part of the promotion.

TPSA is now following up with the other buyers to obtain feedback from the mission and information on their purchase plans. All buyers plan to report on their visit internally and then discuss the possibility of purchasing coffee from the TPSA-sponsored coffee producers. The producers also expect to
meet the six potential buyers again at the Global Coffee Expo in Seattle in April 2018.

About the TPSA Project
TPSA is a five-year C$12-million project funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. The project is executed by The Conference Board of Canada, and the primary implementation partner is the Directorate General for National Export Development, Ministry of Trade.

TPSA is designed to provide training, research, and technical assistance to Indonesian government agencies, the private sector—particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)—academics, and civil society organizations on trade-related information, trade policy analysis, regulatory reforms, and trade and investment promotion by Canadian, Indonesian, and other experts from public and private organizations.

The overall objective of TPSA is to support higher sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty in Indonesia through increased trade and trade-enabling investment between Indonesia and Canada. TPSA is intended to increase sustainable and gender-responsive trade and investment opportunities, particularly for Indonesian SMEs, and to increase the use of trade and investment analysis by Indonesian stakeholders for expanded trade and investment partnerships between Indonesia and Canada.

The expected immediate outcomes of TPSA are:

- improved trade and investment information flows between Indonesia and Canada, particularly for the private sector, SMEs, and women entrepreneurs, including trade-related environmental risks and opportunities;
- enhanced private sector business links between Indonesia and Canada, particularly for SMEs;
- strengthened analytical skills and knowledge of Indonesian stakeholders on how to increase trade and investment between Indonesia and Canada;
- improved understanding of regulatory rules and best practices for trade and investment.

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