

SINCE



1986

AGRICAFE

— BOLIVIAN SPECIALTY COFFEE —

*Bolivian Family Business with
passion for quality and details*

FINCAS
LOS RODRIGUEZ



Sol De La Mañana

@agricafebolivia



COFFEE IN BOLIVIA

Bolivia, the home country where AGRICAPE is located, is a beautiful and very diverse country. It offers beautiful landscapes from mountains up to 6000 masl, valley, Amazonian and even desert-like regions. It's diverse climate, different cultures, food, languages and landscapes; make Bolivia a very unique country. Probably, the only thing missing in Bolivia is a port.

The country offers exceptional conditions for coffee production, considering there is very nutritious soil, the combination of very high altitudes together with one of the lowest latitudes for coffee production.

The main coffee planting region in Bolivia is "Los Yungas" in the department of La Paz. Until the late 19th century, the land was mainly owned but barely used for farming by rich people, but after a reformation by the government in order to increase production in Bolivia and develop new regions, the land has been divided and given to local producers, assigning each of them around 8-10 ha. It was not until around 60 years ago that Bolivia started with commercial coffee production. In that time, coffee plantations were held in a very traditional way, meaning that producers would leave the farms in nature's hands and only act during harvest season to pick the cherries. The traditional varieties growing in Bolivia are Typica, Caturra and Catuai, which have wonderful qualities and profiles were sold in the local market and exported by a few companies. Yet, coffee was often sold in the local market as "mote", meaning washed coffee but not completely dried. This made quality control very hard, nearly to impossible, and did not allow the coffees to completely express themselves in the cup. It's been only around 17 years, that with the help of AGRICAPE as pioneers, Bolivia joined the international market of specialty coffees, which was a tough job, due to the bad reputation it had acquired through the years.

In Bolivia, the high altitude from the Andes gives the coffee a unique set of flavors while the perfectly suited tropical climate and terroir allows the coffee to thrive. These optimum conditions paired with a correct process, selective picking, delicate and controlled drying, and an offset harvest time, has enabled Bolivia to stand out on the international market for the past years.

Bolivia's harvest occurs from June to November, which is different from many specialty coffee regions like Africa or those situated in Central America. "We are therefore able to export beans at a time of the year not many countries are, which gives us an advantage." Los Rodriguez explain.





BOLIVIA'S DOWNFALL IN COFFEE CULTIVATION

Bolivian coffee production has never been really big compared to other countries like Brazil. It was always just enough to export commercial coffee each year and for producers to live from coffee. In the last decade though, Bolivian coffee entered a crisis and around 2012, Bolivian coffee cultivation was in a bad place. Coffee production kept dropping year by year. Compared to 110.000 bags in 2000, in 2010 exports were at around 70.000 bags, and this number kept dropping to as low as 22.000 bags in 2020.

The reasons behind this big downfall are diverse: Firstly, the rust had been devastating to the region and many farmers did not know what it was or how to combat it. As coffee farming has always been done in the previously mentioned traditional way, producers knew nothing about pest prevention, nutrition of the plants or farm management. This lack of knowledge or maintenance of the farms made the harvest difficult and the production decreased drastically. Bolivia was vulnerable in terms of coffee production, despite a good potential", Los Rodriguez explain. Producers were not able to live from coffee anymore, and started to abandon their farms, sourcing for new opportunities. Among these, coca production seemed to be very profitable for many of them, since the market for coca is very big, the crop is not as hard to keep, and there can be up to 4 harvests a year. Consequently, coffee culture in Bolivia was about to disappear.



Pedro Pablo - Daniela - Pedro Rodriguez

LOS RODRIGUEZ

The dream already started 35 years ago when Pedro, who is a former banker and all time coffee-lover, pursued his passion in the Bolivian coffee industry, where he initially started with commercial coffee as well, and later on pioneered within the field of Specialty Coffees in Bolivia.

Pedro Rodriguez, CEO and founder of Agricafe, has seen and lived all these ups and downs of Bolivian coffee culture, and is currently working hard on keeping Bolivian coffee cultivation up, together with his daughter Daniela and son Pedro Pablo, who are in charge of the commercial department and production.

In order to keep coffee cultivation up, in 2012 Agricafe acquired land in Caranavi in Los Yungas, with the dream of starting own farms. "La Linda was the first farm, created when we decided to produce by ourselves. This is where the dream started".

The main aim he is pursuing is to restore and elevate Bolivian coffee, and together with his children and an external consultant - in order to properly manage their farms and get the best results, quality and quantity wise - he initiated this plan by planting coffee on their 12 own farms in the regions of Caranavi and Samaipata in 2012. Eight of them are located in Caranavi, which is located in the department of La Paz.

The remaining four are located in Samaipata, which is located in Santa Cruz department. Los Rodriguez are the pioneers of coffee producers in the region of Samaipata, Santa Cruz. This region is typically known for its wine production but the Rodriguez family decided to develop coffee cultivation there, generating new options of economic development in the region, as well as job opportunities and of course, different coffee profiles than the ones known from Los Yungas region.



While both regions are very different from one another, they offer excellent conditions to grow specialty coffee. This is thanks to the altitude and longitudinal degree they are located at.

Los Rodriguez grow a wide range of varieties - from Java to Geisha, Bourbon, SL 28, SL 34, yellow and red Caturra, among many others.

Recognized by their peers and the local farmers, Agricafe quickly became the ambassador of a high quality coffee in Bolivia and started a program on their own to teach another way to produce coffee. "We have a commitment toward our clients. It is our responsibility to continue providing good coffee but also, to give something back to our country.", Pedro tells.

Furthermore, they decided to found a social program called "Sol De La Mañana", a program designed to help and motivate the producers in the region, too. Sol De La Mañana is a social program, designed for small producers. It is meant to work like a small school, and it takes 7 years for them to graduate. The producers are guided through every step of coffee farming, starting with the nursery, planting, harvesting, pest prevention, pruning as well as financial management. The idea is for them to learn best coffee practices and to be able to improve their lifestyle significantly, improving coffee cultivation in the country, and motivating others to go back to coffee farming. Currently the producers are initiating year 6, learning about pruning, which is a major and very significant part of coffee farming, producers never applied in traditional coffee farming. The program started in 2014, and since then producers have increased their productivity by an incredible 200%!! What used to be 2-4 bags per ha, has now increased so much, that each producer, delivers at least 20 bags per ha every harvest. Not only has productivity increased, but the weight of the cherries has increased as well, which means higher productivity and finally, more income & better living standards. Also this refers to a better & consistent cup quality.



Besides this, environmental sustainability is one of the main pillars of Agricafe. This is why the company constantly sources new ways of better farming practices – for example trials of different farming techniques are being applied in order to reduce fertilization and keep the plant as healthy as they are now. Further, 54% of the 200 ha owned are kept as natural reserve, and in case of the Sol De La Mañana producers, it is even 60%.

Additionally, the program has been teaching about re-forestation for the last two years. Re-forestation is not only an investment in sustainability and nature, but can also be seen as an investment in the medium or long term, for future generations. They could e.g. sell the precious wood in order to be able to pay for university of their children. Agricafé has planted more than 400 trees between all its farms.

Further, Los Rodriguez are working on teaching the producers about the post-harvest work such as processing & farm management, with the aim of improving their quality. In the last two year there has already been more consistency in the cup with a quality of 2 to 3 points better in the cup. This effort directly gets compensated with an even better price for the coffees.

Agricafe is working on having all the producers deliver their cherries at Buena Vista wet mill to avoid contamination which is generated by micro mills that produce very small volumes yet have a big environment impact.

Agricafé believes that constant innovation is key! Firstly, it is important to understand that coffee is a kind of food, and therefore has to be treated as such, applying all hygiene and BPM cleaning measures. Fermentation has to be controlled and Agricafe's goal is to process ELEGANT & CONSISTENT coffees, developing the natural flavors the cherry offers at its maximum potential. It's important not to change the nature of the coffees flavors or to 'cover its taste in make-up', because thanks to environmental offer in Bolivia and the amazing genetics of our coffees, Agricafe only has to 'polish the diamonds'!! Therefore, controlled drying remains crucial for Agricafe in order to archive great longevity of the coffees.



Further, the highest dry mill in the world 'La Luna' at 3,500 masl processes only Agricafe's coffees under a strict quality control which runs through 3 selections: mechanic, optical and manual.

Agricafé has been recognized within the 2019 SCA Sustainability Award as winner in the category of Business Model. Los Rodríguez and the entire Agricafé family are very proud about this special achievement.

The business model of strategic alliances with producers in the region does not only allow Agricafe to stand out with quality and consistency, but also for making a contribution to families' economies in the regions where the company is developing.

“We strongly believe that by positioning Bolivian coffee in a differentiated and responsible manner, we will be able to make a contribution to our country, to obtain more international relevance and to generate other business opportunities as a contribution to the socioeconomic development of Bolivia.” -

Los Rodríguez