



Back to the Roots

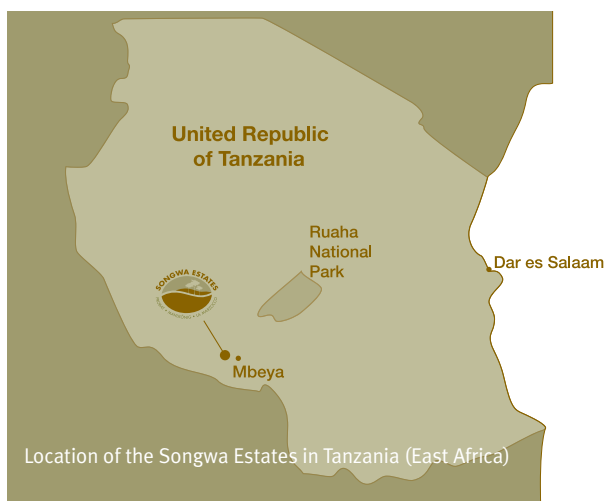
Taking part in the Songwa Farm Project's training programme means travelling straight to the origins of coffee. Here, tour participants get hands-on knowledge about where the coffee bean comes from and the various steps by which it is processed. Daniel Schmidt, PROBAT's Head of Shop Roaster and Lab Equipment Sales, describes in LEONARDO his experiences in the East African country Tanzania.

The flight across the Tanzanian interior reveals Africa's full beauty with its striking mountains, its characteristic vegetation and numerous picturesque villages. During the four-hour flight from Dar es Salaam to Mbeya, the small plane's passengers enjoy the great views of the East African country. Even after the arrival at the Utengule Coffee Lodge, the travellers remain enchanted by the impressions of the surroundings. From the hillside of the Mbeya Peak, to which the Lodge is nestled up against, a magnificent view of the impressive expanse of the Rift Valley unfolds. Particularly during harvest time, the coffee plants in the plantations manifest themselves in exquisite colour. "The impressions of this day alone were overwhelming. Not only the beautiful landscape, but also the friendly and open manner of the local people made the whole trip something very special",

Daniel Schmidt describes his impressions of country and people.

Vivid learning in practical training courses

After exchanging their personal experience on the subject of coffee during the evening, the travellers started their training programme the next morning. During the following days, the participants learnt important interlinkages of coffee processing in theoretical and practical exercises – from biology and harvest to pulping, grinding and tasting. "Particularly the practical parts of the training showed vividly how many-sided coffee processing is. The firsthand experience of the individual steps is something you will definitely remember. In connection with the know-how imparted you can pick up a lot of valuable knowledge for your work in the coffee industry", Schmidt summarises the contents of the in-depth coffee programme. The trip is especially worthwhile during the summer months, as you can experience even more processing steps during harvest time. In this way, the participants assisted in harvesting on the Songwa coffee plantation. The coffee harvest calls for an expert eye in order to pick only the really ripe coffee berries while leaving the unripe ones with more time to ripen. Besides the subsequent drying of the coffees at the processing hut, those present saw how the Pergamino coffee was cleaned, sorted, weighed and packed as green coffee in the City Coffee Mill. When tasting the final product, the prepared coffee, the group learnt how the various green coffee →



sorts and processing forms affect taste and aroma. “Due to their strong practical focus, the courses offer special added value for anyone involved with coffee. Such a graphic illustration of coffee processing can only be experienced on location here”, Hans Rentsch, Head of Coffee at Delica, was sure.

The training programme ended with these vivid impressions all about coffee. During the following couple of days, the participants had the opportunity of better getting to know the country and the continent in the Ruaha National Park, beyond the subject of coffee. In Tandala Camp, in the context of a safari at the end of their journey, they experienced Tanzania’s flora and fauna – this time not from a plane but at close range. “During the trip, I learnt a lot of useful and interesting things; not only on coffee cultivation, but also on Africa and its people”, Rentsch summarises.

Social responsibility

People are also at the fore when looking at social responsibility in coffee processing. The Songwa project is based on the principles of economic, environmental and social sustainability. It carries know-how into the region and generates jobs. Coffee cultivation in Africa, particularly under the ideal conditions available in Tanzania, still has a lot of potential for the cultivating countries. Projects such as Songwa are important cornerstones for researching and further developing crop-growing structures as well as coffee processing. More and more often, consumers want to know where their coffee comes from and how it is processed and traded. Sustainable development cooperation locally lays the groundwork for consumer trust and points to how companies can live up to their social responsibility. Out of every participant’s fee, 100 US dollars go into a social fund, which, among other things, enables orphans in the region to go to elementary school. The trip’s cost is calculated on a break-even basis – the organisers do not profit financially. Marc Herrmann, responsible for purchasing at Azul Coffee in Bremen, considers projects like these to set best practice benchmarks: **“Such projects are not only interesting and valuable for the participants alone. They are also an important element of social commitment in Africa which is particularly relevant for all companies working in the coffee sector.”** ■



After breeding in the nursery...



and on the plantation...



the coffee is processed...



and packed in bags as green coffee.

Further Information

Are you interested in a coffee training course on the Songwa Farm? Call us and order our project flyer or go to www.songwa-estates.com.

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