

## **The Interorganizational Group to assist Coffee Farming has been established**

Coffee producers and representatives of the Mexican government made progress with preliminary agreements to create a comprehensive policy for their activities.



The first session of the Interorganizational Group to assist Coffee Farming [*Grupo Intersectorial para la Atención a la Cafecultura - GIC*] took place in the Secretariat of Agriculture, where preliminary agreements were reached and a route for further meetings, seminars and decision-making for strengthening the rural sector was traced.

With the participation of Víctor Suárez Carrera, Undersecretary of Food Self-Sufficiency, and with the goal of jointly building a comprehensive policy to strengthen coffee farming, this Group was established in the session and consists of representatives from producers' organizations and state and national coffee System-Product groups, and from the Secretariats of Agriculture, Environment, Welfare and Economy; the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (Senasica) and the National Institute of Forestry, Agriculture and Livestock Research (INIFAP).

Also, development banking institutions such as the Agriculture Trust Funds [*Fideicomisos Instituidos en Relación con la Agricultura - FIRA*], the Agriculture and Livestock, Rural, Forestry and Fishery Development National Finance Agency [*Financiera Nacional de Desarrollo Agropecuario, Rural, Forestal y Pesquero - FND*], and academic organizations such as the Autonomous University of Chapingo [*Universidad Autónoma Chapingo - UACH*] and the Postgraduate College [*Colegio de Posgraduados - Colpos*], participate in the Group.

The subjects addressed for which agreements were reached are as follows: structural problems of coffee farming and alternatives thereto; production and sanitation promotion (with proposals to specifically address rust, a priority for this productive trade); problems due to low

pricing, imports, promotion of commercialization and consumption; financing schemes and programs; international policy; environmental benefits and institutional regulatory framework.

The design of an innovative scheme of financial inclusion for coffee producers stands out among the items agreed upon.

The undersecretary pointed out that “Assisting small and medium producers is the direction of policy for the rural sector and defined in the National Development Plan, and it is essential that the development banking supports to the utmost these producers with an effective vision of development, and that new models are defined and obsolete things are discarded.”

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, General Director of the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (Senasica) underlined the success of phytosanitary programs, mainly for prevention, in support of national coffee farming.

He also specified that, by means of weather variables, the Secretariat of Agriculture technicians are able to identify possible epidemiological outbreaks, to which control measures are later applied, in order to protect other crops by a magnitude of 10 times.

The producers in attendance expressed their need of having financial schemes at their disposal, to renew coffee trees and for lending, industrialization and added value purposes.

For the most part, the country's coffee farmers have small or very small operations (mostly of one hectare in extension), and are mainly located in these 12 states of the country: Chiapas, Veracruz, Puebla, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima and Estado de Mexico.

Other agreement reached was conferring coffee farming the status of priority activity for the preservation and care of the environment, considering that 90% of coffee plantations are in canopy ecosystems, and 80% of the production takes places in pine and mountain mesophilic forests, which enriches the soil and biodiversity and acts against global warming.

To establish new national schemes, there were discussions about institutional and representativeness agreements and current regulations in other countries, and it was agreed to promote, on a near date, an international seminar to analyze and consider the successful experiences on the subject and legislative initiatives that have not been realized in the past.

Producers' representatives highlighted the existence of direct economic support to coffee farming, such as the Production for Welfare [*Producción para el Bienestar*], that provides them an income and a base; and mentioned that coffee productive activities require a comprehensive and wide policy.

Ernesto Acevedo, Undersecretary of Industry, Commerce and Competitiveness of the Secretariat of Economy; Santiago Argüello, General Director of Agriculture Promotion; Ramón Mariaca Méndez, General Director of Agroecology of the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources, and José, Solís Ramírez, the Dean of the Autonomous University of Chapingo were in attendance.

Also in attendance, Víctor Aguilar Rincón from the Colpos; Victorino Morales Ramos from the INIFAP; Misael Martínez Bolaños and José Luis López; Pedro Roque Machado, operations coordinator of the Amecafe [*Asociación Mexicana de la Cadena Productiva del Café A.C*], and Luis Herrera Solís, President of the National Coffee System-Product, among others.