



**DEFORESTATION-FREE**  
**COFFEE**  
**FROM COSTA RICA**

**FROM PILOT TO A  
NATIONAL PROJECT**

# CREDITS

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## INTRODUCTION

For the Costa Rican coffee sector, the European market has historically represented the second most important destination (after the United States) with an exportable volume of more than 35% of the national production. This made the implementation of regulatory requirements in order to avoid a negative impact on this agro-chain an urgent task after the approval (in May 2023), by the European Parliament, of regulation EU1115/2023, which contemplates prohibiting the import of products (including coffee) that do not demonstrate that they are not linked to deforestation activities as of December 2020.

Considering the importance of this productive sector, a cooperation agreement between the REDD+ Results-Based Payments Project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of Costa Rica, the Costa Rican Coffee Institute (ICAFFE) and the national coffee sector agreed to carry out a project with the purpose of co-creating an implementation guide that will facilitate compliance with European requirements. This document would also show the actions undertaken years ago by the sector with responsible coffee production, concerned with the protection and health of forests. Thus, the pilot project Deforestation-free Costa Rican coffee was created.

The pilot was implemented between 2023 and 2024, with the technical team of ICAFFE and CoopeTarrazú. It began by analyzing and verifying existing technologies and thus determining the technological architecture to be used. In addition, it sought to guarantee the collection and remaining relevant information, in a transparent and objective manner that accredited the existence of coffee farms with deforestation-free crops. The pilot worked with 69 producers and 117 farms in the Los Santos region, one of the main coffee-growing areas of the country. First export of deforestation-free coffee was made on March 14, 2024, with 275 quintals of coffee (18,975 Kg), and sent to Trieste, Italy.

With the support of the project and ICAFFE, a national scaling was generated to facilitate the understanding of the fulfillment of the necessary requirements established through the implementation guidelines.

Following is a summary of the results generated through this scaling in all the coffee growing regions of the country and its impact on the sector. With it, Costa Rica has managed to position itself globally at the forefront in the export of deforestation-free products to Europe, making the first export of coffee and strengthening its preparation and leadership prior to the upcoming entry into force of European regulations.



## DEFORESTATION-FREE COFFEE PILOT SCALING

The training sessions for the relevant actors in the pilot showed the importance of generating more enabling capacities in the rest of the coffee-growing regions, seeking to disseminate information on: the Implementation Guide, the effects produced by climate change and its relationship with the coffee activity, the Green Deal, relevant national legislation, informed consent and due diligence actions.

In a joint action, the ICAFE team and the REED+ PBR Project conducted 21 training workshops in the country's coffee-growing regions related to the compliance actions established in the Implementation Guide. In this way, the understanding of the requirements was facilitated, signing the informed consent documents and explaining the CR-CAFÉ application for the inclusion of geolocation or georeferencing data of the productive plots.

Training took place in: Coto Brus (Negro River and Sabalito), Pérez Zeledón (Rivas, Los Ángeles de Páramo and Finca La Palmira Pérez Zeledón center), Turrialba (CATIE Training Center), North Zone (Los Angeles, Pila Angosta, El Porvenir de Nandayure, Hojancha and El Dos de Tilarán), Central Valley (San Pedro de Barva, Heredia Centro, Poás de Alajuela and Grecia) Western Valley (Valverde Vega, Atenas, Naranjo and Palmares) and Tarrazú (San Antonio de León Cortés, San Carlos and Tarrazú Centro).

814 coffee-producing families were trained achieving better and greater adoption of the Implementation Guide. The materials used in the trainings were delivered to ICAFE's regional offices, so that their technicians could continue with the training process:

**TABLE 1.**  
**COMPARISON OF DEFORESTATION-FREE COFFEE REGISTERED & ENABLES**  
**FARMS ACCORDING TO REGULATION UE1115/2023**

|                                                                                                                                            | 2023-2024<br>Pilot | 2024-2025<br>Harvest |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Identified productive plots                                                                                                                | 117,00             | 11.979,00            |
| Hectares                                                                                                                                   | 257,60             | 36.714,00            |
| Verified Polygons                                                                                                                          | 11,00              | 6.657,00             |
| Verified Georeferenced Point                                                                                                               | 106,00             | 5.322,00             |
| Coffee production identified as deforestation-free coffee, in two double hectolitres/bushels of coffee (equivalent to 1 quintal of coffee) | 7.850,00           | 675.957,37           |

ICAFE data as of March 31, 2025.

As Table 1 shows, the scaling was more than satisfactory, significantly exceeding the potential volume of coffee exportable to the EU. During the 2024/2025 harvest, even without the regulations having entered into force, 202,763 bags of 46 kilograms were exported under the deforestation-free coffee category, with data collected by ICAFE one year after the pilot was carried out.

## ESTIMATED FUNCTIONALITY FOR JANUARY 2026

Having designed a route that incorporated the requirements of regulation EU1115/2023 in the form of an Implementation Guide has made it possible to significantly train and document producer families and their coffee as deforestation-free, as well as the members of this important agro-chain, so that coffee processing and exporting companies can market their product as deforestation-free.

Having successfully anticipated the analysis of the available technological infrastructure, designing a route of use within a framework of action protected by legality was a differentiating factor to achieve success in the work carried out.

Although the European Union (EU) regulation does not require that actions be implemented through a public entity, the existence of ICAFE and a law regulating the activity that keeps the actors of the agro-chain in the formal plane, allowed that, in a reasonable time, a compliance route could be designed and implemented and an important group of producing families and their coffee will be able to access the EU market without delay.

It is possible that some actions related to documentation or technological links will have to be adjusted once the regulation comes into force, but it is based on the guarantee of faithful compliance with the formal requirements required by Article 9 of the European regulation.

ICAFE has initiated a process of adding actions that complement due diligence, strengthening the CR-CAFÉ tool, given that this is a dynamic process that will incorporate new requirements.

No less important is the speed with which the profiles of coffee producers have been generated, which is precisely the field collected information required by the EU.

**TABLE 2**  
**CR-COFFEE PRODUCER PROFILES**

| PROFILES                                                      | QUANTITY        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| PROFILES BEFORE DEFORESTATION-FREE COFFEE                     | 21,504          |
| PROFILES BEFORE DEFORESTATION-FREE COFFEE                     | 6,800           |
| TOTAL CR COFFEE PRODUCERS WITH DEFORESTATION-FREE COFFEE DATA | 13,000 VERIFIED |
| TOTAL PRODUCERS IN THE PROCESS OF VERIFICATION                | 8,000           |

ICAFE data as of March 2025

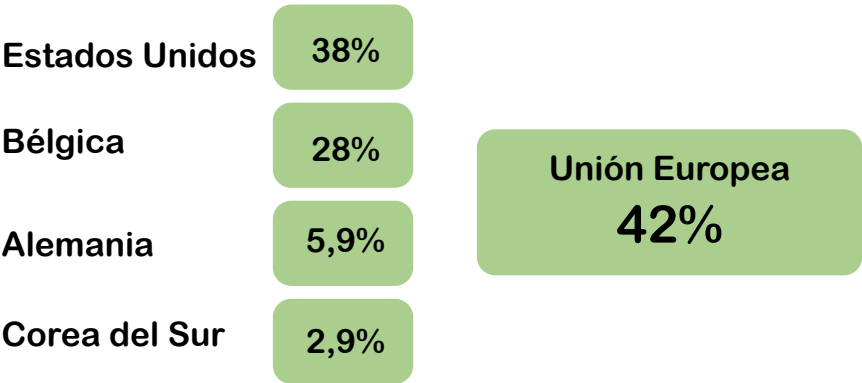


According to ICAFE data, the register is made up of 25,549 coffee producers, which allows us to point out that 4,045 of those remain to be identified with a profile, and 8,000 are yet to be verified.

With this information, it can be affirmed that coffee from Costa Rica is adequately prepared to attend and properly supply (starting in January 2026) deforestation-free coffee.

It is important to note that the export data from the 2023-2024 coffee harvest period indicate for the first time a higher exportable volume to the EU than to the United States of America.

**FIGURE 3.**  
**2023-2024 COFFEE HARVEST EXPORT DATA**



This case, derived from the pilot to document the deforestation-free coffee, shows the successful collaborative actions between the cooperating party, institutions and the coffee sector, not only because of the clarity with which the issue was addressed and the actions to be undertaken, but also because it responded to a need by the national coffee sector.



