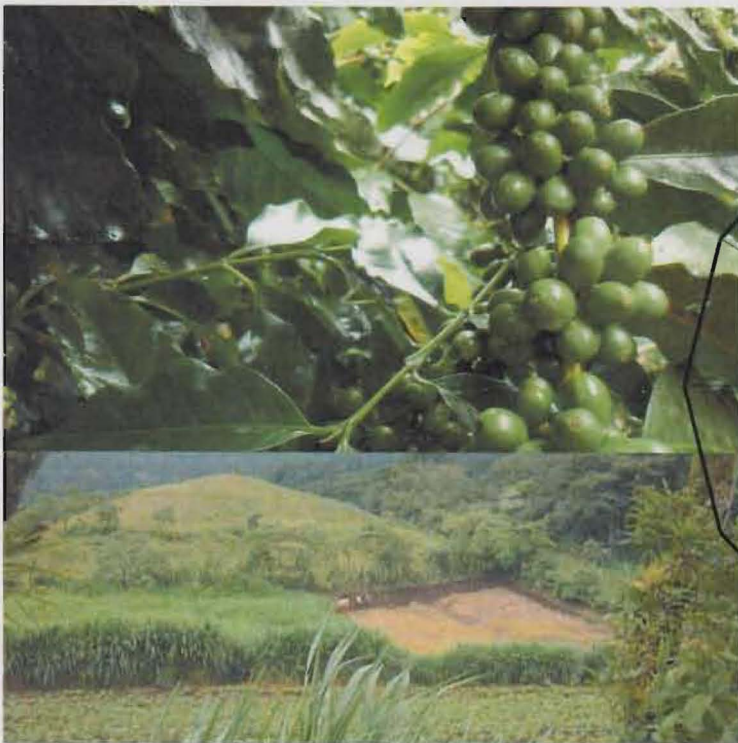




Master of Science in Life Sciences / Applied Agricultural and Forestry Sciences

Does participation in certification schemes lead to more sustainable agricultural production?



Master's Thesis

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of an on farm assessment mainly based on small coffee farmers, with a fieldwork that took place in the north region of Nicaragua during July and August 2010. The study included 30 coffee farmers which participated directly by providing information about their production system through a semi structured interview and a based questionnaire for the RISE 1.0 analysis (a tool developed by HAFL). Manifold improvements have being launched to cover different aspects of sustainability in agricultural production. Nicaragua is mainly an agricultural country where most of the rural population is linked to the coffee sector and its economy is strongly dependent on coffee production." *About 10% of the country's coffee is organic but farmers feel there is not enough of a price premium to make up for the lower yields and extra effort to produce organic coffee*". Cooperatives and labeling schemes (Fair Trade, BIOLATINA and OCIA) have played an important role in the coffee sector to bring together small farmers for a better positioning of the production in the international market. The study aimed to assess whether the participation in certification schemes lead to more sustainable agricultural production. The outputs of the research suggest that farmers recognize the effort of cooperatives and labeling schemes to improve their livelihood through accompanying, without that, having opportunities to explore other markets it is a big challenge. Certification is a complex process and the compliance with the norms are a bit tricky for the all formalities that farmers are not used to follow but in the other hand the certification gave the possibility to maintain a minimum price for their production.

Keywords: Coffee production, organic coffee, certification, standards, sustainability, Fair Trade, Nicaragua, farmers, impact.