

# Nicaragua, climate change and Fair Trade

Nicaragua  
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## Impact of climate change

“ To prevent a catastrophic 3°C average temperature rise the largest emitters must address the root cause of our environmental crisis: the endless, limitless, mindless accumulation and concentration of capital on a planet with limited resources. ”

**Dr Paul Oquist**  
Nicaraguan Minister for Public Policy



**M**ore intense and frequent floods, droughts, storms, rising sea levels, water shortages, destruction of eco systems, melting ice caps... how do the

consequences of climate change affect impoverished, developing countries like Nicaragua?

Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Americas, epitomises the vulnerability of developing countries

confronting the phenomena associated with climate change while fighting poverty.

Since 2007 the government has introduced many socio-economic measures, including free health care and education, food security and house building programmes. Many measures are geared to rural areas where poverty fell from 70% in 2005 to 50% in 2014.

According to the 2017 Global Climate Risk Index, Nicaragua is the world's fourth most vulnerable country to climate change. The IPCC predicts that temperatures will rise by 3.7°C and rainfall decrease by 36.6% by 2050. This poses a catastrophic threat to Nicaragua's economy, as agricultural production is critical to the country's food security and represents 20.5% of the national economy.

## Fairtrade: raising living standards, adapting to climate change

**S**elling coffee through the Fairtrade system means that small-scale farmers in Nicaragua and elsewhere receive a social premium of 20% over market prices. This enables them to invest in their co-operatives, empower women, protect the environment and withstand pressures from large-scale farming.

Most of Nicaragua's coffee is produced by small-scale farmers who grow high grade Arabica coffee in tree-shaded areas. However, climate change means very unpredictable weather patterns, increased risk of plant disease, reduced harvests and consequently rising production costs.

Over two thousand small-scale coffee farmers in the northern Nicaragua region of Matagalpa are members of the association of co-operatives CECOCAFEN ([cecocafen.com.ni](http://cecocafen.com.ni)) that markets coffee through Fairtrade. Santiago Dolmus from CECOCAFEN describes how this has helped farmers face the threats of climate change.

“The Fairtrade system has enabled us to learn about climate change and to mitigate its impact and adapt our methods. We now plant more trees



Picking Fairtrade coffee grown under the canopy of the forest

and cacao bushes among the coffee bushes. This reduces the force of the wind and creates more shade, regulating the temperature, although this means smaller harvests.”

Juana Antonia Mendez Herrera, a coffee producer and a CECOCAFEN member, explains how she and her husband are adapting their methods. “With increas-

ing temperatures, we have to use new techniques to protect the soil and the environment. Excessive chemicals contribute to soil erosion so we have installed a system to make organic fertiliser from animal and vegetable waste so we can keep moisture in the soil. As our coffee is shade-grown the leaves provide natural compost, which keeps the soil healthy.”

## Adapting to climate change: converting from coffee to cacao production

As the impact of climate change is better understood, adaptation and mitigation programmes are being developed. Scientists predict that rising temperatures will mean that large areas of land on lower slopes will no longer be suitable for coffee, which Nicaraguan farmers are already experiencing. However, cacao grows well in these areas. With the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) predicting that demand for cacao will increase by 30% in the next ten years, coffee co-operatives are converting to cacao production.



GIOCONDA PEREZ/BLINC

Fair Trade farmer Ana Maria Gonzalez, a member of the agricultural co-operative SOPPEXCCA, participates in a coffee to cacao conversion programme

## Nicaragua: 'a model for the world on the shift to green energy'

Building renewable energy sources is one way Nicaragua is contributing to the global fight against climate change. The country has moved from 25% renewables in 2007 to 52% in 2017. This includes geothermal, wind, solar and biomass from sugar cane. The country aims to reach 90% renewables by 2020.

Inter-American Development Bank President Luis Alberto Moreno praised Nicaraguan plans as "a model for the world on the shift to green energy."

“Our programme is mutually beneficial: visitors get a low-cost opportunity to live close to nature with local families, and learn about coffee cultivation; the families diversify their income and exchange experiences with their guests.”

Juana Antonia Mendez

## Eco tourism contributes to mitigating impact of climate change

Eco tourism contributes to environmental protection by providing families with extra income to invest in their communities and farms, enabling them to live more sustainably. More about ecotourism in San Ramon: [tourism.ucasanramon.org](http://tourism.ucasanramon.org)



Eco tourism provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of the lives of Fair Trade farmers who produce your coffee

## Nicaragua's vision of climate justice

The 20 most industrialised countries are responsible for 78% of global carbon emissions while the 100 poorest countries are responsible for 3%. Those least responsible suffer the most serious consequences.

Industrialised countries must acknowledge their historical responsibility for the damage and recognise the right of developing countries to be compensated. This is the only scientific, measurable, verifiable and transparent way to approach 'loss

and damage' on an equitable basis.

The large emitters must show political will to keep global temperature increases well below 2°C by pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C in line with the Paris Climate Change Agreement. The biggest emitters must urgently make a dramatic reduction in their carbon emissions.

## Think Global, Act Local: what you can do

■ Participate in the UK's Climate Coalition's actions: [www.theclimatecoalition.org](http://www.theclimatecoalition.org)

■ Talk to your local group about how buying Fair Trade products enables farmers to mitigate the impact of climate change

■ Buy Fair Trade products, such as Nicaraguan coffee, from the NSC, and join the NSC supporters list to keep up-to-date with actions by Nicaraguan farmers to adapt to climate change, and about our UK activities.

“Every cup of Fair Trade coffee you drink, contributes to protecting a forest.”

Fatima Ismael  
general manager of the association of co-operatives SOPPEXCCA

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NSC works with Nicaraguan co-operatives and other organisations fighting for social and economic justice by promoting and seeking support for their work in the UK.

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