



## **San Cristobal Coffee Importers Expands It's FincaLab® QMS To Peru After Transformative Internship**

San Cristobal coffee importers (SCM) and its associate, Cafés Sustentables de Mexico (CSM), have begun helping a new Peruvian coffee producing organization, Cooperativa Agraria Groupthink Yapaz (COOPAGRY), to become sustainable in a commodities market. The three of us have been working together closely to install the FincaLab® Coffee Quality Management system in Peru and use it to raise the value of COOPAGRY's coffee. The FincaLab® QMS was originally developed together with our model producing organization, Grupo Terruño Nayarita (GTNay) in Mexico. Now, as COOPAGRY manages quality, improves processing efficiency and exports its own coffee, it will be duplicating GTNay's success in Peru; its producer members will be able to earn enough with their shade grown coffee to survive and grow.

### **The Story of COOPAGRY**

COOPAGRY was born from the vision of the Vivanco family, who are third-generation coffee farmers living in the town of Yapaz Bajo, which is located in Peru's central jungle in the region of Junín.

Yapaz Bajo, which is situated at about 1,400 meters, is one of dozens of small coffee-growing towns in an area of approximately 6,000 households known locally "El Valle Palomar" (The Palomar Valley).



*Figure 1 - Department of Junín, central Peru. Image credit: Wikimedia Commons*

Small family-owned plots of land for farming are called "chacras," and in the Palomar Valley, chacras—typically 2 to 3 hectares in size—dot the landscape and extend up into the cloud forests of surrounding mountains. The area's farmers grow a variety of crops, including papaya, sugarcane, guava, yuca, and bananas, all of which are typically intercropped with coffee trees. The Peruvian government has declared the area a Parque Nacional de Café (Coffee National Park), due to its natural beauty and the importance of its coffee economy.



*Figure 2 - Parque Nacional de Café (Coffee National Park)*



*Figure 3 - El Valle Palomar, Junín, Perú*



*Figure 3 - Flor Vivanco stands on a typical forested farm in the Palomar Valley. She is a founding member of COOPAGRY and their star taster!*

### **Struggle for Fair Compensation**

Despite the area’s reputation for producing lots of coffee, small producers have long struggled with economic inequality. Middlemen dominate the market, purchasing coffee cherries or parchment at low prices and selling them to large cooperatives or exporters who export the coffee at significant profits. For small farmers, these export-driven profits are essentially out of reach.

For the Vivanco family, this imbalance was especially evident when an investor established a large 70-hectare, full sun, coffee farm and set-up a sophisticated wet mill just down the road from their home in Yapaz Bajo. While the investor’s company employed locals, including members of the Vivanco family, to manage operations and perform quality control, the family realized they had no direct market access for their own coffee and the organization’s profits were not being passed down to them.

### **Birth of COOPAGRY**

In 2021, three young members of the Vivanco family—Alex, Flor, and Jean Pierre—along with their uncle David, met up at a café in the nearby city of Villa Rica. Over the course of their conversation that day, they sketched out a long-term vision: establish their own family exporting organization. They called it COOPAGRY (*Cooperativa Agraria Group Think Yapaz*). Two years later, on April 15th 2023, their cooperative was officially established.

In order to realize their dream, the Vivanco family needed three things: quality management tools, market access, and financing. So, they reached out to us—San Cristobal Coffee Importers—and we made an arrangement: San Cristobal would host two producers from their organization as “interns” at our sister company in Mexico during the 2024 Harvest. If the internship went well, we would sell them our proprietary FincaLab® portable coffee laboratory and commit to being their North American distributors.



In early 2024, Alex and Flor (brother and sister) traveled to Mexico to intern with CSM ([www.cafesumex.com](http://www.cafesumex.com)) in Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico. It was an eye opening and transformative experience for them both. During their four-month internship, they studied coffee quality management, the formal evaluation of daily lots, producing organization management, international trade, and economies of scale. They also collaborated with CSM's engineers to adapt our FincaLab® software for quality management in Peru. This internship, sponsored by San Cristobal Coffee Importers, equipped Alex and Flor with the skills and tools necessary to bring their vision for COOPAGRY to life.



*Figure 4 - In early 2024, Alex and Flor (brother and sister) traveled to Mexico to intern with CAFESUMEX, pictured here during their internship "graduation" wearing Nayarit garb*

### **Community Effort**

Upon returning to Peru, Alex, Flor, and their extended Vivanco family worked to unite nearly 100 small coffee-producing families in the greater community. They all agreed to work together and focus on fruit quality at the moment of reception, as well as the formal evaluation of each lot from each day's reception. These data, entered into the FincaLab® QMS would give them the opportunity to design blends to maximize coffee value.

Some of these families were already part of local coffee producer networks, including:

- APNA (*Agricultores del Parque Nacional del Café*)
- ANTARI (*Cooperativa Agraria Antari Rio Tambo*)
- The Ticllacuri Quispe family from Huantashiri in the Satipo district of Junín
- The De La Cruz family from Raimondi in the remote neighboring Amazonian region of Ucayali

For the 2024 harvest, these families agreed on a bold financing strategy: sell only their lower-quality coffee to cover basic needs and collectively set aside the finest coffees, which would be exported at the end of the harvest. Stored in family homes and local warehouses, this high-quality coffee was carefully logged into the FincaLab® database and preserved throughout the harvest season. By the end of the harvest, COOPAGRY had amassed enough premium coffee to

fill a single export container, which San Cristobal Coffee Importers purchased at a highly competitive price!



*Figure 5 - The first COOPAGRY cupping in June 2024, with COOPAGRY members, Jacob Frankel (San Cristobal Coffee Importers), and Carlos Bustamante (CAFESUMEX). Samples were roasted on the FincaLab® "Analytic" Sample Roaster and logged into the FincaLab® QMS Database*



*Figure 6- Alex and David Vivanco see off their coffee export at the Port in Lima*



*Figure 7 - San Cristobal GM, Kenny Davis, welcomes the first ever COOPAGRY container coffee at Costa Oro Seattle warehouse in late 2024*

### **Model for Growth**

Through this innovative self-financing model, COOPAGRY showed the potential of small producers in Junín to collectively achieve specialty market access and fair compensation, without any reliance on the region’s large cooperatives. Their first successful export boosted the income of all participating families and laid the foundation for growth in future harvests. The Vivanco family is presently investing their income in the construction of a centralized wet mill to increase efficiency, as well as a permanent cupping lab.

San Cristobal is now the official North American distributor of COOPAGRY’s Peruvian coffees, with FincaLab® harvest support administered remotely by our Mexican staff at CAFESUMEX. The 2024 crop’s interesting traceability data is highlighted on our TrackYourCoffee website:

- <https://trackyourcoffee.com/tracker?entry=CGY0101000>
- <https://trackyourcoffee.com/cui?code=CGY0103000>

We have been pleased with the positive feedback from our roaster customers on the delicious taste of these new Junín Peruvian coffees. With COOPAGRY’s continued investments in wet milling and drying infrastructure, we expect the 2025 crop to be even better. And, looking ahead,



we also plan to collaborate with COOPAGRY on developing natural process, experimental process, and women-produced microlots!



*Figure 8 - Geisha parchment undergoes an extended fermentation at the De La Cruz Family Wet Mill*