

Self-Sufficiency in Food Production

Our work includes the development of food self-sufficiency and organization of women coffee growers, in order to strengthen food security and generate greater nourishing independence. We explicitly encourage the participation of women and support democratic processes within our organization.

Since 1996, at the initiative of women's groups, we have been working on strengthening productive and organizational skills. For example, food diversification to us means growing organic vegetables, and working on the overall management of poultry farms.

The women's cooperative groups are organized within the communities themselves in order to work together, and equally distribute the results from any works done. Each community group selects a representative as part of our network of community promoters. Community representatives learn about food self-sufficiency in training sessions and then pass the acquired knowledge on to their own local community through community workshops. They are also in charge of monitoring activities concerning self-sufficiency projects that are being carried out by the women of their respective groups.



Farmers' Micro Bank

Rural Mexico lacks local institutions to provide financial services that are suited to the economic, social, and organizational needs of the population. This is the main obstacle preventing rural families from gaining access to financial credit and savings services.

The creation of our own Farmer's Micro Bank represents a commitment to a local financing system that is administered by local communities and adapted to their culture and needs. The aim behind is to create a local financial institution that is sustainable without relying on subsidies. Instead, the Micro Bank is based on the resources of our members, who effectively and efficiently administer savings made.

Our Farmers' Micro Bank is a non-profit organization which, on an ongoing basis, offers our members savings and credit services that are adapted to the economic and social needs of rural families.



Unión de Productores Orgánicos Beneficio Majomut S.P.R. de R.L.

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**Unión de Productores
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English

What is Unión Majomut?

Unión de Productores Orgánicos Beneficio Majomut is an organization that brings together small coffee producers in the region of the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. We seek to improve the overall living conditions of the families of all members comprising Unión Majomut, in harmony with our environment. This involves fomenting food self-sufficiency by means of food diversification, participation of women, as well as the production and marketing of high quality organic products towards clients and consumers. We are a non-profit organization comprised by approximately 1,000 families of coffee growers in 35 indigenous communities whose populations are composed of the ethnic groups Tzotzil and Tzeltal.



Unión Majomut was founded in 1981, and legally registered in 1983 as "*Unión de Ejidos y Comunidades Cafecultores Beneficio Majomut de R.I.C.V.*".

In 2011 it is being transformed to "*Unión de Productores Orgánicos Beneficio Majomut de S.P.R. de R.L.*". Since its foundation, we have actively promoted home improvement and community house-building programs and have also promoted the production of basic grains. In addition, we have encouraged self-sufficiency, have fostered women producers' organizations and have established a rural micro bank for our members.

In this region, where the Lacandon rainforest fades into pine forests, you'll find the coffee producing lands of the Highlands of Chiapas. The region is famous for its many ranges of hills and mountains, with an average height of 900 to 1,700 meters above sea level. Its soil is dense with volcanic ashes, and it rains frequently (from 1,500 to 2,000 mm per year). All of these factors contribute to producing coffee plantations of an excellent quality.

Our Objectives

In order to accomplish our mission of improving the overall living conditions of our producers' families, we develop alternative ways of doing business, such as:

- Selling coffee directly towards export markets without using intermediary institutions, be they governmental or private (Fair Trade).
- Converting to organic farming as part of a social project to protect our territories by conserving the soil – thus producing healthy, high quality products.
- Strengthening self-sufficiency in food production, sweet corn, cooperative farming of organic vegetables and poultry as a process for building food self-sufficiency for the community and the region.

Organic Coffee

The coffee which we produce is organic - not merely because we do not employ chemicals in its production. We also take care of our soil and our water that is part of the heritage passed on from our ancestors, and which we will pass on to future generations. Our coffee is organic as each grower takes care of his or her plants, harvesting and processing them along with their families, in an intimate relation with nature and with ancestral knowledge of its laws.

As part of the process of converting to organic production, we have built up a network of community promoters who are trained on topics such as conservation of the environment, production and quality assurance in annual workshop programs. The knowledge gained during each workshop is passed on by the promoters to each of the working groups in the respective communities.

Our coffee is certified by Mexico's certification instance for organic products and processes, Certimex S.C.



Alternative Markets and Fair Trade

Our goal is to establish long-term relations with our customers, in order to be able to maintain a permanent offer of coffee of the highest quality available in the market. Furthermore, we want customers and consumers to be aware that, when buying our coffee, they are actively supporting our processes of social organization, environmental protection and communitarian development.

The construction of development alternatives within Unión Majomut has entailed making changes in our way of doing business, according to the Fair Trade system, which has been fostering an international market allowing for the presence of cooperatives of small producers, as opposed to international markets controlled only by large transnational companies. The Fair Trade system is based on a minimum price to producers, guaranteeing decent working conditions for growers and equitable relationships between producers and consumers.

In 1994, we entered the international Fair Trade system (FLO International), and we have successfully participated in the process of setting up the Mexican Fair Trade system "Comercio Justo México". Today, we are proud to say that a 100% of our annual export volume is channeled through the Fair Trade system.

Since 2011, we dispose of the Small Producers' Symbol, a special distinction granted to the products and values of Small Producers' Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. The symbol represents the high quality of products from organized small producers, based on their work to promote dignified living in their communities, local economies, and the health and environment of producers and consumers.

