Sustainability Around the Globe: Coffee in Guatemala

Carlie Simkunas

Over Winterim, I had the privilege of being a part of the Social and Environmental Justice faculty-led trip to Guatemala. One of the organizations we worked with was De La Gente (From the People), a program that provides a growing cooperative of Guatemalan coffee farmers with the “skills, knowledge, and tools” to create successful businesses and improve the quality of life of their families. Through education, micro-loans, and opportunities to export the farmers’ high quality coffee directly to the US, this organization supports sustainable environmental, economic, and social systems. It was fascinating to see these three facets of sustainable development working together at a grassroots level to change people’s lives.

De La Gente is dedicated to a high standard of environmental responsibility, and during our time with the farmers, we learned about some of their sustainable agriculture practices. For example, the farmers recycle the organic waste produced during the coffee processing by using it as a natural fertilizer, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers in their fields. Another environmentally sound practice they employ is the use of a stationary bike that manually powers the machine that separates the coffee pulp from the actual bean.

As far as economic sustainability goes, De La Gente works to ensure that the farmers in the cooperative are making maximum profits from their businesses. Poverty is a serious problem in Guatemala, and the income of many farmers is inadequate to bring them and their families above the poverty line. However, through financing that enables growth and the elimination of the middleman in coffee exporting, De La Gente is proud to say that the farmers in their co-op are decidedly better off financially than many people in the region.

Largely due to the increased wealth that economically sustainable practices have brought to the farmers, De La Gente is also building stronger, more sustainable communities. One farmer explained to us that he only had a third grade education level, but thanks to his involvement in the De La Gente co-op, he can afford to finance the education of all 11 of his children through high school. All of the farmers were so thankful for the De La Gente organization and the visitors who go to learn about coffee processing and the lives of the farmers because it helps them provide better healthcare and education and a higher standard to living for their families.

De La Gente is a success story for the integration of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. To learn more about the organization or to purchase coffee, visit http://www.dlgcoffee.org
Air pollution worsens when a country faces economic crisis. A 30% spike of air pollutants have been released in Greece since the economic downturn. Unemployment rates have climbed to 27%, and energy prices have gone up. People have turned to cheap sources like wood for fuel.

Carcinogenic compounds in the air have risen 5 times. The country is looking towards natural gas as energy and also encouraging the purchase of catalytic domestic wood burners. If other countries suffer from economic downturn it will be interesting to see how their energy usage changes.

Source: http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/12/131219142321.htm
Get Caught: **Green-Handed**

Housing and Residence Life’s Office Of Sustainability

Housing and Residence Life’s Office of Sustainability will be holding a residence hall competition called Get Caught Green Handed as part of the national Recyclemania Competition. The residence hall competition will be held February 9th to March 9th. Students living in the halls will be awarded points for having the most recycling per capita, not having contaminated recycling, for design and posting bulletin boards, posters and other education info, holding a SEED event and other sustainability education events. The residence hall earning the most points by March 9th will receive one week free wash for all the students in that hall. The second prize will be a plastic bag recycling unit made by MAX R that is made from recycled milk jugs that will replace the cardboard collection unit that the hall that wins it.

Any questions about the competition can be made to the Housing Sustainability office by email at hartseka@uwec or by calling 715-836-2505

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**In Season**

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**Storage**

While some produce is no longer in season by the end of fall, many hearty root vegetables and other produce are stored easily through winter months and can effectively be considered “seasonal.”

- Garlic, Onion, Parsnips, Potatoes, Rutabagas, Turnips, Winter Squash, Cauliflower, Apples, Pears, Carrots, Beets
FROM LAURIE DAVID PRODUCER OF AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH AND KATIE COURIC

Before you take another bite...

It’s time to get real about food.

FREE SHOWING!

Thursday, February 19 • 7:00 p.m. • Woodland Theater

*Donation suggested for community members
Spring Sustainability Events

Recyclemania Starting February 1
Fed Up Thursday, February 19 7:00 p.m. Woodland Theater
Chasing Ice Thursday, March 19 7:00 p.m. Woodland Theater
Sustainability Fashion Show* Wednesday, April 15 7:00 p.m. Ojibwe Ballroom
Earth Day Wednesday, April 22
Growing Cities Thursday, April 23 7:00 p.m. Woodland Theater

Don’t forget to check out SOS on our Facebook page for more events and updates about them! We also have our Earth week contests and events being announced soon!

*Sustainability Fashion Show is in conjunction with Housing and Residence Life’s Office of Sustainability

https://www.facebook.com/StudentOfficeofSustainability

Looking for bikes, desks, chairs, computers, file cabinets, kayak, and much more for unbeatable prices!?
Located right next to the Towers Parking lot in the Facilities Management, Maintenance, and Central Stores building, 651 University Drive, is the home of the Surplus Store.

Public Sales: every other Thursday, 3-6pm
February: 5th & 19th
March: 5th & 19th
April: 2nd & 16th & 30th
May: 6th & 20th

The SOS provides funding for projects that reduce UW-Eau Claire’s negative impact on the environment and make UW-Eau Claire a more sustainable campus. The SOS allocates funding to projects addressing the various sustainability areas of transportation, energy, waste, climate change, food systems, campus ecology, environmental ethics, and outreach.