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Mexican Coffee Production Expected To Recover This Year

by LADB Staff
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Mexican growers are projecting at least some increase in coffee production for the current season because of improved field conditions. But the government-sanctioned Consejo Mexicano del Cafe (CMC) and the producer organization Confederacion Mexicana de Productores del Cafe (CMPC) differ in their production forecasts. In a report published in mid-January, the CMC projected coffee production for the 1999-2000 season to reach a record of more than 6 million 60-kg bags, compared with 4.8 million bags in 1998-1999. The CMPC has released a more modest forecast of 5 million 60-kg bags for the 1999-2000 season, which began in October 1999 and ends in September 2000. The CMPC said yields are expected to suffer because many farmers may not be able to obtain loans for fertilizers and other inputs during the coming season. Mexican coffee production in the past several seasons has been hampered by drought, hurricanes, floods, and other adverse weather conditions (see SourceMex, October 22, 1997, August 19, 1998, January 20, 1999).

CMC executive director Ruben Castillo said his organization's optimistic forecast was based on field surveys, which showed exceptional conditions in all of Mexico's major growing states. "Our surveys confirm that we may have the largest coffee harvest in history," Castillo said. "Everything looks good at the coffee plantations." Castillo said conditions have been especially good in Chiapas state, which accounts for almost one-third of Mexico's total coffee production. The CMC projects that coffee producers in Chiapas will increase output by 30% from last year's production of 1.5 million bags. But CMPC president Alejandro Moises Ceja questioned whether Mexican coffee production could reach its potential this year, given the lack of agricultural credits available to growers. Ceja urged the government to help boost yields by devoting more resources to combating rust and other diseases that affect coffee trees. Yields in other major coffee- producing countries like Colombia, Costa Rica, and Brazil average about 20 quintales per hectare, compared with only about 6 quintales in Mexico, Ceja said. Based on its higher production forecast, the CMC has projected coffee exports at 5 million bags this year, a significant increase from the 4.1 million bags exported in 1998-1999. The increased exports could boost revenues for the Mexican coffee industry, since an expected decline in Brazil's coffee crop has raised international coffee prices, Grupo Expansion said in its weekly bulletin Tendencias. (Sources: Associated Press-Dow Jones news service, 01/05/00; Excelsior, 01/06/00; Notimex, 01/18/00, 02/06/00; El Economista, 01/19/00, 02/07/00)

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