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Guatemala: Coffee Growers Request Temporary Tax Cuts &amp; Cheap Credit

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Feb. 15, Carlos Zuniga, president of the National Coffee Association (Asociacion Nacional del Cafe-ANACAFE), told reporters that coffee prices have reached a 17-year low at US$70 per quintal (1 quintal = 46 kg.). Consequently, he said, growers are requesting "special attention" from the Agriculture Ministry in the form of temporary tax cuts, and concessionary loans. Guatemala ranks as the world's fifth largest coffee exporter, after Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Mexico. A large proportion of Guatemalan-grown coffee is categorized as "other mild." According to Zuniga, 2.7 million workers are employed in the nation's coffee industry. When world prices are high, coffee accounts for up to 50% of Guatemalan export revenue. The 1992 harvest is projected at 3.8 million quintals, of which a third will be exported. Guatemala's main coffee customers are the US, Germany, Holland and Japan. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 02/15/92)

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