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Finca Platanillo in Guatemala is the World's First Coffee Farm to be Rainforest Alliance Verified™ as Climate Friendly

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El Platanillo coffee farm in San Marcos, Guatemala, has become the world's first Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farm to become verified for its compliance with the Climate Module of the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), the international coalition of conservation organizations that manages Rainforest Alliance certification. The announcement was made today by the Rainforest Alliance and the local SAN partner in Guatemala, the Inter-American Foundation for Tropical Research (FIIT, its Spanish acronym) in conjunction with the coffee trading company EFICO Green Coffee and Cocoa and the National Coffee Alliance of Guatemala (ANACAFE, in Spanish).

Gianluca Gondolini, project manager for the Rainforest Alliance, praised the dedication of El Platanillo's owner and employees to meeting the requirements of the module. "By fulfilling the SAN Climate Module, coffee plantations like El Platanillo can demonstrate their commitment to reducing emissions and improving the ability of their farms to adapt to climate change. We hope that farmers in Guatemala and elsewhere will follow in El Platanillo's footsteps," said Gondolini.

Producers that commit to implementing the SAN Climate Module will be able to reduce their emissions and better adapt to changing climatic conditions. They'll be able to identify the risks that climate change poses to their farms and communities and estimate their level of vulnerability in the face of prolonged droughts and severe floods – which are becoming more frequent and intense, impact harvest seasons and can lead to plague and disease outbreaks.

Verified producers will also increase the level of carbon stored on their farms by replacing decomposed earth, reforesting certain areas on their farms and improving soil conservation, all of which helps reduce agriculture's climate impacts and offers farmers a way to do their part to solve this challenging global problem.

For years, Finca Platanillo has partnered with EFICO and its clients to adopt sustainable farming practices. The EFICO Foundation has supported the development of sustainable farming models, and Belgian coffee roasters Mokaturc and Colruyt have invested in certification, education and infrastructure development. Over the past two years, Finca Platanillo, the Rainforest Alliance, Anacafe and EFICO have joined forces to develop and implement the SAN Climate Module. Through its embrace of the SAN Climate Module ("Criteria for Adapting to and Reducing Climate Change"), El Platanillo is working to make agriculture more climate-friendly. The Climate Module seeks to raise awareness among farmers about the impacts of climate change and promote the adoption of new practices that can mitigate these impacts and be integrated into a farm's sustainable management plan.

Nils Leporowski, vice president of ANACAFE, expressed his hope that more farmers will join this initiative, and he pointed out that El Platanillo's verification signals the beginning of a new era in evaluating and acknowledging the positive contributions that coffee producers make to the environment. "As an association, we will continue supporting the SAN Climate Module because we are committed to promoting a sustainable coffee culture," he added.

According to Luis Gaitán, FIIT executive director, "The verification of climate-friendly practices builds on the joint goals of the SAN and the Rainforest Alliance, by encouraging people, producers, businesses and industries to share in the responsibility of mitigating climate change and learn how to adapt to its effects, which are becoming increasingly evident."

The SAN Climate Module also provides benefits beyond the farm. "The concept of sustainability is a dynamic process that is continually evolving," said Katrien Delaet, EFICO sustainability project manager. "The module is a practical and accessible tool for the entire coffee chain. It encourages farmers to create carbon stocks and reduce their emissions, and it persuades industry to commit to sustainable supply chains."

Delaet also pointed out that El Platanillo has been a trusted supplier for her business and its clients for several years, and she announced that so far, three containers of the farm's coffee have been sold to three European roasters committed to sustainable development: Peeze Coffee, in the Netherlands, and Belgium's Beyers Coffee and Rombouts.

El Platanillo is an 857 acre shade coffee plantation; 773 acres are dedicated to growing Bourbon, Caturra, and Catuai beans and the rest are set aside as a protected area. The farm employs 35 men and 20 women year-round, and an average of 500 men and 200 women during harvest season.

Stuardo Coto, the owner of El Platanillo, is proud of what he and his staff have achieved. "The most satisfying part has been developing an environmental awareness among our workers and knowing that we are doing something good for the planet, which serves to motivate others within the coffee industry."

Currently, many other coffee producers are also working to obtain the SAN Climate Module verification. Among these is Finca Daterra in Minas Gerais, Brazil, a plantation that covers more than 7,400 acres and is divided into smaller farms according to the variety of coffee bean grown in each area.