

Las Manos del Café Supply Chains

Las Manos del Café collaborates with 16,139 individuals to comprehend their concept of well-being for farmworker families. Together, we create solutions that transform gaps into opportunities, delivering tangible and meaningful results.

A total investment of **\$303,678 USD** was contributed to providing services aimed at closing the wage gap in four communities: Alto Occidente Cooperative in Caldas, Norte de Caldas Cooperative in Caldas, Aguadas Cooperative in Caldas, and Salgar Cooperative in Antioquia.





Improving living conditions for farmworkers and their families

The Las Manos del Café Farmworkers Program was initiated in 2016 with the aim of making employment in the coffee industry more socially sustainable. This involves encouraging a diminishing labor force to actively engage in coffee production, addressing their needs, and transforming gaps into opportunities.

Farmworkers, often the most vulnerable and overlooked participants in the coffee supply chain, have traditionally been neglected by many projects that primarily focus on improving the well-being of coffee producers. The Farmworkers Program sets itself apart by directly benefiting the workers who play a crucial role in coffee quality and production volume.

Over the course of seven years, we have forged a partnership with rural workers, a community that has historically been distrustful and apprehensive, having rarely been heard or included in services and initiatives.

Four essential elements drive our work:

1. Building trust
2. Fostering social capital in a community unaccustomed to collaboration
3. Implementation through participation
4. Valuing the workers' perspective as the foundation

The program strategically focuses on delivering services that enhance the quality of life, job security, and peace of mind for farmworkers and their families. Simultaneously, it fosters stronger relationships among workers, producers, and local organizations.

RGC participated in the living wage and living income study

Conducted by the Anker Research Institute on behalf of Verite, released July 2022.



The study was conducted in two regions: Antioquia in one of las Manos del café project regions (Cooperativa de Salgar) and in Huila (Las Rosas women in coffee project). Field data was collected to establish the definition of a living wage in these regions.

The definition of a living wage, as applied by both the Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC) and this study, is as follows:

"The remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a given location sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and his or her family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transportation, clothing, and other essential needs, including provision for contingencies." (GLWC, 2016, cited in Anker and Anker, 2017).

The study reflected that *"The living wage is similar to what coffee workers actually earn during the harvest season, but about 56% higher than the minimum wage they usually earn outside the harvest season."* (Informe sobre salario vital, Dec 2021, Lykke E. Andersen and Natasha Nina Andersen)

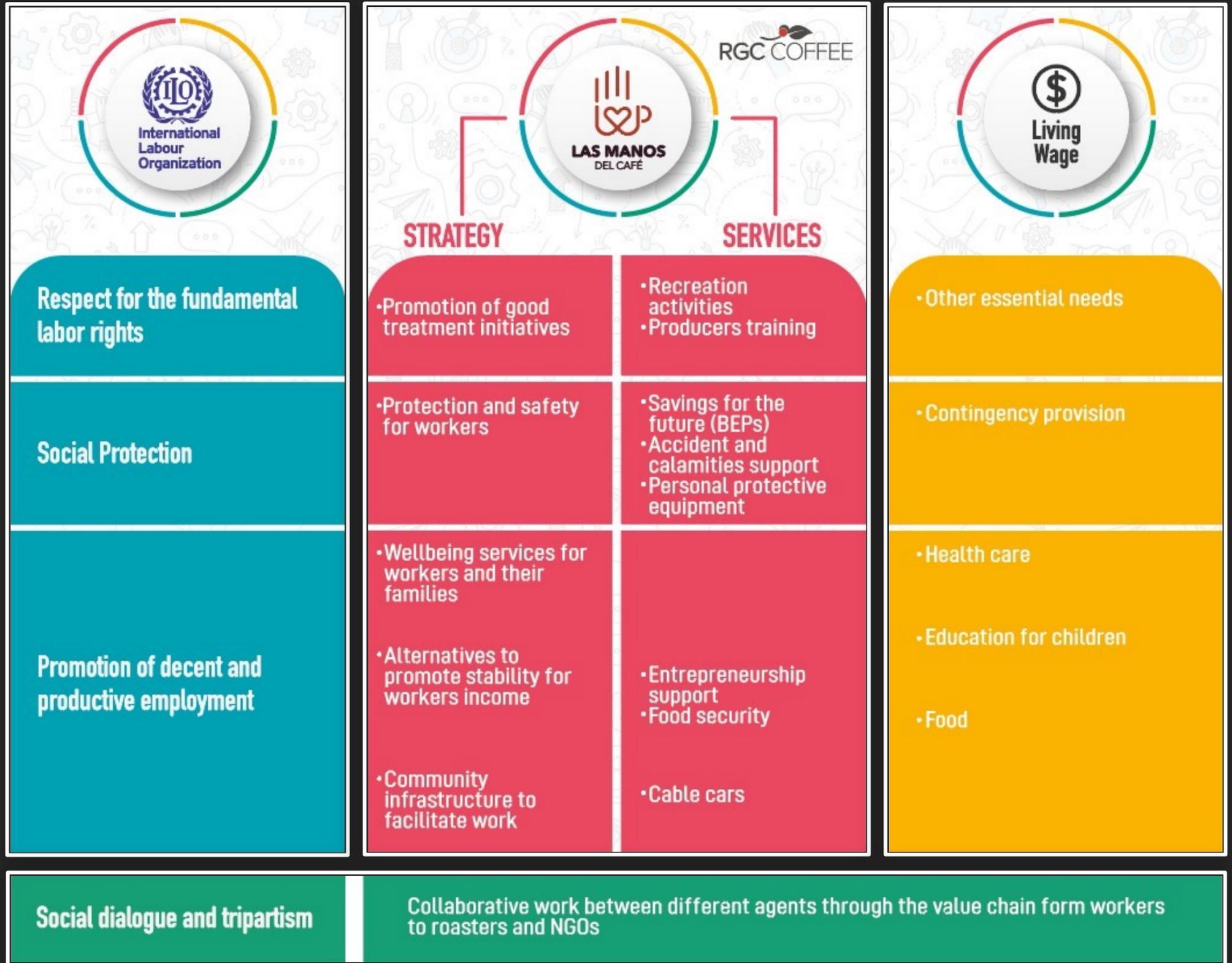
Over the years of building close relationships with workers, we have been able to demonstrate that, as the study indicates, workers receive a decent salary during the harvest season, which nearly reaches living wage levels. However, their capacity to save is nearly nonexistent, as the earnings they receive during the harvest season cover their basic needs but leave no room for savings to bridge the gap during the other months of the year.

According to the Anker methodology, a decent living wage encompasses several key factors: access to a basic yet nutritious diet, aligned with local preferences and resources; housing that meets both national and international minimum standards; access to education for children through secondary school; sufficient healthcare when needed; provision for all other essential needs and a reserve for emergencies. Moreover, a living wage should be adequate to keep the family together, preventing any necessity for some members to migrate in order to supplement household income. (Informe sobre salario vital, Dec 2021, Lykke E. Andersen and Natasha Nina Andersen)

Seven years ago, at the inception of Las Manos del Café, the project organized numerous workshops involving workers in the villages. These workshops enabled us to collaboratively design the array of services that the project should provide. These services are essential for enhancing their living conditions and, without the project's intervention, would remain inaccessible to them and their families.

Correlation Between ILO Decent Work Conditions, Las Manos Del Café, and Components of a Living Wage

The services offered by the project are centered around five fundamental strategies, which we have discovered to be in harmony with the essential components of a living wage and the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda. The ILO has been a strategic partner of RGC for the past three years, actively supporting the establishment of decent working conditions within coffee supply chains.





Impact and Achievements - Project Milestones for 2022

14,620 people are benefiting from wellbeing services; the most valued among the health services are medical, visual and dental care.

126 workers are benefiting from cholinesterase tests.

50 food gardens were implemented with 37 women and 16 men, to promote income stability.

5,196 people have access to funeral services throughout the project

1,187 school-age children of workers received a school kit (books, pencils, crayons)

1,942 farmworkers are saving money through BEPs (savings for the future program) and are covered with life insurance service.

4 calamity funds were established to provide support to workers in case of an unforeseen event.



Sustainable Development Goals

SDG1 – No Poverty

SDG3 – Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG10 – Reduced Inequalities

Awards and Recognitions



WINNER

Las Manos del Café was honored as the recipient of the **2020 Specialty Coffee Association's Project Award**, acknowledging the project's exceptional contributions to sustainability.



International
Labour
Organization

In 2021, RGC continued its partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), implementing Las Manos to support their Decent Work Agenda in coffee supply chains.



Impact and Achievements - Project Milestones for 2022

9 entrepreneurial initiatives were supported including a coffee mechanics venture, coffee nurseries, a coffee harvesting project, and beehive operations.

576 workers were trained on health and safety practices in partnership with ILO.

100 workers were trained in children rights protection using ILO's methodology.

1650 farmworkers received personal protective equipment to improve posture and protect them from environmental conditions during harvesting season.

Professional support was extended through **four social workers** dedicated to the well-being of families. This service is particularly unique and significant for them since cooperatives typically focus exclusively on producers.

715 workers and their families participated in recreational activities in their villages.

687 workers attended trainings in agricultural practices to improve their skills.





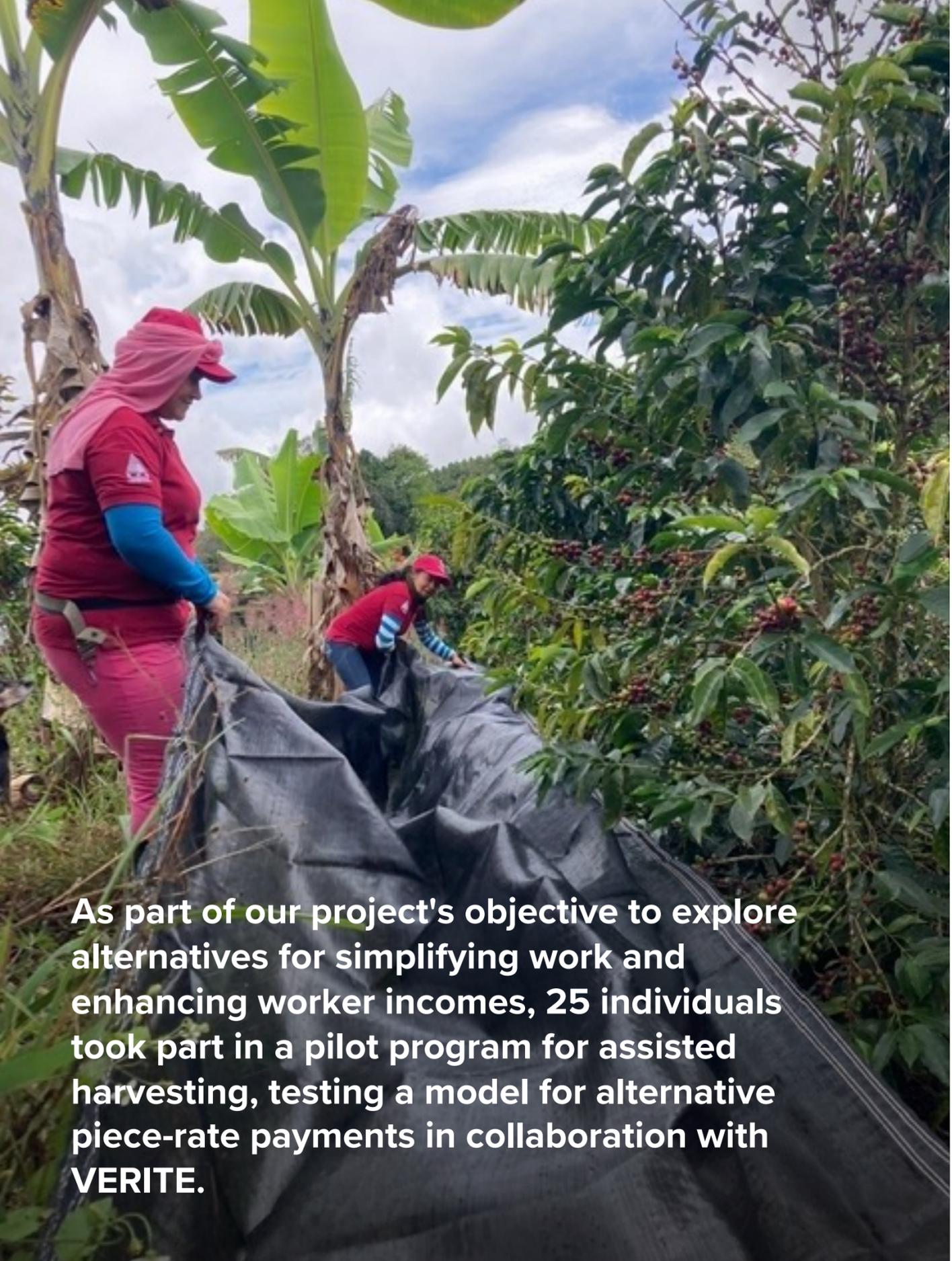
During the main harvest of 2022 in Antioquia, we made significant efforts in the assisted harvesting pilot project. Four worker groups were established to trial the use of 'Lonas' (fabric sheets placed on the ground to facilitate coffee collection), with the participation of 23 workers and two farmers. Notably, one of these groups consists of eight female workers.

These activities yielded significant results: worker productivity increased from 8.6 kg per hour using the traditional basket method to 15.5 kg per hour with the use of 'Lonas'.

Given that this pilot involves a transition from old practices to acquiring new skills, the conclusion is that workers need ongoing support in adapting to this novel technology. It is also essential to engage producers in the adoption and implementation of these technologies.

In general, participating workers have shown a high degree of openness. Despite initial apprehensions, they view this as a viable alternative for offering harvesting services. The project's approach, where it assumed the risk on behalf of workers and producers, played a crucial role in encouraging them to embrace this initiative. It's worth noting that this technology has been available in the country for years, but its adoption has remained nearly nonexistent due to the reluctance to take risks, particularly among workers who are the most vulnerable and cannot afford to bear the consequences of any potential failures.

An intriguing finding is that these methods could significantly enhance the income of female pickers, as they typically exhibit lower productivity than their male counterparts, which affects their earnings. In 2023, Las Manos del Café plans to support a group of women in organizing and offering this new service to producers in the region.



As part of our project's objective to explore alternatives for simplifying work and enhancing worker incomes, 25 individuals took part in a pilot program for assisted harvesting, testing a model for alternative piece-rate payments in collaboration with VERITE.