

QUARTERLY RETURN ISSUE 133

AUTUMN 2024 | www.shared-interest.com

BUILDING A RESILIENT FUTURE

FULL STORY ON PAGE 14



SHAREDINTEREST
INVESTING IN A FAIRER WORLD

WELCOME TO YOUR AUTUMN MAGAZINE

Welcome to our autumn update, where we share the latest impact stories. We are also pleased to announce that Jo Powell has joined us as our new Finance Director Designate. You can read more about Jo's appointment on page 4, alongside outgoing Finance Director and Company Secretary Tim Morgan's reflections on his 15 years with Shared Interest.

As you have read in previous issues, our focus remains on widening our support and continuing to work where other lenders are less keen to operate. In this edition, we bring you stories from our diverse portfolio. On pages 6 to 12, discover how two Peruvian customers, CAES Piura and Quality Supplier, are using Shared Interest finance to increase their stock purchases from farmers, meeting growing buyer demand for Andean grains and sugarcane.

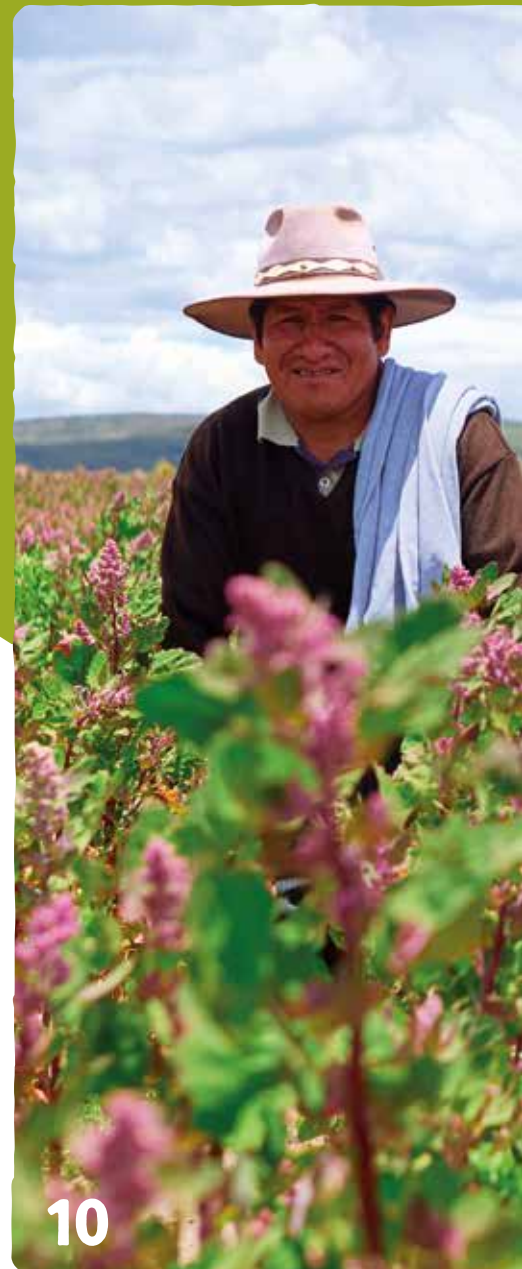
Pages 13 to 18 highlight our East African customers tackling climate change challenges. Learn how Banyankole Coffee Services in Uganda is diversifying into beekeeping, and how Garden Fresh in Rwanda is supporting farmers with climate adaptation solutions.

We recently celebrated Fairtrade Fortnight. A heartfelt thank you to all our volunteers who participated - your support is crucial in expanding our reach and global community. If you are interested in volunteering opportunities with us, please turn to page 19 for more information.

Until next time,



Patricia Alexander
Managing Director

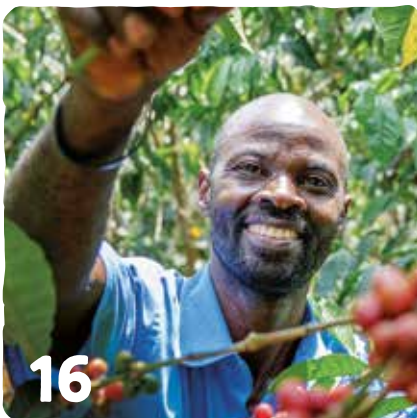




WHAT'S INSIDE

- Appointment of new Finance Director Designate 4
- Diversifying our Peruvian portfolio 6
- Exploring the impacts of climate change 13
- Thought piece from Council 18
- Celebrating Fairtrade Fortnight 19
- Join our volunteer network 19

SHAREDINTEREST
INVESTING IN A FAIRER WORLD



16



19



19

If you would like to manage your Share Account online, you can register for the Member Portal by calling us on 0191 233 9101.

L: Jo Powell, Finance Director Designate
R: Tim Morgan, Finance Director and
Company Secretary



APPOINTMENT OF NEW FINANCE DIRECTOR DESIGNATE

We are delighted to announce that we have appointed a new Finance Director Designate to replace our long-serving Finance Director and Company Secretary, Tim Morgan as he approaches his planned retirement from the Society and Foundation at the end of 2024. Jo Powell joined the Shared Interest team last month, and will work with Tim during a handover period until his retirement. Many of you will have met Tim personally at past AGMs and events during his 15-year tenure, and I'm sure you will join us in thanking him for his unwavering commitment to Shared Interest and wish him the very best in his retirement.

In this article, we speak to Tim as he shares his experiences of his time with Shared Interest. We also speak with Jo, as she shares her enthusiasm at joining the team and her vision for the future.

Prior to joining Shared Interest, Tim studied Maths at Newcastle University, before training with Price Waterhouse (now PWC) as a Chartered Accountant. After seven years with PWC he took his first external role with Azure, a social impact organisation supporting people who support people with learning and other disabilities.

Tim said: "I was there for three years as Finance Manager. I loved it, and I basically got the bug for working in social impact business, and I've never done anything else in the nearly 30 years since I joined Azure. Following that, I moved on to Traidcraft, which then cemented my interest in fair trade. I've also done a lot of work with Cafédirect, Ecology Building Society, the NHS and Paper Dove Company (which designs and sources Christmas cards for the charity sector).

"In 2009, the role with Shared Interest came up, and it was just the perfect fit for me, allowing me to combine finance, social impact and fair trade, which were all things I enjoyed doing and had experience in. It was almost like the job had my name on it."

KEY MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Tim spoke to us about key milestones and achievements, "I think this has been about getting through some major global issues. When I joined, we had just faced the global financial crisis in 2007/08, and then we had Brexit, the resulting financial and economic crisis, and the pandemic. So, my time has been about helping to steer the organisation through choppy waters. We have been navigating a very difficult world in the 15 years I have been here, so I would say getting through those times has been a key achievement."

“Brexit in particular resulted in huge implications for currency exchange rates, when the vote came in and the Pound collapsed, negatively impacting the value of our Share Capital, which we mostly lend in USD and EUR. Our preparation for that event proved to be at the right level but only just so!

“Notably, despite turbulent times, our Share Capital value has doubled in the time I have been with Shared Interest.

“In 2012, we added our team in West Africa. There have also been changes in regulatory frameworks, anti-money laundering regulations, we have moved to a new bank (having outgrown the Cooperative Bank), and also when I joined was the early stages of Shared Interest lending directly to producers. We have expanded our geographies as well as commodities, and are having a much wider impact. Alongside these the Shared Interest Foundation has grown from strength to strength, delivering both large and very innovative projects.

“In 1990, when Shared Interest was founded it was really cutting edge; we can claim to be one of the pioneers of crowdfunding, and the robust model that Mark Hayes set up has really stood the test of time. The fact that we are still working under this model is really a testimony in itself. Our innovation, I think, lies in how we interact with members and our peers, how we have broadened our customer base, and also how we have written our own software to manage our customer and member databases.

“We have always had a community of members who are willing to put their money into supporting producers in marginalised parts of the world. Today, what we do is still ultimately the same, staying true to our mission. Our determination to keep lending money at risk to people who are very vulnerable is innovative, meaning that we remain the only lender prepared to work with small and marginalised groups.”

We asked Tim about the most rewarding aspects of his role, with a smile on his face, he said: “I feel very privileged to have worked with such a great team of colleagues and to have had the opportunity to meet producers and members over the years.

“I visited East Africa and Latin America and was thrilled to meet with several customers, and better understand the impact of our finance. Then there is the patient dedication of our members, who I am always delighted to meet and chat to.

“That is what mutuality is about, connecting those two groups - the customers who need the help, and the people here who have the firepower to provide that help as a collective - and that is amazing.”



“My vision is for Shared Interest to remain true to its focus on justice at the heart of trade finance and I hope that the Society and Foundation thrive while continuing to be inspired by that vision.”



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Jo Powell joins us from the NHS Business Services Authority, a large shared-service organisation providing non-clinical services across the UK. Jo has been a Chartered Accountant for over 20 years, working in the public, private and third sector. In her role at the NHS she became heavily involved with the diversity and inclusion network, creating opportunities for individuals in the UK. Jo said: “I had been looking for an opportunity to use my financial experience in a wider setting with the opportunity to make a difference to individuals on a global scale. When I saw this role advertised, I jumped at the chance and am still overjoyed to be starting work with Shared Interest.”

ALIGNING PERSONAL VALUES WITH SHARED INTEREST'S MISSION

Speaking about how her personal values align with the mission of Shared Interest, Jo said: “My personal values are positivity, growth, kindness, acceptance and respect.

“In my personal and professional life I visibly embrace diversity and inclusivity; I know that what makes us all different brings richness and colour to life. Shared Interest’s mission and the work it does is totally aligned to my values with learning, development and collaboration evident in everything they do. I am thrilled to be part of the journey to support ethical investment and fair trade.”

“I believe that all feedback is a gift and helpful, however for Shared Interest and the way it works, member feedback is essential. Knowing why people want to invest and why they want to get involved helps us set the right strategic direction.”

Speaking about taking over the role, Jo said: “I met Tim many years ago when I worked at UNW LLP and was struck by his knowledge, experience and passion for Shared Interest. I will learn how to do things the right way and this will help me succeed in the role. I know I have a brilliant team to work with as well; having great colleagues that you can trust means that you enjoy coming to work and can give your best.”

Jo shared with us her motivations to work in ethical finance supporting farmers and artisans, she said: “I am motivated by creating positive outcomes in society through promoting investment in projects and businesses that encourage sustainability, fairness, and social responsibility. Supporting farmers and artisans, who often represent the backbone of local economies, helps preserve traditions, provide essential goods empowering families and communities.”

A MESSAGE TO THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF MEMBERS

We asked Jo if she had a message for our global community of members, and she said:

“I am excited to be taking up this position and I am certain that we will continue the brilliant trajectory set in previous years. Whilst moving forwards and dealing with any challenges as they arise. As Tim says we will maintain our focus on justice at the heart of trade finance. I really look forward to getting to know you over the coming months and years.”

FOCUS ON OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2022, we conducted a comprehensive five-year Strategic Review. Our analysis focused on the emerging challenges confronting farmers and artisans. These challenges include the escalating climate crisis, the critical need for gender equality, increasing consumer demand for supply chain transparency, and the rapid evolution of technology.

Our key strategic focus is on:



1. GENDER EQUALITY



2. DIVERSIFYING THE PORTFOLIO



3. NEW TERRITORIES AND PRODUCTS



4. CLIMATE CHANGE



5. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: DIVERSIFYING THE PORTFOLIO

Broadening our focus to reduce the dominance of coffee and cocoa.

DIVERSIFYING OUR PERUVIAN PORTFOLIO



Customer: CAES Piura
Commodity: Sugarcane
Location: Piura, Peru
Members: 80 members in 11 associations

The Ecological and Solidarity Agricultural Cooperative of Piura (CAES Piura) is an agricultural co-operative that processes and exports organic sugarcane grown in the mountains of the Piura region of northern Peru. Located between 1,000 and 1,500m above sea level, the sugarcane is sown and harvested by the co-operative's members, then processed and exported across Europe.

CAES Piura was founded by four producer organisations in 2014. Their objective was twofold: to introduce a sustainable supply chain for Peruvian brown sugar by adding value and exporting it, and to contribute to the development of local communities where this commodity grows.

In 2016, they gained Small Producer Organizations (SPP) certification. Today, the co-operative supports 80 members in 11 associations, most are located in the province of Ayabaca, specifically in the districts of: Montero, Jililí, Sicchez, Ayabaca and Frías. Characterised by consistently mild temperatures and a marked contrast between dry and wet seasons, these regions provide ideal growing conditions for the sugarcane.



CAES Piura farmer Segundo Polidoro Maza Portocarrero harvests sugarcane.



CAES Piura farmer Etelvina Niño Ríos holds a bag of banana flour.

Traditionally, most small farmers in the Piura highlands have grown coffee and sugarcane simultaneously, placing more importance on coffee cultivation as it is more profitable. In recent years, with the growing popularity, small producers in the northern macro-region have recognised that sugarcane represents an important source of income.

Panela has transitioned from being a marginal product with very low value in local markets to a more valued product in terms of quality, processing, and presentation, and it is now exported to more demanding markets in Europe and Japan.

The producers of CAES Piura grow sugarcane on their farms, either individually or as a family. Once harvested, they organise themselves into grassroots associations or groups to process the crop. Sugarcane can be harvested throughout the year, however in the mountains of Piura, the heavy rains between the months of January and May make transportation and processing difficult. For this reason, during these months only 5% of the annual production is processed, with the highest production months being from July to December, when the rains have ended.

Elber Meza, General Manager at CAES Piura, said: “In 2023, the Piura region experienced heavy rains that affected roadways in some areas, with the most severe consequences felt by families living on the Peruvian coast. Within the co-operative, approximately two hectares of sugarcane were destroyed, impacting 10 families. The roads leading to the farms were damaged, with deep trenches making it difficult for families to access and harvest their crops. However, in other farms, the three-row planting systems and contour planting helped prevent significant soil erosion. Regarding the areas of land, only one family area was partially destroyed by the rains and landslides. Producer Ramos Abad Morocho had to invest 15,000 soles (around £3,000) to restore it, and the co-operative supported the restoration by providing bricks. The farm is now back in operation.



Field Assistant unloads sugarcane.

CONTINUED >

“There is growing concern about climate change, which is being accelerated by the harmful practices of industries, agriculture, and the general population, as they increasingly rely on energy from hydrocarbons. This is happening despite scientific advances in more eco-friendly energy sources. CAES production is based on circular, Organic, and fair trade practices, which not only respect and protect water, soil, and the environment but also apply social principles, such as non-discrimination, respect, and equal opportunities for men and women. Additionally, it supports education for children and rejects child labour.”

Shared Interest has supported CAES Piura with finance since 2019, enabling the organisation to acquire larger stocks of brown sugar from their members and to contribute to improvements in their income and quality of life.

Speaking about the impact of the finance, Elber said: “The purpose of the Shared Interest loan is exclusively for working capital, such as the collection of raw materials and payment to each of the producers upon delivery, in a timely manner. CAES Piura supports the producers by providing advance payments for the collection of their products, which allows them to secure the product and pay their labourers promptly. The financing will help the company and producers improve production levels and capacity, increase producers' income, create job opportunities in the area, and contribute to a better quality of life. It will also help boost sales volumes in both domestic and international markets.

“In general, CAES Piura operates mainly in the rural highlands of Piura, an area identified as being impoverished. This is where their processing plant is located, creating jobs for local residents, primarily women and young people, providing them with dignified employment and opportunities for growth.”

The main international market for brown sugar is Europe. CAES Piura aim to continue increasing their sales in the European market and they are also exploring the possibility of entering other markets such as the USA and Asia. In addition, they are seeking to diversify their portfolio, focusing on products with higher added value, such as peanuts.

CAES Piura work with their members to develop social and environmental projects. They have been working with the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) to improve members' family incomes by increasing the production and quality of their sugarcane fields. This project enabled farmers to improve their processing plants, as well as train farmers in Organic certification, so they can access wider markets. In addition, this project included organisational strengthening by training women and young people to assume leadership roles. The project concluded in 2022 and they began a new project to finance production of brown sugar and peanuts.

With regards to gender equality, the co-operative ensures its women members play an active role in its assemblies, meetings and decisions. Women have a voice and the right to vote, with the aim of promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Additionally, priority is given to integrating women into leadership positions within the co-operative.



DID YOU KNOW?

Sugarcane production in Peru is expected to increase to 1.3million metric tons (a 14% increase on the previous year).

AYABACA
(CAES PIURA)

LIMA

PERU



CAES Piura GM Elber Meza and farmer Segundo Polidoro Maza Portocarrero at the processing plant.

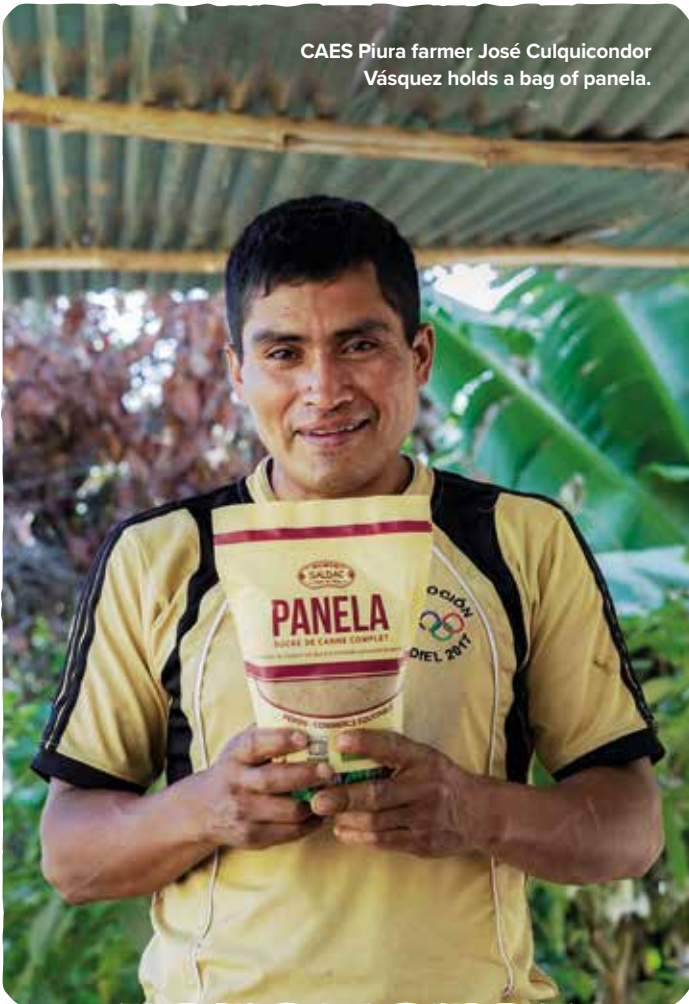
SPP CERTIFICATION

SPP is a Network of network of small producer organisations that transforms the relationship between brands and consumers through honesty, as well as by means of responsible purchases where producers are guaranteed fair payment and consumers get quality eco-friendly and health-friendly products. The Small Producers Symbol (SPP) is independently certified, and a recognised fair trade label developed exclusively for and by small-scale producers in the Global South.





CAES Piura farmer Marleny Del Socorro Alvarado loading sugarcane.



CAES Piura farmer José Culquicondor Vásquez holds a bag of panela.

THE PROCESS

Brown sugar is also known in Peru as 'chancaca' or 'panela'. It is a natural sweetener derived from sugarcane and the main difference from white sugar is that there is no refining and no chemicals are added. The finished product is widely used in the food industry for its nutritional and health benefits. CAES Piura sells it wholesale in 25kg and 30kg batches and, in retail, in 1kg and 0.5kg packages.

The sugarcane is cut and transported to a processing centre for milling and then extraction of the 'guarapo' (sugarcane juice). Once extracted, filtered and decanted, the guarapo is subjected to a thermal process by which it loses water by evaporation up to the optimum point, when it reaches the right texture. Then, it is allowed to cool, mixing until it solidifies into small grains of brown sugar.

Once the producers have processed the panela, it is transported to the finished product centre in Montero. There, the CAES Piura technical team perform quality control and sift the sugar to eliminate possible impurities. Panela from different producers or areas usually varies slightly in percentage of humidity and colour, so it is mixed to achieve a homogeneous product. It is then packaged and stored, generating a stock to meet regular orders. Finally, the packed product is transported to the Port of Paita for shipping.



Customer: Quality Supplier Foods
Commodity: Quinoa and chia seeds
Location: Puno, Peru
Members: 32 producers

FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE ANDES AND THE RAINFOREST

Originating with the Incas in the mountains of Bolivia, Chile and Peru, quinoa has been at the forefront in these regions for 5,000 years. It was a staple for the Incas and is still a prominent food source for their indigenous descendants, the Quechua and Aymara people.



Gonzalo Yesang, Quality Supplier CEO visiting producers families in Puno.

Situated on Lake Titicaca, one of South America's largest lakes and the world's highest navigable body of water, lie some of Peru's most disadvantaged communities, where farmers are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Founded in 2020, Quality Supplier Foods (Quality Supplier) provides an opportunity for these communities to improve their income through the sale of quinoa, fava beans and other indigenous seeds and grains.

Peru is the world's largest producer of quinoa, accounting for just over half of the global supply. Neighbouring Bolivia is the second-largest producer, responsible for just over a third. Although many importing countries have started to produce the grain domestically, Peruvian and Bolivian quinoa remains distinct due to its superior quality and taste. This is largely thanks to the high altitudes of the Andes Mountains, which provide ideal growing conditions for the plant.

Quality Supplier was founded in 2020 with the purpose of promoting the agro-export of Andean grains, directly supporting Peruvian farmers. The organisation is dedicated to bringing these superfoods to markets around the world, including the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

Quality Supplier CEO (pictured left), Gonzalo Yesang Merino, said:

"Our mission is to offer global consumers a healthy choice that enhances their lifestyle, while making a positive impact on the farming families who, with their hard work in the field, make every shipment possible. Through our exports, we contribute not only to the well-being of those who are part of our supply chain, but also to the economic growth of Peru."

PERU'S GRAIN INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE:



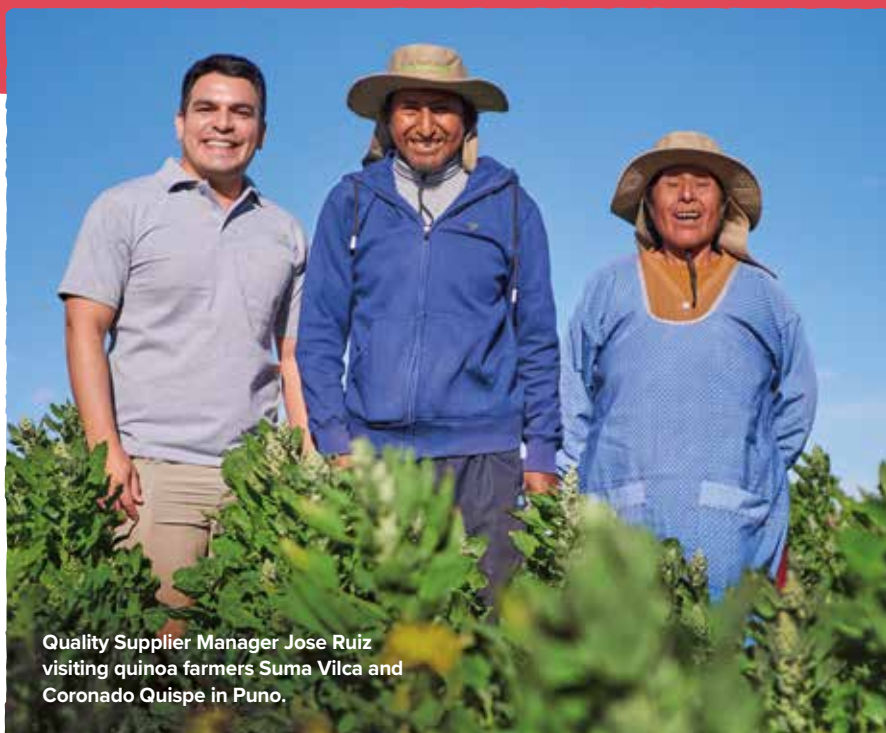
Peru is the largest producer of quinoa worldwide



Peru is one of the top 10 producing countries of chia seeds



Andean grain exports surged by 42.5% in early 2024



Quality Supplier Manager Jose Ruiz visiting quinoa farmers Suma Vilca and Coronado Quispe in Puno.



Quality Supplier quinoa producer on a farm in Puno.

Gonzalo continued: "In Quality Supplier Foods we are committed to working in harmony directly with our producers to ensure we obtain a high-quality product, while creating a reliable supply chain."

Quality Supplier Country Manager Jose Ruiz Raborg, said: "Quality is the main characteristic of our products, and this is the same quality that we seek to promote in our area of direct influence, always seeking improvements in the quality of life of our producers, and generating a quality work environment for all our collaborators."

Earlier this year, Quality Supplier approached Shared Interest for finance to support them to purchase higher volumes of quinoa and gain a more competitive price for farmers.

Speaking about the impact of the finance, Gonzalo said: "Shared Interest helps us continue to expand our reach and the commitment we have to the development of farmers in the education and quality of life in their families."

"Our projection is to continue incorporating farmers from the areas of Ayacucho and Huancavelica into our supply chain. We are currently working with 32 producers in Puno for the 2024 campaign, we plan to reach 100 producers for the 2025 campaign from these areas, creating greater opportunities and benefits for them."

Quality Supplier supports farmers by providing training in agricultural practices to improve soil fertility. This directly benefits farm yields and, subsequently, the producers' income. The organisation also conducts annual training for all producers on topics such as environmental and agronomic management. Furthermore, Quality Supplier has implemented projects related to organic certification.

The producers mentioned that with training and supervision received, they have managed to improve the yield of their quinoa production, having a much higher income due to this crop.

Quinoa farmer, Coronado Quispe, said: "Before, my parents produced quinoa for their own consumption, and it was a product that was known here in the area (Puno), but that had no value for the people of the capital. Later it began to become better known outside this area, and they discovered that it is a product with a lot of nutrition."

CONTINUED >



Quality Supplier farmer Mrs. Juana, collecting the plants of quinoa that have been cut by the men.

"I remember that I started planting quinoa to sell to people, together with my parents in 2005, and we did it in greater quantity because it was already a product that they asked us for, and it had a good price and gave us more money. From then on, quinoa has become a product that more people want to buy from us.



"Quality Supplier arrived in this area in 2022 and since then we have had a good relationship. They have taught us things we didn't know to be able to produce more on the plot and they visit us to see how quinoa is doing."



Quality Supplier Country Manager Jose Ruiz and farmer Coronado Quispe.

Quality Supplier are committed to paying a fair price to their farmers and as of August 2023, they paid up to 18% higher than the market prices. In line with this, quinoa represents the farmers highest source of income where producers obtain USD 930 per hectare per harvest on average (average size of 2.5 hectares), while with other crops (i.e. potato, corn; cultivated in other months of the year or when rotating crops) they obtain USD 270 per hectare. Earlier this year, Quality Supplier approached Shared Interest for finance to support them to purchase higher volumes of quinoa and gain a more competitive price for farmers.

Quality Supplier are looking to diversify their portfolio, by expanding their chia seed production into new markets. Currently accounting for around 3% of their production, chia seeds grow in different climatic conditions to quinoa. Although both products are grown in Peru above 2,500m, quinoa grows in more temperate climates in the high Andean area, while chia is produced in more subtropical climates.

WHAT IS QUINOA?

Quinoa (pronounced KEEN-wah) is the seed of the *Chenopodium quinoa* plant. Quinoa is an ancient South American grain, first grown for food 7,000 years ago in the Andes. The Incas called it "the mother grain" and believed it was sacred. It was largely unknown to the rest of the world until fairly recently. Since then, it has experienced a huge surge in popularity because of its high nutrient content and health benefits. In fact, the year 2013 was named "The International Year of Quinoa" by the UN because of its valuable qualities and potential to fight world hunger.

WHAT IS CHIA?

Chia is mainly used in the food industry because it is a good source of omega-3 fatty acid, protein, and fibre, which makes it an ideal food for improving cardiovascular, digestive and bone health. It can be consumed directly (raw or cooked) or through its derivatives, such as flour, oil, or beverage.

Coffee berries collected on a Ugandan farm.

EXPLORING THE EFFECTS ON FUTURE FARMING

We know that the impact of the climate emergency is growing on a global scale, with remote and rural regions often suffering most. With extreme weather conditions intensifying, farming communities urgently need to build resilience against rising temperatures and the increasing risk of pests and diseases.

In recent years, eastern Africa has starkly demonstrated the economic, political, and humanitarian consequences of severe drought. Since 2020, the region has experienced six consecutive rainy seasons with insufficient precipitation, affecting millions. This prolonged drought resulted from a multi-year La Niña event, likely intensified by global climate change, as even slight variations in sea surface temperatures can significantly alter weather patterns.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 2023 report indicates that global temperatures have already risen by approximately 1°C. Projections suggest further increases of 2.5°C in optimistic scenarios and up to 4.5°C in worst-case scenarios. These changes pose a significant threat to coffee production, given the crop's sensitivity to narrow temperature and precipitation ranges. Experts anticipate reduced coffee yields and productivity across eastern Africa's coffee-growing regions, with concerns extending to potential loss of genetic diversity within coffee plants.

Immaculate Ochieno, Shared Interest Lending Manager for East Africa explains:

"In our region we have experienced frequent floods with increased severity and also longer drought spells. The downside is the effect this has on coffee seasons. Previously we would see harvest periods of three months, these are becoming shorter as weather patterns change, and the coffee matures later. However, the issues comes as the buyer expects coffee at a certain time.

"For the coffee to dry farmers need the rains to end, however we have seen many instances where this has not happened, meaning the coffee cannot dry in good time. Mechanical dryers are needed which are more costly and also affect the quality, and the end result is that it takes coffee farmers a longer time to fulfil their contracts, and the period in which they require our (Shared Interest) financing is also disrupted. These severe rains also invite pests which require pesticides to be fought against to mitigate crop loss, again impacting the quality of the coffee."

These issues are not limited to coffee. In Rwandan fruit and vegetables, producers face increased pests and diseases, and the need to install greenhouses to avoid cross-contamination from pesticides, affecting the quality and subsequent selling price of their crops.

Immaculate continued: "In the fresh vegetable harvest, farmers are being required to install greenhouses to prevent cross-pollination when using pesticides to tackle pests and diseases. If greenhouses are not installed pesticides can blow onto crops from nearby fields, affecting the quality and spreading the chemical. If this occurs the crops are unable to be sold as certified produce to the buyer. In this case farmers are forced to sell the product locally at a lower price, and so they lose money.

"The easily available and affordable pesticides will have lead components which are forbidden in testing. Proper pesticides are more costly which increases the cost of production. This underlines how essential investments in greenhouses are to prevent cross-pollination and produce organically certified coffee."

In the articles on pages 15 and 17 we explore the impact these changes are having for two of our customers in the region.

CONTINUED >



Customer: Garden Fresh
Commodity: Fresh fruit and vegetables
Location: Kigali, Rwanda
Members: 324 producers

A FUTURE THROUGH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES



Garden Fresh farmers collect French beans.

On the outskirts of the Rwandan capital of Kigali, father-and-son owned fruit-and-vegetable co-operative Garden Fresh are rooted in the heart of a growing horticultural industry, which is valued at 10% of the nation's agricultural GDP. Founded in 2015, Garden Fresh have evolved to support over 300 farmers, producing high quality products such as French beans, chillies and passionfruit.

Whilst exporters in Rwanda largely rely on production from their own farms, Garden Fresh are pioneering the out grower model by actively engaging with other co-operatives and smallholder farmers to source their produce. Furthermore, Garden Fresh provide farmers with inputs, such as seeds and crop protection, as well as training on climate adaptation solutions, to enable them to meet quality and volume standards required for export.

The co-operative's impact extends to the wider community. By employing local, casual workers during the harvest, an average of 300 community members per season are empowered with a decent income.

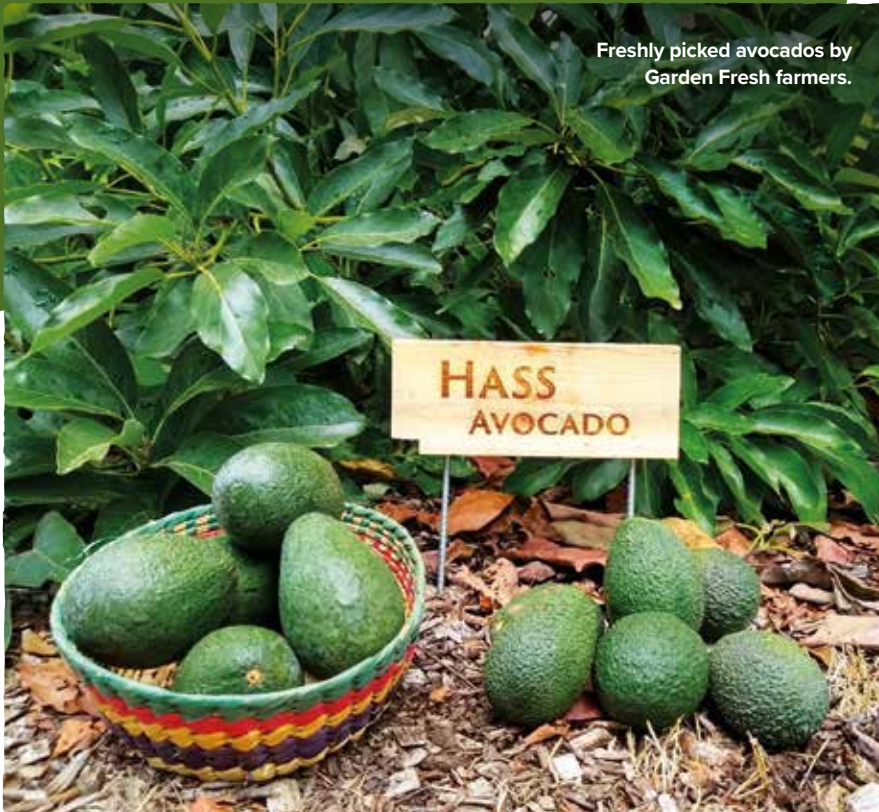
Meanwhile, by providing a market for farmers' produce, farmers receive better prices than those offered by the local market. In addition to improving livelihoods, in the eastern province of Nyagatare, Garden Fresh have contributed towards the construction of a school.

In 2017, Garden Fresh delivered training to its management staff on the horticultural value chain - from cultivation to marketing. Following the training, Garden Fresh gained certifications in Global G.A.P (a brand of smart farm assurance solutions) and SMETA (an audit, which helps you to understand standards of labour, health and safety, environmental performance, and ethics within your own operations). This facilitated access to more export markets including Europe and the Middle East.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: CLIMATE CHANGE



SUPPORTING PRODUCERS AS THEY FACE THE ONGOING EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Fruitful relationships with new buyers have subsequently enabled the co-operative to increase its level of production and strengthen its support of local farming communities further.

In 2022, Garden Fresh opened the first privately owned packhouse in Rwanda, based in the northern region of Masoro. Packhouses serve as a critical link between farmers and export markets, helping to aggregate and prepare produce. The packhouse will reduce post-harvest losses and generate new employment opportunities for 300 Rwandan women and young people each harvest season. Prior to this, Garden Fresh depended upon the use of a standard packhouse with capacity limitations.

Garden Fresh have also invested in two refrigerated trucks, which will provide transport between Garden Fresh farms and packhouses, increasing product quality and the percentage of exportable produce.

Collectively, the cold chain facilities will enable Garden Fresh to improve their food safety credentials. These investments are expected to increase efficiencies in post-harvest activities and decrease post-harvest losses by 30%.

Above all, the co-operative's cold chain facilities present an opportunity to meet the requirements of Rwanda's export market and tap into the nation's annual horticulture export revenues, which are expected to rise from USD 42 million to USD 130 million in 2024, according to data from the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB).

Garden Fresh Managing Director Emmanuel Harelimana, said: "Garden Fresh is in expansion mode with more demand with new clients, we have to adjust with new planting programme, infrastructure to equip our farms with high technology such as irrigation and have cold trucks for maintaining cold chain."

Garden Fresh became a customer in 2023, and are using Shared Interest finance to support them in meeting the escalating demands of their growing value chain and to fulfil increasing orders. The majority of the finance is used to provide a stable income to Garden Fresh farmers by purchasing their produce directly. Meanwhile, a portion of our finance is allocated to improving cost efficiencies by bulk-purchasing packaging materials from Kenya.

Speaking about the impact of the loan, Emmanuel said: "Farmers are paid on time, and encouraged to farm as businesses, and now we have more demand to plan more. They get extra income and are able to improve their livelihood, get medical insurance and send kids to school. This is a steady market for their crops and we offer an improved price compared to what they could get from local market (an increase of up to 80%)."

Our Lending Team in East Africa told us that an increase of pests and diseases caused by the impacts of climate change is an issue for the co-operative. Lending Officer Kennedy Mwasi, said: "In fresh fruit production, climate change is causing increased pests, resulting in farmers using pesticides to control them. Approved pesticides to ensure the quality of the crops, are costly and buyers are insisting farmers make use of greenhouses to stop cross-contamination with nearby farms using unapproved pesticides."

Emmanuel said:

"A prolonged rainy season has affected our planning and rotation programme as we were not able to grow beans and maize for the local market as rotation from our programme and farmers missed that opportunity. Also, we were affected by diseases coming with too long rains. For example, last year we had rains from October to May which was huge and abnormal."

Looking to the future, Garden Fresh will continue to train their farmers on climate change impacts and Good Agricultural Practices, in an effort to continue improving upon the quality of their produce. In addition, the co-operative will train farmers in passionfruit farming, enabling them to meet increasing demand. Garden Fresh will also continue sourcing for new international buyers in 2024, with current negotiations underway with a retailer in the United Kingdom for fresh produce.

CONTINUED >



Customer: Banyankole Coffee Services
Commodity: Coffee
Location: Sheema, western Uganda
Members: 1,583 producers

BREWING A RESILIENT FUTURE FOR UGANDAN COFFEE

BCS coffee farmer Justus Muhumuza harvesting coffee berries.

Uganda's economy heavily relies on agricultural commodities like coffee, grown mainly by smallholder farmers. These farmers often have limited access to inputs such as fertiliser or seeds and information about adequate adaptive strategies to combat climate change. These farmers are almost entirely dependent on rain-fed agriculture, and for around 70% of coffee households, farming is the main source of income.

Over the past three decades, coffee-producing areas in Uganda have faced:

- **Drier and warmer conditions**
- **Increasing annual temperatures which result in a loss of moisture from the leaves and soil**
- **More variable rainfall distribution**

These changes have led to increased pests, diseases, soil erosion, irregular coffee flowering, unpredictable harvest seasons and ultimately reduced crop yields and quality.

Banyankole Coffee Services (BCS) was founded by three coffee farmers in 2014, with the aim of producing good quality coffee and achieving good prices to benefit farmers. Today, BCS works with more than 1,500 farmers, 19% of whom are women, supporting them to export the highest quality Robusta coffee to local and international markets.

Speaking about the challenges BCS are currently experiencing, Managing Director Lauben Kurubaija said: "BCS are facing low deliveries due to a poor coffee harvest. But we have a new peak season with good coffees coming in October to January next year."

UGANDA'S COFFEE INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE:



Second largest coffee producer in Africa



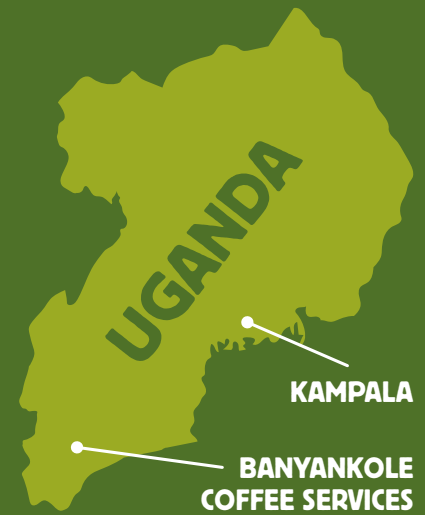
Fourth largest Robusta producing country globally



Tenth largest coffee producing country globally



Home to 10% of global coffee farms (1.7 million households)



"We are seeing coffee diseases, however our agronomist has been advising on means of dealing with these, and we have seen a great improvement from their most recent report

"We also struggle with lack of capacity to implement the EUDR regulation on deforestation. Previously BCS had collected data for only 500 farmers and was short of funds. But we have fully implemented that from our local sales and been able to collect data for the majority of farmers now."

Specifically, in relation to the impacts of climate change, Lauben said:

"Coffee trees are drying and the quality of our products is reducing because of changing weather patterns, resulting in little or poor deliveries and a reduction in income to the community. However, these are now considered normal effects of climate change and cannot deter any one from producing good quality coffee with the trainings we have received from Shared Interest support."

BCS have been a Shared Interest customer since 2020, receiving loans to meet export demands from their buyers.

"Shared Interest finance has pushed Banyankole Coffee Services to a new level."

Lauben Kurubaija
Managing Director



BCS coffee farmer Justus Muhumuza prepares coffee beans for drying.

BCS are supporting farmers to overcome these challenges by focussing their efforts on adapting to the impacts of climate change. This year, they concluded a successful climate resilience project, which Lauben told us directly benefited their farmers. They are also involved in a beekeeping project, involving diversification to help farmers earn an alternative revenue stream from coffee. The organisation also provides advances to farmers, which helps them to meet their basic needs such as education for their children.

Lauben continued: "We have received excellent services provided by Shared Interest Foundation and Shared Interest Society, which have enabled us to sustain and grow our operations. Training has been provided on agroforestry, agribusiness, beekeeping skills, and honey harvesting skills to more than 300 farmers.

"The project has also provided 12,000 good variety coffee seedlings and 4,300 shade trees to 300 farmers, as well as over 1,000 beehives to 210 BCS farmers."

BCS farmer, John Kibuzo, said: "BCS did open our eyes and protected us from the cheating of coffee middle men with their compromised scales and low prices; and as of now a lot of namely benefits have been achieved from BCS name them: coffee premium funds from our Fairtrade sales, high prices from our coffees, trainings in agroforestry among others, supply of quality seedlings, diversification of our incomes with bees projects to mention but a few."

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COUNCIL COMMENT

THOUGHT PIECE FROM A MEMBER OF COUNCIL

What sort of guest are you?

“We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as other creatures do.”

A phrase was coined at the One Earth Conference in 1972 when concerns about environmental mismanagement by humans were first collectively voiced at an international level.

Yet here we are in 2024, and climate change remains a ‘hot topic’. Rising temperatures of more than 3°C across the globe, if left unchecked, will adversely alter life as we currently know it for us all.

So how can we all be ‘better guests’?

Adopting some of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals into daily life would be a great start, together with supporting the work of organisations such as Shared Interest.

Loans that empower local farmers to build more sustainable businesses & provide secure futures in developing countries are good for all of us. Support for innovative equipment development and production methods that can increase yields and reduce damage to fragile ecosystems is vital.

As well as financial support from the Society, projects delivered by Shared Interest Foundation embed education and practical examples, to improve outdated and harmful farming practices, ultimately reducing carbon emissions.

Those currently eeking out a living in developing communities often face the most challenges in terms of weather and the impact of global warming. Reducing the risk of cataclysmic wildfires and other natural disasters that damage the planet is vital for us all.

Targeted financial support can help transform small enterprises, which can lead to improvements in health and social justice for all involved.

Communities that are financially self-sufficient are less likely to suffer from food shortages and increased mortality, making them less prone to conflict and migration risks.

‘Walking lightly as guests’ collectively could make it possible to achieve the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

What sort of guest will you be in 2024/5?

Written by Denise Smith, Member of Council

*The views expressed and content in the piece above are from a current member of Council and do not necessarily reflect the direct mission or strategy of Shared Interest Society or Foundation.



BCS coffee farmer Justus Muhumuza collects coffee berries during the harvest.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Delivering innovative ways to build capacity and strengthen businesses.

As well as receiving finance from Shared Interest Society, BCS also took part in a project with Shared Interest Foundation, aimed at building coffee farmers resilience to climate change.

The farmers received extensive training in agroforestry, climate resilience and eco-friendly farming practices delivered by an agronomist and a District Environment and Entomologist Officer. To encourage the farmers to implement eco-friendly farming practices, they were taught how to produce organic fertilisers using locally available materials to support their coffee production and reduce soil contamination. 12,000 coffee seedlings and 4,300 agroforestry trees were also distributed among the farmers as part of the project.

One participant, Jackson Muyambi has been a coffee farmer since 1996. Jackson manages a 1.5 acre coffee farm which he has intercropped with mangos, bananas and passion fruits to provide additional income. Prior to the project, Jackson was experiencing challenges of coffee wilt from intense exposure to sunlight and fast absorption of water from the soil which was impacting upon his yield.

Jackson explained why he joined BCS, “When we co-operate we learn more, we produce more and we have a bigger voice”.

As a result of the training Jackson has been able to plant and maintain his agroforestry trees and also implement better farming practices across his coffee farm. In addition to providing shade, Jackson told us how he will use the fallen leaves as mulch for their coffee plants. He anticipates to start harvesting coffee from his newly planted trees in three to four years, but is hoping to see an improvement in yield from his current trees during the next harvest.



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT

This year's Fairtrade Fortnight ran from 9th to 22nd September with a theme 'Be the Change', encouraging consumers to pick up Fairtrade products and speak up for fairer trade.

During the fortnight our volunteers hosted events across the UK, including a visit from a Kenyan Fairtrade tea farmer and a conference to celebrate 30 years of the FAIRTRADE Mark. Resources were also sent to a wide range of events across the country, and our Ambassadors were also involved in a range of virtual events.

JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER NETWORK

Fairtrade Fortnight and awareness events like this provide opportunities to share your knowledge and spread the word about Fairtrade amongst your networks.



Volunteers play an integral role in spreading the word about Shared Interest here in the UK, sharing their desire to see a fairer world for fair trade producers. They enable us to raise awareness and support for our work to achieve this.

Our network of Ambassadors represent Shared Interest in their local areas. They inspire others to support us and invest, by seeking opportunities to increase awareness of Shared Interest, such as delivering talks and running information stalls. Supported by our Member Engagement Team, Ambassadors contribute their knowledge and passion to enable us to reach potential investors.



Shared Interest stall at a past event.

We have been so pleased to see an increase in the number of requests for speakers throughout the UK, and to meet this demand we are looking to recruit new Ambassadors to join our team. We are particularly keen to speak to you if you are able to help us in Scotland, North East England, East Midlands, Central London and Yorkshire.

If becoming an Ambassador interests you, we would love to hear from you. For more information, or to discuss this opportunity further, call us on 0191 233 9100 or email volunteers@shared-interest.com

As well as Ambassadors we have a range of volunteer roles at Shared Interest, these include Community Supporters, Translators, Administration Supporters and Data Entry Volunteers. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these roles please get in touch.

“Volunteers widen the perspective of the Society - just as the Society widens the perspective of the volunteers; I always leave events filled with hope and enthusiasm.”

Susan
Shared Interest Ambassador (pictured left)

SHARED INTEREST

INVESTING IN A FAIRER WORLD

Shared Interest was set up in 1990 and brings together a community of over 11,500 people in the UK with a shared goal of investing in a fairer world. We work hand in hand with people in communities where income opportunities may be limited and businesses are facing increasing challenges.

www.shared-interest.com

FRONT COVER

BCS coffee farmer Justus Muhumuza holds freshly harvested coffee berries on his farm in the Sheema district of Uganda.

HELP US RAISE OUR ONLINE PROFILE

Join us on social media to keep up to date with our activities and help share our news with others.

-  SharedInterest
-  SharedInterest
-  SharedInterestSociety
-  Shared Interest Society
-  Shared Interest Society Ltd

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SHARE WITH A FRIEND

Have you considered passing Quarterly Return on to a friend or family member before recycling it?

If you would like a Resource Pack to spread the word about Shared Interest, please get in touch.



DID YOU KNOW?

QR magazine is now a carbon balanced publication.

BECAUSE WE CARE



WORLD LAND TRUST