

New report: Coffee producers need responsible procurement as prices rise — buyers must share value, liquidity and risk

VOCAL consultation with producers calls roasters, retailers and traders to embed living income, timely payments and risk-sharing into core purchasing practices.

ULTRECHT, NETHERLANDS, February 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Producers from Brazil, Nicaragua, Honduras, Uganda, Indonesia, Guatemala, Mexico and Sri Lanka who participated in VOCAL Coffee Alliance consultations between June and December 2025 urged downstream buyers to move beyond isolated sustainability projects and adopt responsible procurement that fairly compensates and protects the people who grow the world's coffee.

A living-document consultation published by VOCAL Coffee Alliance shows that while recent commodity price rallies have raised farmgate prices for some, structural barriers — delayed payments, rising input and compliance costs, and concentrated risk exposure — prevent most smallholders from closing the living income gap and investing in sustainable production. Producers call on buyers to translate 'sustainability commitments' into procurement practices that deliver remunerative prices, faster payments, co-financing for compliance and shared risk mechanisms.

Key findings

- Value capture is unequal. Downstream actors capture the majority of value while smallholders — who produce roughly 80% of global coffee — receive a small share despite providing labor, stewardship, data and stories that underpin brand value.
- Liquidity is critical and missing. Delayed payments and long cash cycles force producers into expensive credit or side-selling; producers reported no consistent examples of buyers offering pre-finance, shortened payment terms, or working capital support.
- Compliance costs are burdensome. Producers face high upfront and ongoing costs to meet regulations such as the EU Deforestation Regulation, often without buyer co-financing.
- Data and storytelling are extracted. Producer-generated data and images fuel traceability, branding and market access, yet producers rarely share in the economic value created by their data or narratives. The concept of data dividends is proposed as a pathway to redress this

imbalance.

Producer priorities

- Relationships over transactions: Producers prefer long-term, transparent partnerships with regular origin engagement.
- Fair and predictable pricing: Prices must reflect quality, environmental stewardship and production realities, and include mechanisms to share upside when markets rise.
- Risk sharing and investment: Buyers should co-finance compliance, offer insurance or hedging arrangements, and invest in community-defined infrastructure and services.
- Data sovereignty: Support for producer-controlled data systems and equitable returns from data use.

Call to action

VOCAL Coffee Alliance invites producers, producer groups, civil society organizations, buyers and funders to collaborate on expanding consultations, aggregating income and price data, and sharing practical procurement clauses and risk-sharing models. VOCAL seeks partners to share or co-develop examples of contract language, payment terms, and data-dividend pilots that can be scaled across origins.

Background

This press release summarizes findings from Percolating Responsible Procurement: Coffee producer perspectives, a living document based on consultations with producers across multiple origins in 2025. The paper highlights the need to move beyond isolated sustainability projects and embed living income and wage, liquidity and risk-sharing into procurement.

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