

Edgar

Edgar is a coffee farmer from Costa Rica. He is married, with 7 children, and is 57 years old.



His passion

Edgar's enduring passion is educating his children. 'All my life, all I have ever done is work, work, work - only work. I had no choice. I wanted my children to have an education so that they could choose what they want to do.'

Coffee and hard work have enabled him to send all his children through primary and secondary school. One of his sons is just finishing seven years of study at medical school, helped by financial contributions from the whole family, and a scholarship from the coffee cooperative.

Edgar didn't go to school himself as a child, but instead helped his parents working on other people's farms. In his early thirties, when his children started school, he attended night classes to learn the basics. Every night after a day in the fields he would study. Now he can count, read and sign his name.

'If I could live life again I would study. I would also continue to work in the fields. If you only study, then you forget that someone needs to grow things to eat and you can't eat money.'

His daily life

His wife, Blanca is up before Edgar, cooking and helping to get their youngest daughter off to secondary school in nearby town, Monteverde. As the daughter is catching her bus at 5.30am, Edgar sets off to his coffee farm 6 kilometres away. When he is not harvesting the beans, he is weeding, pruning or fumigating. He has lunch at midday and returns home at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon to collect firewood and feed the animals. When he can, Edgar likes to watch sports and news programmes on television, but, he explains, he doesn't get much time.

A better deal

Two of Edgar's children have received financial support for their education, from his cooperative, Coopeldos, through a scheme partly funded by the Fairtrade premium.

The farmers of Coopeldos are able to sell between 30-40% of their coffee to the Fairtrade market. For this portion, they receive a price, guaranteed to cover the costs of production and living expenses. For the rest, they receive the world market price, which for the last few years has been very low, below the cost of production.

Edgar says that over recent years, though the price of coffee has gone down, his expenses have remained the same. 'You do the same with less money.' Edgar fears that without Fairtrade things would go downhill and he wouldn't be able to repay debts. His hope for the future and his message to consumers is blunt. 'I'd say - drink lots more coffee!'