

**Farmers name:** Melese Welde  
**Farm name:** Shantawiene Melesewelde Farm  
**Kebele:** Shantawiene  
**Woreda:** Bensa  
**Zone:** Sidama  
**Altitude of farm:** 2100 - 2250mm.a.s.l.

**Varieties:** Mixed heirloom, 74110, and 74112  
**Harvest period:** November 2<sup>nd</sup> – December 30<sup>th</sup> 2018  
**Processing:** Natural  
**Drying days:** 15 days

### **About Melese Welde:**

As you enter Melesse Welde's land, you pass a small grove of trees that his father planted many years ago. "I did not want to cut them down and take away what my father left behind", says this quiet Sidama coffee grower. Despite his mild manners and gentle voice, it is as clear as day that Melesse loves his land, his people, and his culture. His respect for his father's legacy is just one small way he shows this.

Melesse lives in a traditional Sidama hut with his mother, his two wives, and his thirteen children. Behind his home, screened from view by a bamboo fence, lie his coffee fields, shaded by numerous types of trees. He points them out and calls out their local names: *berbera*, *korchi*, *wanza*, and *shola*.

Before he started growing coffee seventeen years ago at the age of 35, Melesse used to farm *ensete*, *teff*, and wheat. A little after the turn of the century, he decided to shift to coffee. He started off with half a hectare and has slowly grown his coffee area to 2.5 hectares over the years. You'll still find *ensete* in the fields, serving both as shade for young coffee trees, and as food for Melesse and his family.

His reason for growing coffee is simple: to improve his family's standard of living and after he benefits from coffee, for the benefits to spill over into his community and the country as a whole.

Government coffee experts helped Melesse with information and seedlings as he started his coffee adventure. Careful to follow instructions, Melesse prepared the ground well, purchased high quality seedlings, and began growing coffee. When it was time to harvest his Shanta Wene coffee, he followed best practice again, training his hired help and ensuring that cherries were picked at the right time with no damage to the trees. The results soon bore fruit, and he was awarded a model farmer award from the local authorities. A logical path to follow was to take out an export license, which is what Melesse did in 2018. But then he ran into a problem.

Melesse's quiet voice becomes animated when he talks about exporting his coffee. "Before we got our export licenses, we grew coffee to sell locally. Now we were told to find a market ourselves. We had no idea where to start. We travelled to Addis Ababa, spent days talking to people and gathering information, and it was a new thing for us. Our coffee was ready, but who was going to buy it?"

After much investigation, Melesse and his friends finally found someone who asked them to bring samples and connected them to Trabocca, something that has given Melesse hope for the future as he believes he won't have to struggle as hard as he did this year to find buyers for his coffee. "I thank God I found Trabocca. Now I can just follow a path I know. Before that it was all dark for me and I did not know what to do. I am just a farmer. How am I to sell my coffee internationally?"

With an export license, Melesse did not want to sell his Sidama coffee in the local market. He is very pleased with the fact that he has found a path to international buyers, saying, "I can focus on improving the quality and flavors of my coffee, now that there is someone to drink it and enjoy it as it is, straight from my fields."