

Farmers name: Mekuria Mergia
Farm name: Mekuria Mergia Farm
Kebele: Benti Nenka
Woreda: Hambela Wamena
Zone: Guji
Altitude of farm: 2163 m.a.s.l.

Varieties: Mixed heirloom
Harvest period: December 2018 – February 2019
Processing: Washed
Fermentation time: 48 – 72 hours
Drying days: 7 – 12 days

About Mekuria Mergia:

Most Ethiopian growers inherit their families farm and faire on the knowledge passed down from generations. Mekuria Mergia is the opposite. Having no background in coffee, he entered the market as a true entrepreneur; from the bottom up.

The young Mekuria started to collect coffee from Hambela Wamena-based farms and sold these small batches to nearby mills. He functioned as a smallholder agent, connecting supply and demand. This hands-on, trial and error, ‘groundwork’ gave him valuable insights into the coffee market.

During these years, he started to harbor an interest in coffee processing, and finally was able to establish his own company: Wete Ambela Coffee Export Plc. Through this company, Mekuria installed several washing stations and dry mills in the Guji and Yirgacheffe zone.

He supplied his coffee through the ECX to local exporters and gained a lot of reputation among them as a quality supplier of Guji and Yirgacheffe coffees. In recent years, Mekuria started to focus more on Guji, and in particular on the washing station in the Benti Neka Kebele: the place where his auction lot was harvested and processed.

The washing station in Benti Neka receives coffee cherries from 700 smallholders that live, and farm, at altitudes ranging from 1650 – 1800 m.a.s.l. Their plots have an average of 120 coffee trees which are engulfed in an almost natural forest-like environment; often classified as semi-forest. Compost and deadfall are strategically spread throughout the small farms to stimulate a heathy eco-system.

The entire family of the smallholder is involved in picking the ripe cherries. The family plans several sweeps through the terrain to make sure every cherry they pick is mature. A tree might be visited several times before harvest is over.

Cherries are laid-out on the properties of smallholders and they make sure that immature cherries are discarded from the batch before they deliver these to the Benti Nenka station. Mekuria’s specially prepared micro-lot for The Ethiopian Cup, endured several of these sorting’s before being processed.

Although his roll shifted from smallholder agent to owner of several washing stations and dry mills, Mekuria still considers himself a representative of the farmers he works with.