

Farmers name: Tomas Genemo
Farm name: Tomas Genemo Farm
Kebele: Shantawiene
Woreda: Bensa
Zone: Sidama
Altitude of farm: 2150 – 2230 m.a.s.l.

Varieties: Mixed heirloom, 74110, and 74112
Harvest period: November 5th – December 25th 2018
Processing: Natural
Drying days: 14 days

About Tomas Genemo

The soil is rich in Tomas Genemo's coffee fields, full of life and vigor, just like his hearty laugh. Large and loud, Tomas does not fit the stereotypical image of an Ethiopian farmer. He even jokes about it, telling a story of reporters who came to interview him after he won a government award. The reporters took one look at his large girth and would not believe he was a farmer, prompting him to ask if they expected all farmers to be skinny. "Shouldn't we too improve our lives and grow?" he asks, and then bursts into laughter.

Born to a farmer and raised in Shanta Wene, in Ethiopia's Sidamo zone, 52-year-old Tomas has been farming since he finished the eighth grade. He started off with *teff* and *ensete* (false banana) like his father before him, but unfortunately, that did not bring in much income. Frustrated because he was unable to provide for his family, Tomas decided to start growing coffee as he had heard this was a way he could help improve both his income and that of the country as well. He planted his first 10,000 coffee seedlings in 2008, taking care to plant them as advised by agricultural experts. He has since been planting more seedlings every year, adding another 3,000 this past year. Unfortunately, despite the quality of his coffee, Tomas found the results less than sweet for the first few years as what he earned from selling his coffee barely covered his expenses.

Then, a little over a year ago, Tomas applied for his own export license, and got it. Tomas ensures he follows instructions from coffee experts to the letter. "I pick the cherries when they are red like pepper", he says, "And then I dry them on beds at least a meter high, ensuring they are protected from rain and too much sun." With his coffee dried and ready, Tomas started looking for buyers, a process that was not easy as he had no contacts and had never exported coffee directly before this. But Tomas does not give up easily. Doggedly following a trail of information, Tomas and his Shanta Wene coffee found their way to Trabocca.

Tomas is delighted that his coffee has a path out of the country now. "This is a chance to put our coffee in front of the world, and our village on the map", he says.

Like most Sidama men, Tomas has two wives. His younger children are in Awassa studying, and his oldest son is married and has his own farm. One of Tomas's wives helps him with his coffee crop, mainly by preparing meals for the temporary help during harvest season, and also by helping with the picking itself.

Despite his joy and newfound hope for better sales, Tomas can't help wondering if this is all a dream that is too good to last for long, adding "I hope this new light we have found does not go dark."