

Use resources. Protect the environment. Increase turnover.

Together with the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS) in Brazil, the Melitta Group is testing sustainable ways of recycling organic waste in the coffee supply chain.

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Together with the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung, the Melitta Group is testing sustainable ways of recycling organic waste in the coffee supply chain. ©Melitta Group

Minden, 7th April 2021 - Coffee cultivation, processing and preparation generate considerable amounts of waste, especially organic waste. This waste, such as the pulp from coffee cherries, is often not considered to be a valuable resource that can be fed back into the farm nutrient cycle e.g., as compost. Instead, it is often disposed of incorrectly and further pollutes the environment. Together with the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS), the Melitta Group is working on a project co-financed by the DEG (German Investment and Development Company) with funds from the develoPPP.de programme of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to identify and make use of opportunities to reuse organic waste throughout the coffee supply chain. This is taking place in the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil, where all of the relevant stakeholders including coffee farms, farm organisations, a Melitta roastery, civil society and an agricultural university, are working together on the project. The goal is to reduce the burden on the environment, increase the efficiency and profitability of coffee cultivation and processing, and further strengthen the local economy with innovative business ideas.

“As an international coffee company, we want to contribute to improving conditions and solving challenges in the coffee sector. With this project, we are starting with waste management - our aim is to establish the concept of a circular economy throughout the entire coffee supply chain,” explained Stefan Dierks, Director of Sustainability at the Melitta Group. “We are convinced that this commitment will enable us to find integrated solutions to the many different ecological and economic

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challenges. Ideally, we will be able to significantly reduce the use of artificial fertilisers in coffee cultivation. We are actively involved in this, including in the local area, and we are very pleased to be working together with the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung.”

For the HRNS, it is particularly important that the project combines responsible use of natural resources with opportunities for young people. “The circular economy in coffee cultivation offers local young people the potential to increase earnings. The profitability of their farms can be improved by producing organic fertiliser, for example, and other possible business models can be opened up with the implementation of certain processes and practices. We also see great potential for innovation that would also be of benefit in terms of environmental protection,” commented Michael Opitz, Managing Director of the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung.

Project schedule and current status

In the first phase of the project, a comprehensive analysis of the current situation was conducted. All of the relevant stakeholders in the project region and the coffee supply chain were identified and made aware of the project idea. In addition, a collaborative learning platform known as the ‘Community of Practice’ was created so that all of the stakeholders could learn together from one another, share their experience and work together on measures related to recycling and reuse of resources. This phase has been successfully carried out despite the Corona pandemic.

The next step is to identify various options for improved waste management for both recyclable organic and inorganic waste. To this end, the Melitta Group and the Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung are working together with waste management experts and scientists, including some from the renowned Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA).

In the third and final phase of the project, the research findings will be put into practice. Together, local small farms and farmers' organisations, the Melitta roastery team and other stakeholders from the whole coffee supply chain will test, drive forward and continuously develop the findings in the field. The aim is to create sustainable local structures, including through the establishment of innovative start-ups, which will consistently put into practice the principle of the circular economy in the regional coffee sector with a focus on youth.

“The project consciously pursues an integrated, systemic approach from which the entire coffee sector should benefit. This means that we will also make the research results available to other stakeholders both in Brazil and internationally,” explained Stefan Dierks.

The project is scheduled to run for three years and will be completed in May 2023.

The Melitta Group

Melitta is an internationally active group of companies and is one of the leading independent family businesses in Germany and in other countries. The main activities are the development, manufacture and sale of branded products for coffee enjoyment, for the storage and preparation of food and for household cleanliness. More information is available at www.melitta-group.com.



Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS)

Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung (HRNS) is an independent foundation working with smallholder families in coffee regions and youth in Germany. We believe that only strong future generations around the globe can shape a livable world.

HRNS is implementing projects in seven countries worldwide focusing on the livelihood situation of smallholder families with a holistic approach in the areas of youth, climate change, family business, organizational development and gender. This contributes to prospering smallholder families, strong future generations, employment and employability, attractive rural communities and landscapes worth living in.

We see youth as drivers of change globally and in Germany. Since its foundation in 2005, HRNS reached more than 330.000 smallholder families in 18 countries. In Germany HRNS is supporting more than 20 organizations focusing on the integration of migrated youth.