

Nalima Kariappa in India: Building on tradition to optimise sustainability



Nalima Kariappa in her coffee farm, Kambihalli Estate, in India

Birthplace of Indian coffee

Chikmagalur, located in the south Indian state of Karnataka, is considered to be the birthplace of coffee in India. According to legend, the Sufi scholar Baba Budan smuggled seven coffee seeds into India from the Yemeni port of Mocha nearly 350 years ago, sowing them on the slopes of a high mountain that now bears his name. Systematic cultivation soon caught on, and by the 19th century when the British recognized the potential of the international coffee trade, coffee plantations in the region flourished for export.

Building on a rich tradition

It is here along the slopes of the Baba Budan mountain range that Nalima Kariappa runs Kambihalli Estate, a family-run coffee farm now in its fourth generation, which has been growing coffee since 1948. The high altitude and low temperatures allow the farm's Arabica and Robusta coffee cherries to mature slowly, infused with the subtle aromas of the terrain. A world of spices envelops the farm, as pepper, cardamom and areca nut grown among the coffee plants are also harvested.

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Kambihalli Estate reflects in its name both the village in which it is located as well as its terrain. "Halli" means "village" in Kannada, the primary language spoken in the south Indian state of Karnataka. "Kambi" means "iron" and refers to the iron-rich soil that nourishes the wealth of plant and wildlife species found in the region. Kariappa's coffee farm is located in the Western Ghats, which is recognized as a global biodiversity hotspot.

As is customary throughout India, the coffee plants on Kambihalli Estate are integrated in the forest landscape, grown under a canopy of shade trees in harmony with the natural surroundings. Nevertheless, Kariappa realized there was room for improvement. Through the encouragement of an agronomist from ECOM, a global coffee supplier and key *Nespresso* partner, she joined the *Nespresso* AAA Sustainable Quality™ Program in 2011.

Improving standards through the AAA Program

Implementing practices from AAA Program, Kariappa has established clear buffer zones around water bodies and human dwelling areas. Vegetative barriers have been planted near public roads and streams to further minimise the estate's environmental impact.

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- Name: Nalima Kariappa
- Age: 55

- Farm: Kambihalli Estate
- Location: Chikmagalur, Karnataka, India
- Size of farm: 73 hectares, 55 hectares of coffee
- Joined the *Nespresso* AAA Sustainable Quality™ Program: 2011

She has also addressed farm health and safety issues affecting the some 30 employees on the farm. “Educating workers about the use of personal protective equipment and maintaining hygiene has been a challenge,” she admits.

The premiums that Kariappa receives through the AAA Program, in the form of group workshops and individual consultations provided by *Nespresso*-trained agronomists, as well as the higher prices that *Nespresso* pays for AAA coffee, are helping her to enhance and maintain the ecological balance of her coffee farm.

“There is still a lot of room to improve our standards,” says Kariappa. “Through the AAA Program we are working to improve our sustainability, productivity and quality by optimising the processes that were already in place.”