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Forced Labor Found Within The Supply Chains of The Coffee Industry

by

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**An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of
Science in Business Administration in International Business and SEVI.**

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Fayetteville, Arkansas**

May 13, 2023

Abstract

I have focused my research on the morality within supply chains that source major coffee companies around the world. As consumers, many of us have no idea where the products that we use everyday truly come from. The purchases we make have the power to feed into the issue of forced labor. The coffee we buy often does. My thesis takes a look into the extensive issue of human trafficking and unjust labor practices on the plantations that provide us with the coffee we sip on each morning. This paper serves to enlighten producers and consumers on this phenomenon, to expose the companies, plantations and systems behind it, have the voices of those trapped into modern slavery be heard, and recruit my fellow business leaders to help fight the good fight against forced labor.

Introduction

Each morning when your alarm goes off, do you sluggishly roll out of bed, drag your tired body to the kitchen, reach for that mug with the inspirational quote engraved, and begin to brew yourself a hot, steaming cup of coffee? Do you froth some creamer and drizzle it atop, step outside to the back patio, with a book in one hand and your caffeine in the other? Do you then sit down, listen to the birds chirp, watch the dogs chase after squirrels, and lean in for that first sip? Are you able to taste the richness on your tongue and feel the warmth flow down your chest? Do you lean back, put your face to the sun, and all of the sudden not feel so sleepy anymore? I did. As you sip on your coffee, do you pause to think about how that mug got to be in your hand? Do you wonder how the coffee got to be in that mug? Are you curious as to how planted seeds became the liquid substance that you are sipping on? When you smell the aroma coming from coffee cup number three, do you question the true cost of coffee? I did not.

When fifty - one year old Abelar Reboucas was found heaving fifteen gallon bags of coffee beans on a plantation in Southern Brazil he was “bone thin”. Living off of water retrieved from a ditch next to a septic tank, portions of rice and papayas, no salary, and no way out, “end[ing] up in a coffin” was his near fate. This was the true cost of coffee for Abelar Reboucas and over eight hundred others on that plantation. This still is the true cost of coffee for millions of people around the world (Lopes).

As consumers, many of us have very little knowledge regarding the attributes behind the products we use and goods we consume every day. This paper looks into the *where*, the *who*, the *how*, and the *what now*?

What is Forced Labor?

The international labor organization has defined forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily” (Forced Labor Convention). There are three elements that must simultaneously occur in order to classify a workplace as unethical in terms of forced labor. The three elements are: work/ service, menace of penalty, and involuntariness. This means that if the activity of producing a good or service is done under the compulsion or intimidation of the employer and does not offer the employee the freedom to leave, then that situation is deemed forced labor.

The three main types of forced labor involve the sexual exploitation of women and children, the entrapment of migrants into debt bondage, and those job sites, often sweatshops and farm fields, with low wages and legal defiance. Forced labor can be found in each of the following tiers of a supply chain: tier three - raw material sourcing; tier two - component/sub-assembly; tier one: final assembly/finished product. The abuse of labor is most commonly found within tier three as it usually involves the most demanding jobs physically and quantitatively.

Forced labor can be imposed by the state, found within a private sector, or occur commercially. Each of these groups have different approaches to forcing someone into labor, but all seek similar outcomes: exploitative servitude. Labor demanded by the government often serves as political punishment (for taking part in a protest or freely speaking), labor discipline, racial discrimination, or religious oppression (for defiance of the primary religion within the state). At 17.3 million persons, the private sector is where the greatest number of forced laborers are found (“7. Forced Labour (Decent work for sustainable development (DW4SD) Resource

Platform)”). A private sector refers to any privately owned company within the free economy that is not under the direct control of the government. Industries within the private sector such as agriculture, construction, and domestic work often have complex supply chains with multiple processes that can be easily swept under the rug. This leads to a high opportunity for employment under false pretenses and poor conditions. Commercial forced labor usually incurs prostitution or conduct of a similar sort.

Who Does Forced Labor Affect?

According to a 2021 report provided by the International Labor Organization, Walk Free, and the International Organization for Migration, an estimated 49.6 million people are trapped in modern slavery, 27.6 million of whom make up forced labor (Geneva).

Some are more predisposed to becoming victims of forced labor. Those most vulnerable may have an unstable immigration status, a debt to pay off, language barriers, an impoverished lifestyle, past trauma or abuse, an inadequate support system, a lack of education, a physical disadvantage, or a mental disability. An instance where these risk factors prompt forced labor could consist of one taking the job because they did not understand the “contract” they were signing due to poor communication skills. After signing on, they then may receive threats for exposing their lack of citizenship if they do not perform to satisfaction.

Evident by the statistics claiming that one in four modern slavery victims are children and 71.6% of modern slavery victims are women, these groups are especially susceptible to becoming victims of forced labor. Recurring trends show that women tend to work more hours, be paid less, and experience higher rates of assault in the workplace than their male counterparts (Lobdell).

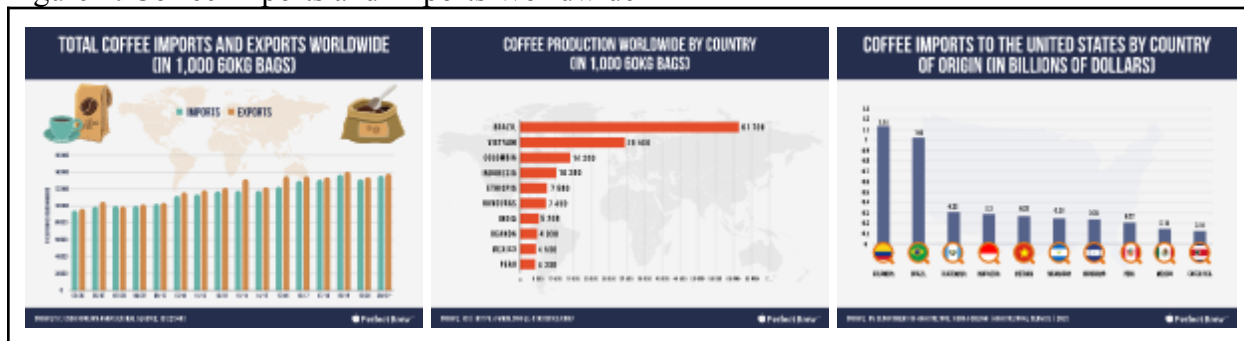
Indicators that one may be subjected to forced labor involve the isolation of that worker from others or the outside world, the restriction of their movement within a small work space, a hazardous working environment, unsanitary living conditions, verbal abuse or physical violence from authority figures, excessive overtime requirements, the retention of that person’s identity documents, and the withholding of their wages (“What is Forced Labor?”).

How Much Does Our Morning Coffee Contribute to Forced Labor?

According to a 2022 survey conducted by Drive Research, three in four Americans drink coffee every day. Forty - nine percent of those that drink coffee drink three to five cups each day (Allen). Coffee is one of the most consumed beverages in the world and it also comes from some of the most questionable sources, in terms of morality, around the world. Concentrated harvests, such as these coffee plantations, serve as part of the third tier within many supply chains and offer the least visibility to following production stages and consumption groups. Much of the forced labor on these plantations can be attributed to that notion. If we are not able to directly see the conditions that those three to five cups are being produced in, then how can we know how broken that picture really is?

The following figure gives logistical insight into the mass amounts of coffee being created and circulated around the world.

Figure 1: Coffee Imports and Exports Worldwide



(Collins)

By looking at the statistics within figure two, we can get a better understanding regarding the popularity of this good as well as the many services that this industry provides.

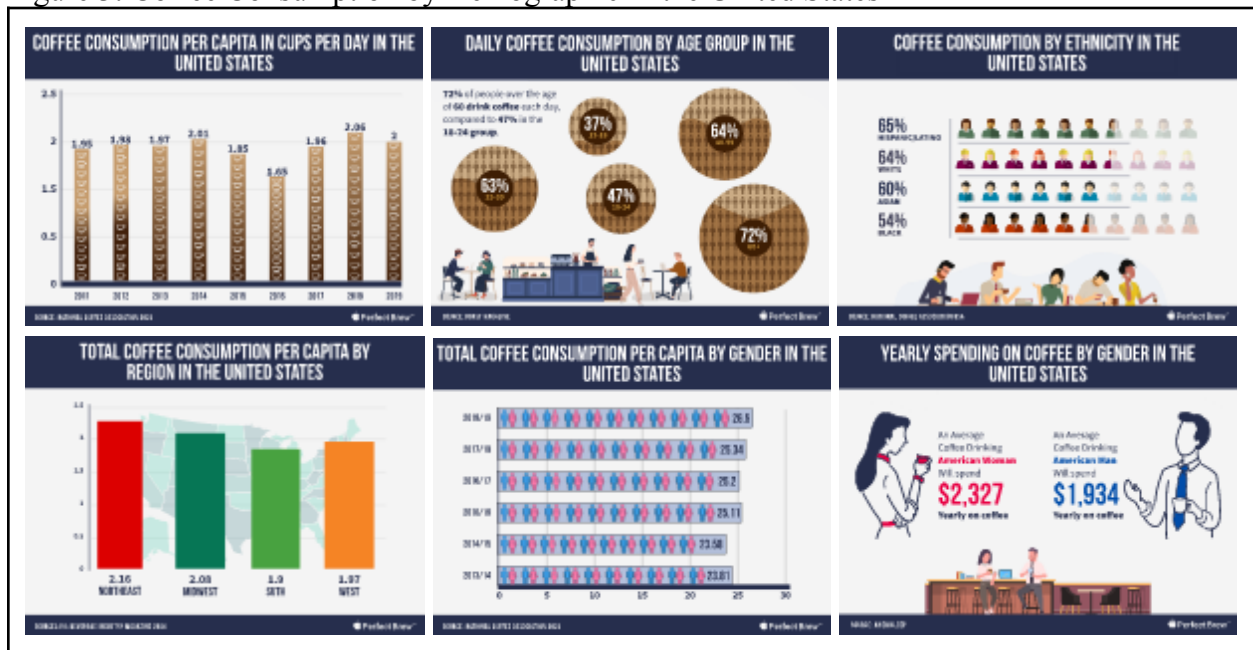
Figure 2: Coffee Production and Consumption Worldwide



(Collins)

In the below figure, we see a glimpse into the groups that keep this business running the most, by way of purchase and consumption.

Figure 3: Coffee Consumption by Demographic in the United States



(Collins)

Around the world, there are approximately twenty - five million coffee plantations which employ about twenty - six million people each year. A large portion of these twenty - six million people work in less - than - ideal circumstances. For instance, in Kenya, the average wage for coffee farmers is \$12 a month. It is estimated that, annually, 30,000 people from Guatemala are recruited to be coffee pickers in Mexico. This majority is made up of indigenous peoples, who cannot speak Spanish and have no “access to resources or information on labor rights”. With decreasing coffee prices and increasing supply in the past decades, families have been forced to put their children to work in order to stay afloat and keep from going hungry. In Honduras, up to forty percent of their coffee - harvesters are children. In March of 2022, reporters from the UK’s channel 4, caught on film a video of “children under the age of thirteen working backbreaking 40-hour weeks on Guatemalan coffee farms” (Calaway). According to lead industry insider Marcus Stern, “child labor is the norm in coffee these days” (Stern). Child labor not only goes against the laws established by the Fair Labor Association, but it also has a detrimental impact on child development, as this job substitutes their hours in school.

While, as stated, there are millions of plantations employing coffee pickers all over the world, some locations have much more prominence within the industry and serve the supply chains of more major coffee brands. One of these locations is Brazil.

The Problem Area

Brazil is listed as the world’s number one producer and exporter of coffee, accounting for about one-third of the global coffee market. There are three major cities in which the majority of Brazil’s coffee is produced and exported from. With more than 245,000 workers employed on the 100,000 coffee plantation in Minas Gerais, this city accounts for approximately seventy

percent of that coffee. In 2013, it was estimated that approximately eight million people were employed to work on coffee plantations in Brazil (Von Spiegel and Pearse). There is no doubt that that number has gone up since. With previous accounts of child and forced labor on coffee plantations in Brazil, there is no doubt that that number has gone up either.

According to the Denmark based group, “human rights abuses are rampant across Brazil’s lucrative coffee industry” (Hodal). The Global Slavery Index estimates that at least 369,000 people in Brazil are being subjected to “slave - like” working conditions (Von Spiegel and Pearse). On average, “a Brazilian coffee worker earns about \$2 to fill a 60-liter sack of coffee”. According to a report provided by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, it is estimated that two - thirds of the laborers on coffee plantations in Minas Gerais are informal migrants, coming in for the season from nearby states. These migrants are targeted for their impoverishment and are recruited by brokers, or intermediaries known as “gatos”, who bring them in by transgression and deceit. Considering these migrants are informal, they do not have the proper paperwork for documenting their official work status. Without this, they “are left with no legal claim to minimum wage, overtime pay, or labor rights protection as guaranteed by Brazilian law” (Teixeira). With no labor regulation by law, perpetrators take advantage of these situations and cases tend to escalate.

By the hundreds of workers rescued each year from these conditions in Brazil, recounts of times with no access to food, clean water, bathrooms, proper housing, identification documents and wages have been given. At times, even if the workers were given their basic needs such as food and housing, they would, in turn, inevitably end up in “debt-bondage”. They would get stuck in endless loops of rising debt, with their only option being to continue working in order to pay those debts off. Many recalled feeling that there was no way out and as a result, had no choice but to stay on the plantation. For those who did have a place to go home to after their fifteen hour work - day, they often did not have the financial means to get there, and would end up “stranded on the plantation” (Teixeira). Furthermore, working on a coffee plantation in Brazil means working with high levels of exposure to toxic pesticides. Interfering with products that have been banned from other select countries, Brazilian laborers have complained of “difficulty breathing, skin rashes and birth defects” (Hodal). If anyone thought to confront someone regarding these conditions, they feared the repercussions they would face for doing so would be of even greater punishment than that of their current labor situation.

According to another report provided by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, a particular farm in Brazil was paying its workers only \$0.49 per hour (Calaway). This particular farm was a supplier for Starbucks and Nestlé.

Accusations of Forced Labor Within Starbucks’s Supply Chain

Starbucks is the most popular coffee brand in the United States and around the world. Starbucks has more than thirty - thousand retail stores spanning eighty - three countries (“Top 10 popular coffee brands worldwide”). It holds more than a twelve percent share of the ground coffee market in the United States and brings in an annual revenue of 24.61 billion dollars each year, contributing to its net worth of 120.42 billion (Ariella). According to a 2022 coffee survey, thirty - nine percent of Americans enjoy Starbucks coffee more than any other brand (Allen).

With statistics like those, and money like that, Starbucks should be breeding a positive influence regarding ethical sourcing. Starbucks has claimed that ninety - nine percent of its coffee is produced ethically (Canning). This is to be ensured through the commitment they made to engage solely with plantations that have been certified under their Coffee and Farmer Equity

Practices (C.A.F.E.) standards (“Starbucks C.A.F.E. Practices”). However, in 2018, Brazilian labor inspectors proved that Starbucks is breeding an influence of the opposite sort. Starbucks has made claims that their company mission statement involves the acquiescence of an *Ethical Sourcing Policy*. However, reports on the deprivation of \$90 million to Ethiopian coffee growers every year claims otherwise (Forth). By implementing ethical sourcing strategies, Starbucks has ruled that their coffee (as far as they can control) is produced with fair trade. Nonetheless, they are not fair trade certified. Based on the list of locations that Starbucks plantations source from, it is wrong to believe that all of their operations are done using the C.A.F.E. standards and ethical sourcing strategies that they have promised (Deuschle).

Accusations of Forced Labor Within Nestlé’s Supply Chain

With their products being sold in one hundred and eighty - six countries around the world, Nestlé is the world’s largest food and beverage company. In recent years, *Food and Drink 2022* named Nestlé “the world’s most valuable brand” with a value of 20.8 billion and a net worth of 325.41 billion (Cowdin). In light of recent complaints, though, Nestlé has admitted to a slave labor risk on its Coffee - mate, Nespresso, and Nescafé farms in Brazil, as it cannot “fully guarantee that it has completely removed forced labour practices or human rights abuses” (Melville).

These complaints are based on findings from 2016 investigations conducted by the Fair Labor Association and Danish watchdog group known as DanWatch. DanWatch found that Nestlé was “unable to verify the sources of [its] beans”, as they are believed to have been purchased from plantations in Brazil infamous for participating in slave labor behaviors. The Fair Labor Association found that seventy percent of Nestlé farms were not trained to actively prohibit forced labor, resulting in multiple cases of uncompensated pay to children laboring in dangerous conditions (Fortin). These dangerous conditions involve the handling of hazardous chemicals, holding heavy machinery, and the creation of a hostile environment by pinning employees against each other. This state of affairs has been referred to as a “humanitarian disaster” that will lead to “long-term mental and physical trauma” (Balch). (Deuschle).

Accusations of Forced Labor Within Jacobs Douwe Egberts’s Supply Chain

JDE Peets, otherwise known as Jacobs Douwe Egberts, was formed in 2015 through the merger of Jacobs, Douwe Egberts, Peet’s, and Mondelez coffee assets. This coffee company claims to be “the world’s leading pure-play coffee and tea company” as it has acquired over fifty coffee brands and involves over one - hundred markets. It is, by volume, “the biggest player in the global coffee market”. Serving at a rate of “approximately 4,200 cups of coffee or tea per second”, it would be hard not to believe that Jacobs Douwe Egberts engages in unethical production (“Unleashing The Possibilities of Coffee and Tea”).

According to a 2015 study published by Danwatch, “Jacobs Douwe Egberts [has] sold coffee from suppliers who sourced from plantations with working conditions analogous to slavery”. When confronted with the names of select plantations known for enforcing unethical labor practices, JDE admitted to the following: “Due to the nature of how coffee is traded, we cannot guarantee that there are no labor-related issues on each and every farm in Brazil from which coffee is sold to cooperatives, exporters, traders, and eventually to us” (“Slavery-like working conditions at suppliers to world’s largest coffee company”).

How These Companies Are Responding

Starbucks has responded to claims of forced labor on their plantations by stating that they have “zero tolerance for child labor anywhere in [their] supply chain” (Trevathan). In addition, this company has made pledges to “increase the frequency of third-party audits” on their farms, send Emergency Relief Funds to farmers at certain locations of theirs, invest in social service resources, and manage community and childcare centers in developing nations. Starbucks insisted that it knows the names of all of its suppliers, and therefore, will be able to “blacklist” the plantations with low credibility. Any blacklisting is yet to be made apparent, though.

Nestlé acknowledged the allegations it was faced with by expressing that the company and its lawsuits have the “shared goal of ending child labor”. Nestlé affirmed that they have the necessary policies, such as laws requiring access to drinking water and a healthy working environment for their employees, put in place. Nestlé has avowed to having high departmental dedication in their commitment to “combating child labor”, as it “is unacceptable and goes against everything [they] stand for” (Balch). Nestlé also stated that, pending an investigation by the Brazil authorities, they have suspended trades with two plantations which were reported, by rescued laborers, to have engaged in slave labor.

Jacobs Douwe Egberts not only implied that they had ethical codes for protecting “the human rights of their workers and ban suppliers from using child or forced labour”, but they also testified to notifying their suppliers “not to procure coffee from known violators”. JDE said that they are willing to work with a number of groups (which include governments, non-governmental organizations, suppliers, and farmer cooperatives) in order to refine the working conditions on coffee farms throughout Brazil and throughout the world (Hodal).

In their conviction statements, the representatives for each of these companies sure have a lot to say. Nonetheless, they still have a lot to show.

How These Companies Should Be Responding

These companies must work to analyze and understand the processes within their own supply chains. These companies must stop turning the other way and start looking at what is actually happening. They must own up to the ignorance within their organizations that have allowed these behaviors to continue. They must now do their research regarding the processes within their industry. Being naive is no longer an excuse. Preventative measures to ensure that allegations of such do not continue to ring true are necessary. The plant that a company’s supply chain involves, is the responsibility of that company.

Both Nestle and Jacobs Douwe Egberts confirmed that they cannot ensure that all of their goods are produced within the realm of law because they do not know where some of their resources are coming from. This seems to be a norm within the coffee industry. Human trafficking investigations have confirmed that coffee beans may “change hands over 100 times” before they ever even reach our suppliers (Calaway). How can a company deem their production ethical, when they cannot regulate each hand that their product touches. The answer is simple: they can’t. It is time they do their due diligence.

The supply chain of coffee beans “is a lengthy process that involves growing the beans, harvesting, hulling, drying, packing, bulking, blending and finally roasting. In between this process, the beans go through international transporters, export sellers and retailers like grocery stores, cafes and specialty shops” (Chan). Do corporate companies understand this?

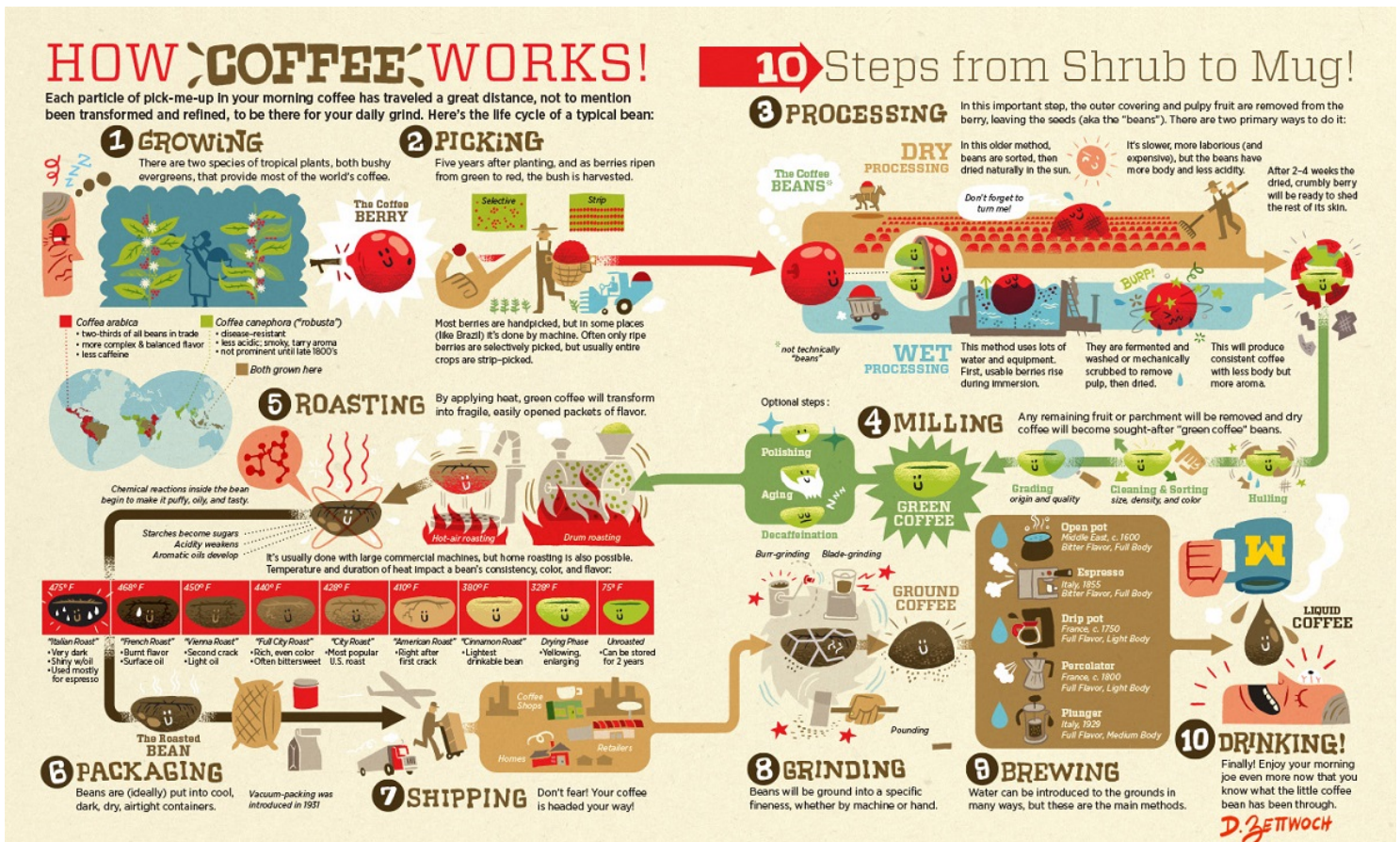
Does Starbucks realize that it takes one - hundred coffee beans to produce one cup of coffee?

Does Nestlé grasp the time it takes (five years) for a coffee tree to grow before it can even begin

to produce its first crop? Does Jacobs Douwe Egberts know that coffee farmers worldwide were harvesting and hauling 170.94 million sixty - kilogram bags of coffee in 2019?

Below, I have provided two graphics which outline the process of creating coffee to the process of consuming coffee. Maybe Starbucks, Nestle, and Jacobs Douwe Egberts should go ahead and take a look at these.

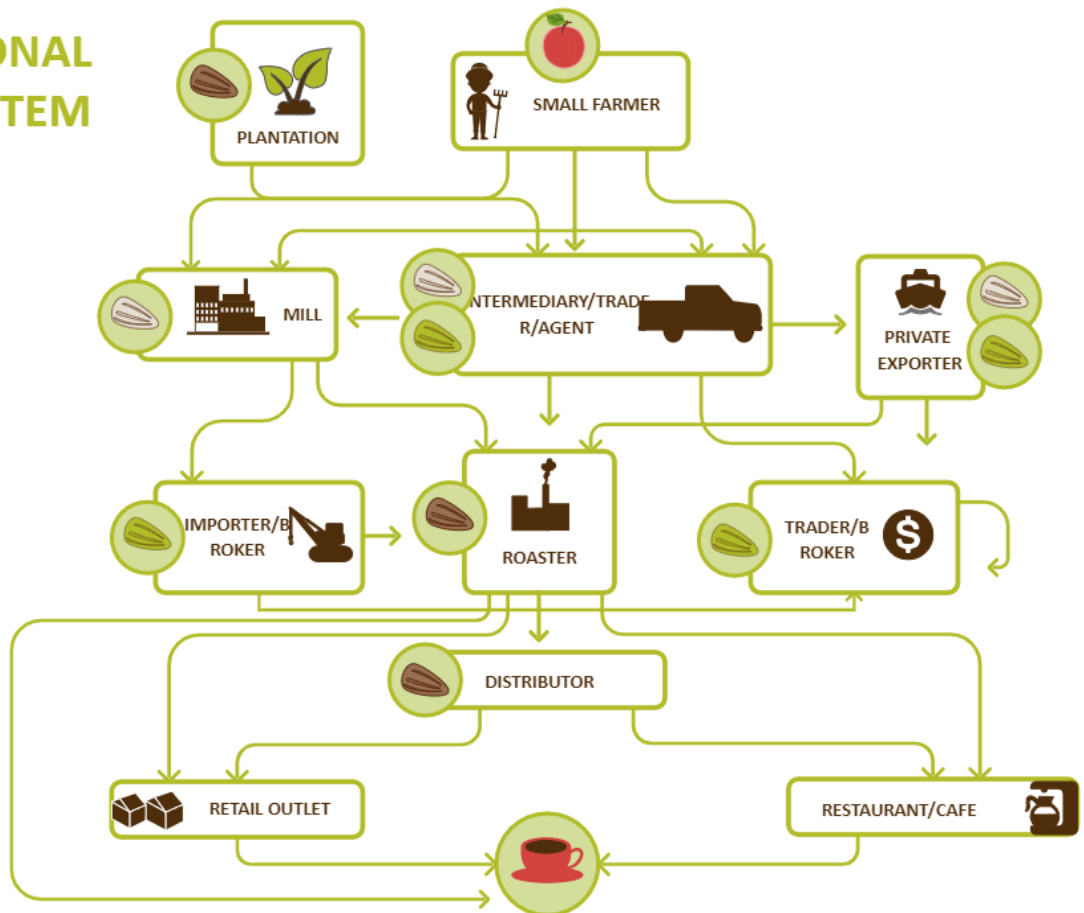
Figure 4: *From Bean to Brew: The Coffee Supply Chain*



(Wallach and Rao)

Figure 5: *Coffee Supply Chain Diagram Example*

CONVENTIONAL COFFEE SYSTEM



(Anderson)

The Fight Against Forced Labor

Around the world, there are a number of organizations that have formed within and among nations in an effort to monitor labor affairs and put a stop to the unfair ones. These groups join in conference to generate laws for fighting forced labor and for preventing its ability to continue further into the future. In the table below, I have listed some of those associations along with some of the acts they have developed.

Table 1: Acts and Organizations which Serve to Stop Modern Slavery

U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs
The Fair Labor Association
International Labor Organization
Forced Labor Convention, 1930
U.S. Tariff Act of 1930
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPPRA), 2006
The California Transparency in Supply Chains Act, 2010
Protocol of the Forced Labour Convention of 1930, 2014
Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014
Great Britain – U.K. Modern Slavery Act, 2015
U.S. Trade Facilitation and Enforcement Act (TFTEA), 2015
The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), 2017
Netherlands – Child Labor Due Diligence Law, 2019
Proposed U.S. Legislation – Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 S.3477, 2020
U.S Executive Order on the Establishment of the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force Under Section 741 of USMCA, 2020

How Others Are Responding

A number of labor unions and government groups are doing what they can to end forced labor. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has generated a document comprised of complaints in which “workers accused the companies of lax oversight of their supply chains in violation of the organization’s binding human rights and sustainability guidelines”. In order to promote global trade, thirty - six countries signed this document. One of these countries was Brazil (Lopes).

Brazil’s government has made “considerable efforts to tackle forced labor”. For Instance, in 2015, the Inter - American Court of Human Rights ordered Brazil to pay five million dollars to those formerly enslaved on a cattle ranch. That being said, “the authorities only have the resources to reach out to about half the workers who complain about slavery-like conditions, so that means of all the people who escape, and are able to file a complaint with the ministry of labor, still only half will be helped” (Hodal).

In order to justly serve those who have been victims of forced labor (or still are), reparations to a small fraction of them does not cut it. It is not enough for us to leave the fight against forced labor to lawsuits and to the groups listed above. For the sake of all those trapped into forced labor, we must join the fight too.

How We Should Respond

When encountering problems such as this one, it is easy to feel helpless. I often catch

myself thinking: *Well, what more can I even do? How am I, as one person, supposed to put a stop to a worldwide phenomenon?* It is easy to ask myself those sorts of questions. That way, when I do nothing to help solve the situation, I will not feel guilty. Why try if my effort will be deemed pointless anyway, right? Wrong. Yes, those thoughts are valid. And, yes, there is a level of realism to them. However, they should not be final. Thoughts of doubt should not be the factor that holds us back from contributing to a change. *Contributing*, that is the key word right there. I did not say we need to independently make change tomorrow, but I do say that we need to, together, contribute to it each day. As consumers, business leaders, and just decent human beings, there are steps we can take to contribute to the end to modern slavery.

We must become informed consumers. We should know where our dollars are going and what they are truly supporting. As consumers, we have the “right to be informed about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods” in order to protect us from unfair trade practices (“Consumer Rights”). We should take advantage of that right. Next time, before you make a purchase, do your research. A simple google search and I received hundreds of stats regarding unjust labor practices. I am sure you can find the same.

We should no longer be giving these companies the benefit of the doubt when they claim to be blind - sided by allegations of forced labor. Businesses must be proactive and perform their due diligence when sourcing or producing coffee on plantations, and we need to hold them accountable for that. Through scrolling the internet we find an abundance of evidence regarding forced labor at particular plants. There is no reason for the companies interacting with this evidence not to see it. We are providing them with way too much money not to. So, until the circumstances which place certain companies under the foot of forced labor improve, we should stop giving them all that money. By purchasing from groups that operate at the expense of others, we are feeding that behavior and encouraging the progression of forced labor.

If we want these companies to stop looking the other way, then we must vow to stop looking the other way too. An ultimatum must be given: Either these businesses are to boycott the plantations where forced labor occurs and regulations are lacking, or we are to boycott these businesses. More than anything, boycotts have been found to decrease market efficiency and attract attention to the cause. A few customers choosing not to buy coffee from Starbucks anymore may not make much of a dent in their operations or revenue, but the attention they might gain from our petitions and campaigns just may. Until we know that our coffee shops are being loyal to their missions by enforcing health, safety, and fair labor practices on the plantations they utilize, we do not need to be loyal to their service. We need to be loyal to the cause and, through boycott and petition, we can get others on board too.

Our cause seeks to do much more than to persecute the companies which source from problem plantations. Our cause seeks to also persecute those plantations, as they are at the root of the issue. About .5% of farms in large markets are reviewed for violating regulations every three years (Calaway). .5% every three years. That number is strikingly low. For those of you who are not sure how you can contribute to this cause, join a labor union and volunteer your time to explore much more than .5% of coffee plantations every three years. If we can increase the number of those willing to help, we can increase the threat of shutting down unethical plantations, and in turn, we can decrease the threat of forced labor in the future.

For those of you unwilling or unable to go to the extent of joining a labor union group, consider contributing to the ones listed below. Initiatives we can take and institutions we can join to help spread awareness and fight forced labor have been established in Table 2.

Table 2: Actions We Can Take

Watch the Blue Campaign Labor Trafficking Awareness Videos Submit allegations to eallegations.cbp.gov/Home/allegation . Submit information to ICE.ForcedLabor@ice.dhs.gov Submit information to Homeland Security tip line at 866-347-2423 Submit a tip form on the Homeland Security website Join the Rainforest Alliance Certification program Join the Sustainable Coffee Challenge
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The Systems at Fault

In addition to acknowledging and advising issues within supply chains, we must also notice those within the economic, political, and social systems that predispose victims to forced labor in the first place. The systems that continue to allow for perpetrators to ignore regulations without repercussion. This problem goes much deeper than the plantations that source companies. Much deeper than the companies that source our coffee.

From the ground up, systems need to be reviewed and revised. Governments which encourage forced labor as a way of punishment, need to be completely impeached and never inaugurated again. Countries such as the United States who have the privilege of serving for a democracy should not shy away when intervening with international affairs. Unjust governments should be overthrown and overpowered. I know, easier said than done. But to realign our focus onto these dictatorships is pivotal, if not necessary, in fighting this fight. Other political proposals that need to be reevaluated involve those that provide no welfare and little support for the socially and economically disadvantaged. There is a reason that women and children make up the majority of modern slavery. There is a reason that those trafficked into labor are often impoverished and come from unstable home life or no home at all. These groups have no way out, nowhere else to go. Certain demographics are targeted when it comes to immoral recruitment. If one is so desperate to survive that they enter this field of work knowing the potential losses they may reap, or another is so powerless that they have no way to stop those from forcibly carrying her away, then they face a bigger force than that of the unjust coffee industry. They face an unjust way of life, an unjust territory. Whether it be due to their own accord or not, one should not be resorted to these labor practices. That is at the fault of our political leaders, our financial figures, and our deficient human resources around the world.

The Rainforest Alliance has formed an *assess - and - address* approach to tackle forced labor beyond the grain. The *assess - and - address* approach “involves assessing and mitigating risks, addressing root causes, and going beyond the traditional audit model to open up channels of trust and communication with workers” (Rigby). I recommend that we, too, follow this approach, *assess - and - address* from the ground up.

Conclusion

As of 2020, the United States coffee industry had a market size of \$25.024 billion with one - hundred and forty - six billion cups of coffee being consumed by Americans each year (Ariella). Let’s start paying attention to those cups of coffee. Until we do, they probably will not taste so good. At least not ethically, anyway

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