



# **CLIMATE JUSTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF COLOMBIAN FARM WORKERS**

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[1]

[1] from Yauhenika\_Banderuk on Canva.com

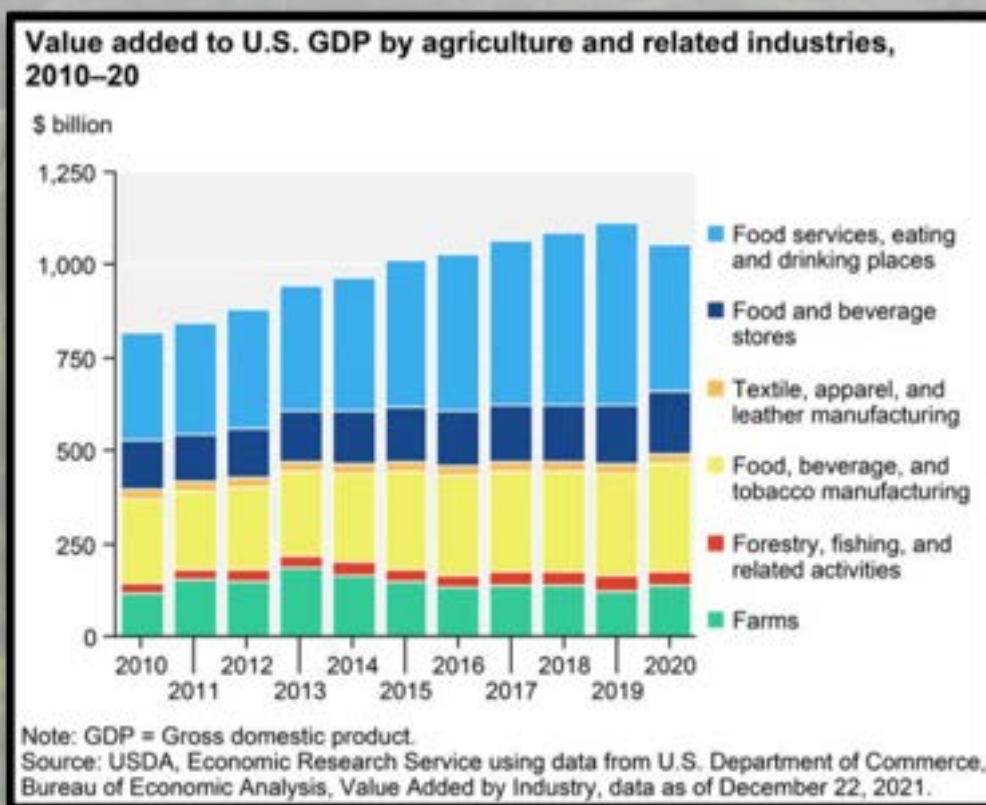
Background image provided by Pablo Merchan from Studio Colombia on Canva.com

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# Introduction

Dating back to early civilizations, agriculture continues to prevail as one of the largest factors for economic growth, especially in countries with access to rich natural resources. In the year 2020 alone, the U.S. agricultural industry accounted for five percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), totaling over \$1 trillion (USDA, 2020).



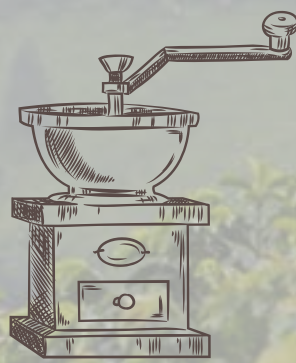
This economic driving force is accentuated in countries, such as Colombia, which have large exports of petroleum, coal, and coffee.

Background image provided by Pablo Merchan from Studio Colombia on Canva.com

As the ramifications of climate change continue to devastate agricultural communities around the world, increasing concerns about economic growth, food security, and job employment have become more prevalent. Inherent to these growing concerns are the social injustices brought upon frontline communities, which tend to live the most sustainably, yet face the most harmful effects of climate change. Hence, I will investigate the challenges presented to agricultural communities in Colombia, which account for less than 0.2% of global CO2 emissions, yet endure some of the worst consequences of climate change.



[2]



[3]



[4]



[5]

This zine will address the persistent struggles of small coffee growers in Colombia, to explore the extent to which climate change stifles the ability of agrarian communities to have sustainable employment. This topic merits significant attention as it highlights the burdens of Colombian farmworkers, whose voices belong at the forefront of discussions pertaining to environmental, climate, and energy justice in Latinx communities.

Images [2-5] provided by @sketchify on Canva.com  
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## Social Context

Coffee forms a large part of many people's lives and is an integral part of many different cultures around the world. Understanding the origin behind your daily cup of coffee is the first step towards solving a complex global problem.



[6] from Starbucks Coffee Company  
[7] from Peet's Coffee Company  
[8] from Lavazza Coffee Company



# Political Context

Colombia is one of the largest exporters of Arabica coffee. Each year, coffee exports from Colombia are one of the main drivers of economic growth in the agriculture industry. In 2020 alone, Colombia "exported \$2.54B worth of coffee" (OEC, 2022)

Colombia



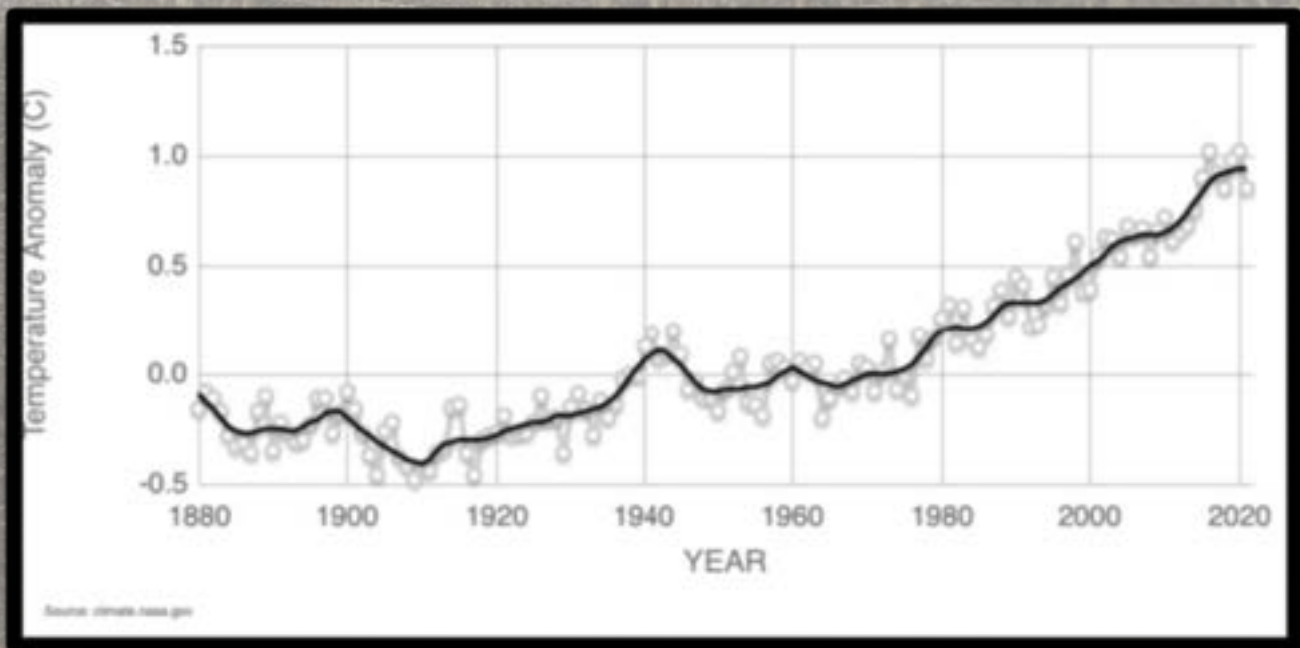
[9]

[9] Jenn Franco on Canva.com  
Background image from [www.diariolibre.com](http://www.diariolibre.com)

# Historical Context

Colombia and Ethiopia originated as two of the most prolific coffee producers in the world. However, climate change has posed many issues for farmworkers near the equator and traditional growing methods have been put to the test.

## Global Land-Ocean Temperature Index



[10]

[10] <https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>  
Background image from stock.adobe.com





# Key Terms



## **Sustainability**

The quality of preserving basic demands for current and future generations, through the scopes of social, environmental, and economic development (Pezzullo & Cox, 2022)

## **Community**

Those who share, yet are not limited to, similar beliefs and practices pertaining to the field of agriculture, and who exercise these principles through field work (Sifuentez, 2016)

## **Climate Justice**

The strive to develop a more equitable and sustainable future, by centering the needs of frontline communities, while addressing the large-scale threat of climate change. (Pezzullo & Cox, 2022)



"Low-altitude municipalities will be negatively affected by climate change"

"Thousands of growers and their families in these areas will see their livelihood jeopardized"

"Productivity is likely to fall below their breakeven point by mid-century"



-Federico Ceballos-Sierra, PhD

[11]

Ceballos-Sierra studies the effect of climate variability on the productivity of tropical crop

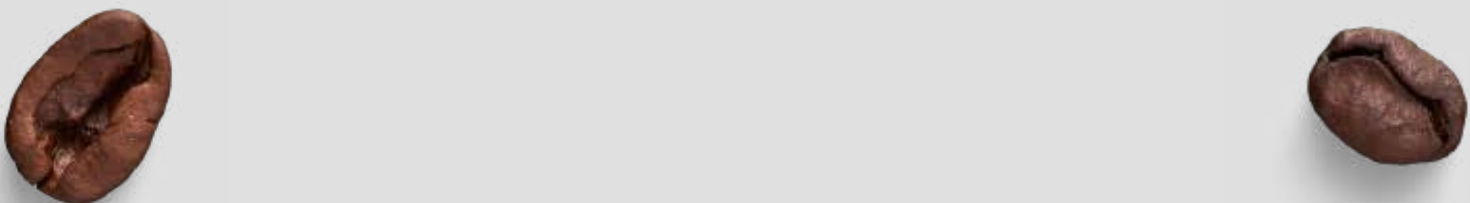
[11] <https://aces.illinois.edu/news/how-climate-change-affects-colombias-coffee-production>  
Background image from <https://coffeehunter.com/the-coffee/san-antonio-tolima/>



In this Ted Talk, Carlos Ignacio Velasco highlights ways in which Colombian farmworkers can persevere the effects of climate change by shifting towards alternative crops such as cacao. This would connect well with the idea of climate justice, a term I defined above, because it proposes solutions for future generations to overcome these adverse effects. This artifact was taken from TED. It is in video form and the speaker is the co-founder and CEO of Cacao de Colombia.



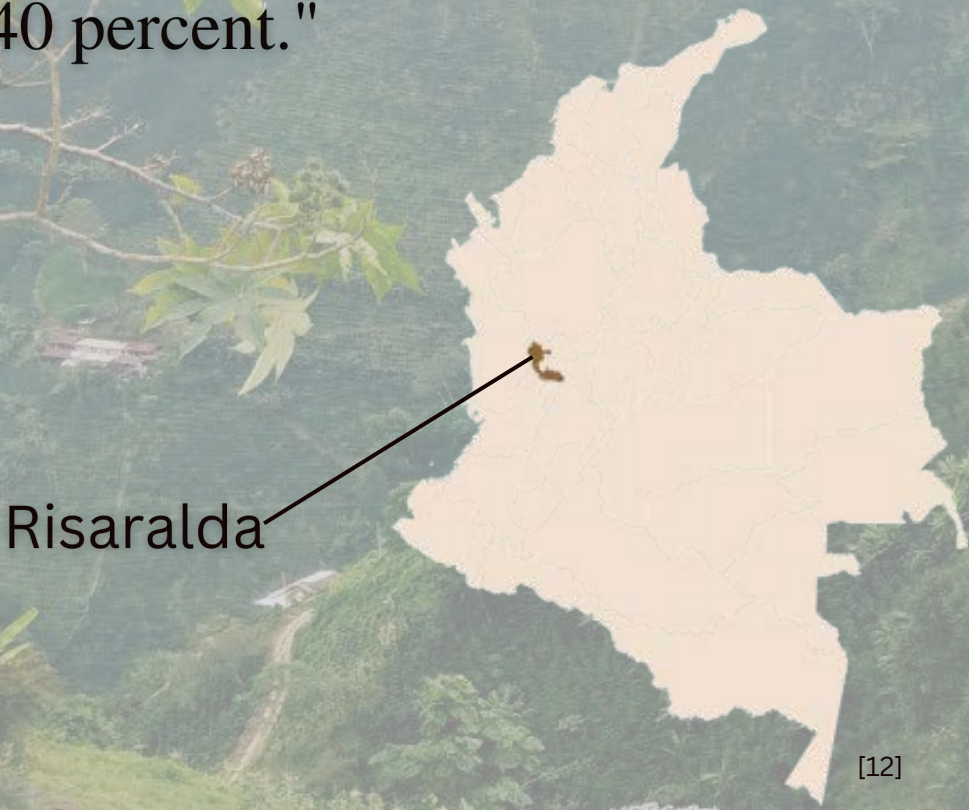
Background image from <https://coffeehunter.com/the-coffee/san-antonio-tolima/>



"In earlier times, the climate was perfect for coffee"

"this changed and we now don't know when it will be summer, when the coffee will blossom"

"Our yearly production now varies by up to 40 percent."



Risaralda

[12]

-Anonymous Risaraldan Farmer

[12] from <https://www.escoafe.com/en/en/la-finca-del-cafe/>  
Background image from stock.adobe.com



The national federation in Colombia is centered to “work for the well-being of Colombian coffee growers through an effective union, democratic and representative organization”. This ties closely with the idea of community, which I have defined above, because many of the people in this federation likely share similar values and beliefs. This artifact was taken from the mission statement page for the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros.



In August of 2022, Gustavo Petro became Colombia's first left-wing president. During his time as a senator, Petro focused on agrarian reform. Colombian rural communities are hopeful that new leaders in his administration will listen to their demands. This artifact ties into the idea of climate justice.

Background image from stock.adobe.com





This website belongs to one of Colombia's largest-scale coffee producers. The company addresses different methods that are taken to minimize their Carbon footprint. Given their status as a large corporation, greenwashing in their media communications is possible. This artifact relates to sustainability, one of my keywords defined above. This artifact was taken from an "about" page on the Juan Valdez website.



This artifact is a Twitter post by Greenpeace, a global campaigning network devoted to preserving the planet. It is useful in understanding how the issue is presented to large-scale audiences. The post relates to the key word defined above, sustainability. This artifact is from Twitter, and posted by @Greenpeace.

Background image from stock.adobe.com



This artifact provides a personal anecdote from Edgar Mendoza, a local coffee grower in Serranía de San Lucas, Colombia. He discusses some of the “gigantic” challenges that climate change is causing. This article also provides a perspective from Carolina Ramírez, a Colombian agroclimatologist. This artifact pertains to the keyword community because it focuses on the personal opinion of one of the farmworkers in Colombia. This article was found on Eos, which is a science news magazine published by AGU.




This article is from the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois. This artifact relates to the key term climate justice as it provides a research-based outlook on the climate change issue in Colombia. This article was published by Marianne Stein, Instructor of Business Administration at the University of Illinois.

Background image from stock.adobe.com



# Discussion

Understanding the detriments faced by frontline communities is the first step towards striving for climate justice. Not only are agricultural workers experiencing the most injustice from climate change, their labor is essential. As we continue developing solutions for climate change, it is imperative to keep the voices of frontline communities at forefront of every discussion.



Future directions in this field are plentiful. As an activist, you can support this cause by spreading awareness, becoming more conscious of carbon emissions, or supporting global climate justice

13 organizations.







# Conclusion

This zine observed the challenges presented to agricultural communities in Colombia, who experience some of the worst effects of climate change. With agriculture as one of the largest economic driving forces, it is essential to center the future around agricultural communities. By examining the persistent struggles of small coffee growers in Colombia, we were able to see that climate change has already massively changed the lives of coffee growers in Colombia. Learning from these stories can help to repair the damages of climate change and provide a more sustainable future.



# Creator Biography



- Student at the University of Oregon Clark Honors College
- Spanish/American identity
- Has been involved in several different groups that work towards environmental justice.
- I hope that readers will learn about the struggles that some of the frontline working communities have endured with the change in climate.
- I challenge readers to use this knowledge to spread awareness about the issue and reflect on ways to mitigate the burdens faced by agricultural communities in Colombia and around the world.



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