



## EMPOWERING COFFEE FARMERS THROUGH EDUCATION ON DIGITALIZATION: A collaboration between Digital Coffee Future and GFAR

The world of coffee production is changing rapidly, and the organizations supporting this vital industry must evolve to meet new challenges. A collaborative effort between knowledge hub Digital Coffee Future (DCF) and GFAR trained five coffee-producing associations and enterprises in Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, and Peru with the digital strategies they need to thrive in this evolving environment. Digital Coffee Future's Digital Origin Education Program (DOEP) involved them in six weeks of live, virtual classes and eight weeks of individual support to develop their digitalization plan and start this journey towards more streamlined operations.

### *A Diverse Mix of Coffee Organizations*

The participating coffee associations represent a wide range of profiles, from family-run businesses to a newly formed producer association and an independent coffee professional providing a range of services in different nodes of the value stream at origin. Similarly, the representatives of those organizations also came from various backgrounds. Indeed, two of them had recently decided to pursue a career in coffee despite coming from a different industry, which underlines the program's ability to attract new talent to the coffee industry. Furthermore, women were actively involved in four of the participating associations, demonstrating the program's commitment to gender diversity and inclusivity.

While the majority of the participating coffee associations were just beginning their digitalization journey, their diverse nature and the varied professional profiles of their representatives underscored the need for a personalized approach. The program played a pivotal role in helping them assess their specific needs and develop tailored digitalization strategies that fit their unique contexts.

### *Addressing Specific Needs*

When analyzing the diverse interests and needs perceived by the participants, DOEP emphasized the demand for digital tools that focus on two aspects: farm-level management, and marketing and sales management. The former included overseeing workers, managing farm activities, and carrying out cultural outreach work, especially with indigenous communities. The latter highlighted the need for tools to manage transformation processes, quality control, inventories, and coffee sales, both for export and domestic roasted and ground coffee sales.

The biggest challenge identified during the program for the concrete applicability of digital tools by coffee associations was accessibility considering the limited resources available for technology in these organizations. Indeed, concerns about costs prompted several of the participating associations to reassess the allocation of resources based on the volume of coffee produced and sold.



### *Reimagining Data*

One of the most significant shifts brought about by DOEP was how these coffee associations perceived and used data. They learned the importance of data collection and how it can be integrated into concrete processes within coffee farming operations. As a result, Digital Coffee Future introduced various digital solutions to the participants, including commonly used tools such as Google Drive and Excel. Mobile solutions like Kobotoolbox were also explored for efficient and high-quality data collection.

The program provided hands-on demonstrations, enabling participants to practice and customize these tools for monitoring field activities, production deliveries, and worker payments. In a particular case, the Honduran cooperative was able to develop a system to streamline internal inspections for certification compliance.

### *The Value of Education on Digitalization*

The Digital Origin Education Program, a collaborative effort by Digital Coffee Future and GFAR, has supported a more strategic digital transformation for the Latin American coffee associations participating in the program. With a tailored approach and a focus on specific needs, these associations have made significant progress in adopting digital tools and strategies to remain competitive in the coffee sector. This initiative empowers these organizations and contributes to the sustainable growth of the entire coffee sector in Latin America. Digital Coffee Future's endeavor serves as an inspiring example for the coffee industry, showing that with the right guidance and tools, traditional sectors can embrace digital innovation and chart a course toward a more prosperous future.