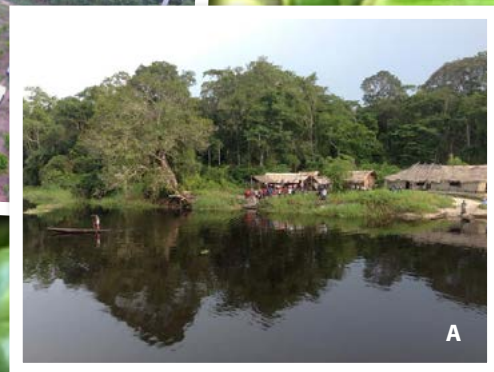


Robusta Replanting in Progress at the Miluna Plantation of the NOCAFEX Group (Sud Ubangi) ▼

**A| Mongala River** : Tributary of the Majestic Congo River (Equateur Province DRC.

**B| Miluna Robusta Plantation** (44 Hectares) in Gwaka, South Ubangi Province, DRC.



# ROBUSTA COFFEE IN D.R. CONGO

Kambale Kisumba Kamungele

Coffee play an important role in the economy of many African countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the continent's 25 coffee-producers and coffee is an important cash crop in the country playing a major role in the livelihoods of thousands of households and being an important foreign exchange earner for the national economy.

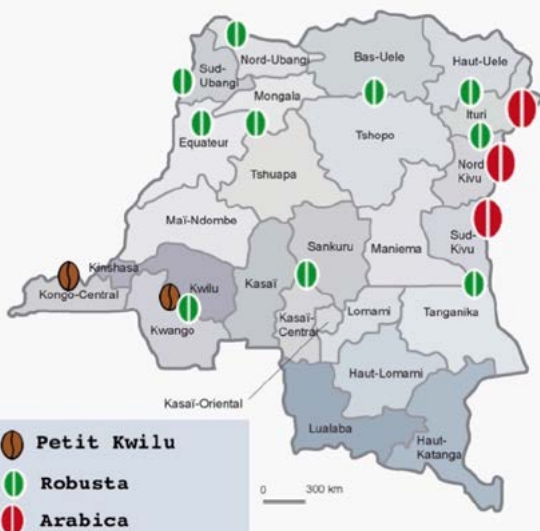
volumes have been declining for the last three decades. A new approach for revamping the coffee industry is needed, if the country is to continue respond to the challenges of the needs of the rural farmers in the midst of an increasing global coffee consumption..

In the DRC coffee is mostly produced by smallholders in mixed farms where it is intercropped with subsistence crops such as banana, beans, which ensure households' food security. Many varieties of coffee are available in the country but two major species are grown for commercial purposes;

Canephora is cultivated in low altitude regions covering the central plateaux and the equatorial regions. It is worth mentioning that in the north-western part of the Congo-Central province, a special variety of Canephora adapted to the Mayombe eco-system, the Petit Kwilu, can be found. This variety, from which the Brazilian Conillon is said to have been derived, has smaller fruits but presents neutral cup and good acidity characteristics, when washed.

Historically the DRC was a mainly Robusta producing country. During the height of the sector in the 1980s the country's exports averaged over 80'000 metric tons per year , of which 80 % was Robusta.

The ravages of Coffee Wilt Disease (CWD) and multiple factors associated with political instability during the last 25 years decimated the production. Although much of the produced coffee is smuggled



The DRC is a country endowed with a tropical climate, fertile soil, abundant water resources, which offers favorable conditions for the cultivation of coffee. Despite its immense potential, the country's coffee production and export

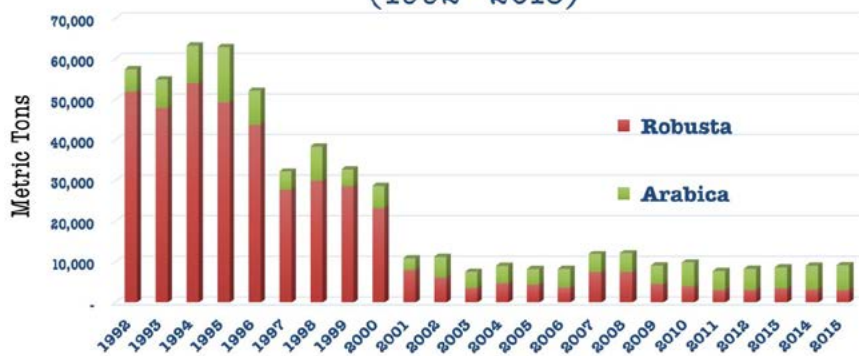
Arabica is cultivated in the eastern highlands ashore the African Great Lakes . The great concentration of production is found around Butembo/Beni area in Lubero territory (Lake Edward) , in Goma/ Bukavu (Lake Kivu), and in the Magahi area in the Province of Ituri (Lake Albert).

into neighboring countries, the current official exports average approximately 10'000 metric tons per year, of which 40% is now Robusta.

is about 155.1 million bags (55% Arabica and 45%Robusta). In an address at the Global Coffee Forum, Milan, organized by the ICO, it was

expected to rise, African eating habits and spending patterns are being transformed. A burgeoning middle-class made up of young professionals is adopting western life style, which includes coffee drinking in the diet. This trend will contribute further to the demand for coffee and this is once again an opportunity for the African coffee farmer, particularly for D.R. Congo Robusta.

## 25 Years DR Congo Coffee Export Performance (1992 - 2015)



Recent developments in the sector have been observed more in Arabica than in Robusta during the last decade. The attention of many international development agencies have been concentrated primarily in the North and South Kivu, where the focus is mainly on supporting cooperatives to access high value markets through high quality certified Arabica. Robusta, on the other hand seem to have been abandoned, and previous production sites need intervention to rehabilitate their production.

Robusta potential to grow and provide rural farmers with income that can help transform their lives is huge. It is worth reminding that Coffea Canephora was first identified growing in the wild in the Belgian Congo back in 1898. The actual cultivation of coffee as a cash crop started in early 1900s. Some of the the earliest research institutions that served as Robusta Coffee planting material dissemination centers were in the DRC and today a few of them are still holding precious germplasms necessary for the survival of the coffee specie.

According to the International Coffee Organization, the current world coffee production (2016/2017) is estimated to 151.6 million bags while the global consumption

presented that the global coffee consumption will increase by a third to 200 million bags by 2030, as the world population increases and disposable incomes rise. The share for each type is expected to be 55% Robusta and 45 % Arabica. This is a tremendous opportunity for the DRC which has 80 million hectares of arable land, a population close to 80 million, a favorable climate and enough water resources. The statistics above are very encouraging to small holders farmers in the DR Congo who aspire to a better life.

The global demand for Robusta driven by the consumption increase in non-traditional markets is evident. According to ED&F MAN Volcafé Newsletter, Brazil uses 43% of Robusta in their domestic blends, while East Europe uses 46%, and Asia as the biggest consumer of Robusta thanks to its customary 3-in-1 solubles uses up to 68% of Robusta in their blends. Apart from Ethiopia, the birthplace of Arabica, where coffee drinking is an old tradition, other parts of Africa have joined the dance of coffee drinking and an estimated 60% of Robusta is used in the blends, especially in Maghreb and Sahel countries. There is also an opportunity for other Sub-Saharan Africa coffee consumption. As urbanization is rising across the continent and buying power is

Facing the reality of Climate Change, Robusta could offer an alternative crop to respond the threat of global warming. As it is well known, coffee is sensitive to climate fluctuations; temperature and rainfall conditions are critical to production. Arabica is particularly sensitive to increasing temperatures, especially during blossoming and fructification. Robusta coffee is better adapted to higher temperatures, but is much less adaptable to lower temperature. According to a recent study by the Australian Climate Institute, some parts of Africa may no longer produce coffee by the end of this century, as a result of the rise in temperature globally. This would be an opportunity for Robusta, as asserted by Christophe Montagnon, scientist at the World Coffee Research, in a RFI Interview.

The Democratic Republic of Congo's Coffee sector is undergoing positive changes. There has been a tremendous improvements in the official export volumes as well as quality of Arabica, which is contributing to the visibility of the country's origin. In order to witness a true renaissance of the DRC Coffee Industry, a special attention need to be paid to the Robusta production. Traditional production sites rehabilitation with improved planting materials will increase yields and overall production volume, which will translate in more income for farmers thus unlocking Congolese wealth through its Robusta Coffee.

**Kambale Kisumba Kamungele**  
Export Director  
ETS Tsonga Kasereka