

POLICY BRIEF

The Pluma designation of origin for coffee granted to the state of Oaxaca, Mexico



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Summary

Coffee production is an economically important crop in 13 of Mexico's 31 states. The states of Chiapas, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Nayarit account for 90% of all production. Twenty-five percent of the coffee crop production takes place in rural areas identified as socially and economically marginalized and food insecure. These marginalized areas transect four of the five states above (Chiapas, Veracruz, Oaxaca, and

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Puebla). The state of Oaxaca ranks third in terms of extreme marginalization (Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural [SADER], 2023).

Oaxaca has approximately 28,000 small coffee producers. The region has taken significant strides to elevate and distinguish its coffee. In 2020, the origin of Oaxacan coffee was officially recognized and granted the “Pluma” namesake. In 2022, Pluma met the Mexican Standard 255, a validation of quality and compliance.

The Pluma origin signifies and describes the geographical range, soil, and climate where that coffee is produced within the state of Oaxaca. The Mexican Standard 255 validates the homogenous sensory and physical attributes for the Pluma origin. Together, these brand the Pluma origin as a product worthy of a higher demand for production at a higher price point. Since the quality of Oaxacan coffee has already been recognized and is coveted in the international marketplace, this adds value to the region’s specialty coffee.

Keywords

Coffea arabica L., Pluma, Oaxaca, Mexico, social development, economic development, designation of origin

How Did the Pluma Appellation of Origin Arise in Oaxaca, Mexico?

The Oro Verde Cluster, a group representing the coffee producers within a region of Oaxaca, requested assistance for an appellation of origin to distinguish their specialty coffee. Lic. Leticia Ruiz García provided this assistance, with additional goals to safeguard the production areas from soil degradation and the impact of climate change.

In coordination with the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property, a series of deliberations were conducted between coffee producers and a number of companies listed in Mexican Standard 255. Historian Francisco Zavaleta García provided the chronological account defending the rationale for the namesake “Pluma”; he established that (1) the municipality of Pluma Hidalgo did not exist at the time of the first coffee farm’s establishment, and (2) the first farm, La Providencia, was named after the shape of a feather created by the clouds in the area. This information defended the relevance of the name “Pluma” for the region.

Following a defense of the name, the group defined the purpose of a Pluma designation of origin as inherently commercial in nature. The objective is to increase sales at a higher price point while maintaining and safeguarding quality standards.

It should be noted that the involvement of the three municipal, state, and federal governments was necessary to gain acceptance for the designation of origin.

To proceed, the Oro Verde Cluster requested samples of coffee beans from a subset of producers. Following this, a sensory evaluation was completed by a Q grader taster, an evaluator of the sensory quality of coffee. The state government of Oaxaca covered the costs associated with the evaluation and associated paperwork. On February 22, 2019, the application to obtain the denomination of origin of Pluma coffee was submitted.

The Acceptance for Designation of Origin Pluma

On February 4, 2020, approval for the origin Pluma was granted. The Declaration of Protection was published in the official gazette of the federation (Official Gazette of the Federation, 2020). The recognition extends to 30 municipalities of the Costa, Sierra Sur, and Lower Mixteca regions. Furthermore, on October

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Disclosure

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

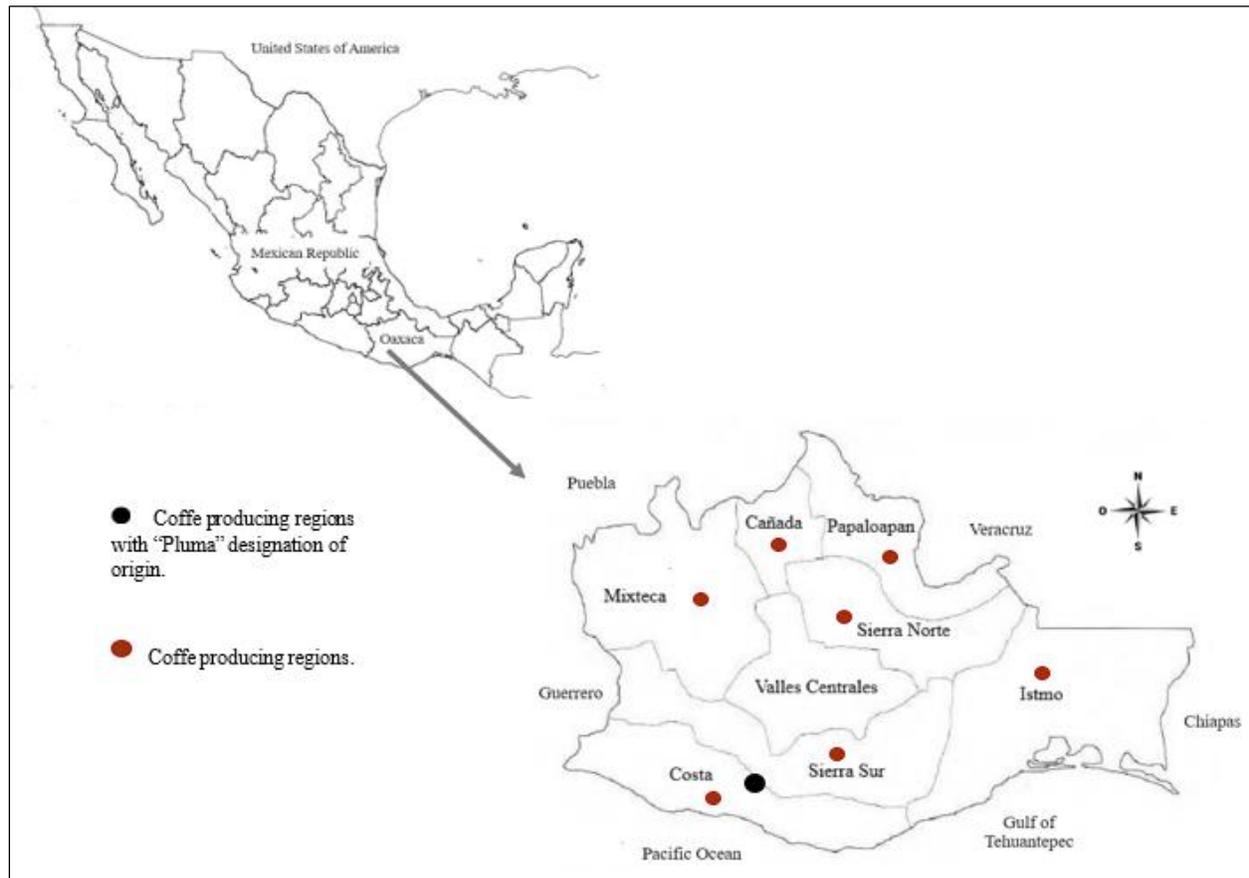
14, 2022, the Official Mexican Standard NOM-255-SE-2022, Café Pluma-Denomination-Specifications-Commercial Information and Test Methods, was published in the official gazette of the federation (Official Gazette of the Federation, 2022). In the margin is a stamp with the national coat of arms that reads United Mexican States.

The acceptance of these two recognitions has provided an important recognition for the economic development of coffee with a Pluma origin.

Pluma Geographical Range and Qualities

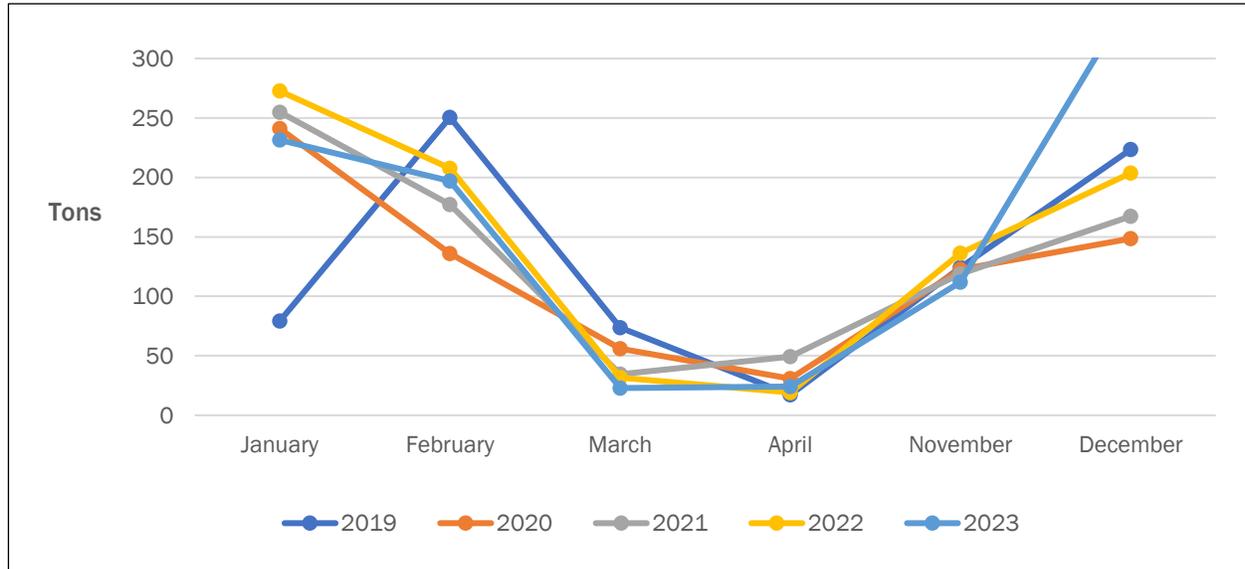
The coastal region of Oaxaca is situated in the southern portion of the state and adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and the Sierra Sur Region (Figure 1). It comprises three districts: Jamiltepec, Juquila, and Pochutla, which collectively encompass a total of 50 municipalities. The region has an area of 12,502 km², with the isthmus located to the east, the state of Guerrero to the west, and the sea to the south. The climate of this region is optimal for coffee cultivation, with warm, sub-humid conditions, an annual rainfall of 732–2,054 mm and temperatures ranging from 24°C to 26°C. The population is primarily engaged in agriculture and fishing. The production of both Arabica and Robusta coffee is increasingly common. It is the Arabica coffee produced in this region that has become classified as specialty coffee. Arabica coffee is cultivated in mountainous green or green forest areas, where the sea breeze has a beneficial effect on the quality of the beans. Robusta coffee is grown in low-lying areas that are predominantly exposed to sunlight, resulting in a different set of environmental conditions. Figure 2 shows that as of 2019, the production of Arabica coffee in Oaxaca was 75,724 tons, and in 2023, it reached 87,694 tons (Sistema de Información Agroalimentaria y Pesquera [SIAP], 2024,

Figure 1. Distribution of Coffee Producing Regions in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico



p. 48). This upward trend, despite adversities such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is indicative of the resilience of the coffee industry in Oaxaca. Robusta coffee is not designated as a specialty coffee.

Figure 2. Cherry Coffee Production in Oaxaca, Mexico, Since 2019



Conclusions

The recognition of the *Coffea arabica* L. grain, designated as Pluma, adds value that may increase demand for it in the national and international marketplace. This elevates the value of Mexico's cultural, gastronomic, and agro-industrial reputation on the global stage. This encourages grain production, thereby strengthening the economic position of coffee producers and generating new sources of employment in many of the marginalized areas of the state of Oaxaca. A continued examination of the remaining coffee-producing regions, to explore their future integration into the Pluma designation of origin, would greatly benefit the industry and enhance the national recognition of specialty coffee generated within various regions of Mexico.

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