

Quality Control for Rambagira Coffee



The Dukunde Kawa cooperative has policies, processes and skills that add up to a substantial quality control function.

1. Farmer Training: Farmers deliver cherry mostly to collection sites that are removed from the washing station. The farmers are members of the coop so each season at the annual meeting the cooperative leaders remind the farmers of the cooperative's quality standard. Each farmer is expected to float their cherry in water before bringing it to the collection site for weighing. This is in the farmer's best interest, because if the farmer, (including the Rambagira women) fail to float at home, the "floater" or bad cherry, will be sorted out at the collection site and the farmer will have to carry it home.

2. Site Collector Training: Each site is supervised by a Site Collector who has been trained in quality control. First they evaluate each bag of cherry brought visually. If there's any sign of non-ripe cherry, the site supervisor will require the farmer to sort out any unripe cherry. When the site collector shows up at the washing station with many bags, probably half a truck-load, of cherry, the cherry will be run through the Pinhalense cherry sorter, which uses water and vibration to sort out floaters. If there is more than 1% floaters in the Collector's delivery, that Collector's pay will be deducted for the overage (Kg cherry * price paid for cherry.)

3. Cupping Lab: A highly valued resource for every coffee producer is a fully equipped and on-site cupping lab. Cupping labs allow a trained cupper to evaluate the quality of each lot of coffee, and thus enables the producer to know the potential value of their crop. Dukundekawa is already advancing from their first on-site cupping lab to a new, still-under-construction, state-of-the-art cupping lab that will likely qualify for Specialty Coffee Association certification.



Inside the old cupping lab.



New, quite large, state-of-the-art cupping lab under construction.

With a cupping lab, old or new, producer groups are able to go much further with understanding the quality and thus the value of their coffee. They can work more strategically to **eliminate defects** in all parts of the production system.



Outside the old cupping lab.