



Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk



Myanmar Product Profile: Coffee

Myanmar Coffee

Among many coffee producing countries, Myanmar has ideal natural conditions, which are key for growing high-grade Arabica coffee: high altitudes and cool to moderate temperatures. Coffee cultivation in Myanmar started 140 years ago, when missionaries began to plant coffee in the south in 1885. Eventually, production arrived in the Shan Highlands in the early 1930s.

Myanmar premium and specialty coffee is recognised at international coffee cupping competitions for its rich and well-balanced flavour.

Why You Should Buy from Myanmar

- **The highlands of Myanmar are 1,300 metres above sea level**, with a subtropical climate. Coffee cherries develop in the rainy season and harvesting and processing takes place in the dry season. These are ideal conditions for producing high-quality coffee.
- **Independent cupping results** show that most samples of Myanmar coffee exceed 85 points, as given by recognised tasters, which classifies the coffee as specialty.
- **Myanmar's coffee sector is experiencing a revival** after years of isolation. This offers thousands of poor farmers the opportunity to earn a living and secure a future for their families. The majority of Myanmar coffee producers are smallholder farmers, women, and young people.
- **Myanmar aspires to distinguish itself among Asian coffee producers:** small in volume but maintaining high quality standards.

Sorting coffee in Myanmar



Source: Daily Coffee News

Production Data

Coffee production in Myanmar increases every year. Myanmar currently produces 7,000 tonnes of coffee on 20,000 ha. Premium and specialty coffee account for around 1,000 tonnes. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation aims to increase the coffee producing area to 100,000 ha and to export 60,000 tonnes of high-quality coffee by 2030.

Arabica coffee represents 80% of the production in the highlands in the north. The remaining 20% is Robusta coffee, grown in lowlands in the south. Myanmar produces around 12 varieties of Arabica coffee including SL 34, Catuai, S795, and Blue Mountain. The coffee harvest runs from December through March.

Drying of coffee cherries in Shan State, Myanmar



Source: Myanmar Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

Myanmar coffee is mainly grown in the Shan State, Mandalay Region, Kayin State, and Chin State. There are 11,000 ha in Shan State, 4,000 ha in Kayin State, about 2,000 ha in Mandalay (Pyin Oo Lwin), and 800 ha each in Kachin and Kayah States. Small-scale coffee plantations can also be found in Tanintharyi, Bago and Kayin Regions.

Careful handpicking is critical to the quality of Myanmar coffee. This process ensures that only ripe cherries are harvested. Within 24 to 48 hours after harvesting, the skin is removed from the coffee cherries in two stages. The cherries are then naturally sun-dried, then sorted by size and hand-graded to remove impurities.

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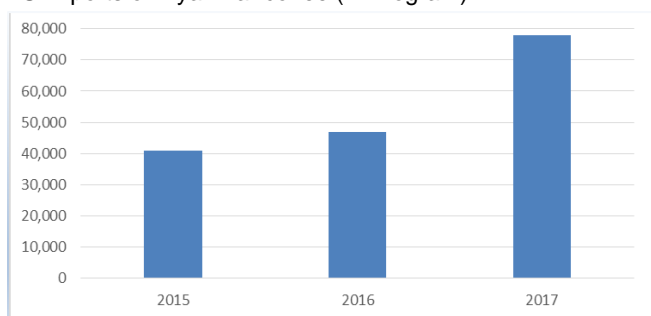


Export Structure

In 2017, Myanmar exported 860 tonnes of coffee, worth EUR 1.2 million. The largest export destination in value was China (31%, mainly commercial grades), followed by the USA (16%, specialty and premium coffee), and Japan (13%, specialty and premium coffee).

Export of Myanmar coffee to the European Union (EU) started in 2015 and increased every year since then. In 2017, the EU imported 78 tonnes of coffee from Myanmar. The main importer was Germany (39 tonnes), followed by the United Kingdom (21 tonnes), and Belgium (18 tonnes). Myanmar primarily exports high-value specialty coffee to the EU.

EU imports of Myanmar coffee (in kilogram)



Source: EU Trade Helpdesk, 2018

Companies

Currently, there are 28 coffee exporting companies in Myanmar. There are nine exporting companies that export through Myanmar's border trade points to neighbouring countries. 19 companies export to further destinations via sea or air freight. The largest exporter in value terms is [Mandalay Coffee Group](#), focused on premium and specialty grade coffee production.

Most coffee companies depend on small farmers. With an average coffee area of less than half a hectare, smallholder farming accounts for about 80% of Myanmar's coffee crops. Harvest is typically the work of women who systematically return to the same trees to pick cherries as they gradually ripen. Myanmar companies are making efforts to support coffee producing communities, helping farmers and investing in community infrastructure.

Mya Ze Di community coffee



Source: Dragonfly Coffee Roasters

Government and Support Organisations

There are several organisations and projects in Myanmar supporting the coffee sector. Some of the relevant organisations and projects are:

- [Myanmar Coffee Association \(MCA\)](#): Established in 2014, making efforts to streamline production techniques and thus bringing Myanmar closer to international coffee quality standards.
- [Myanmar USAID Value Chains for Rural Development](#): USAID-funded project, supporting Myanmar market strategy development and the execution of an export marketing plan to high-value coffee consuming nations.
- [Trade Development Programme \(TDP\)](#): Funded by the EU and co-funded by the German Government, supports Myanmar exporters by providing market information and promoting Myanmar products in the EU.

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