



NEWS RELEASE

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Wake Up and Smell the Prize-Winning Coffee

ARLINGTON, Va. - After just one year in the business, IAF grantee PAGJINO produces the best coffee in Nicaragua.

That was the verdict announced May 24 by the international panel of 25 experts who spent April 17 - May 23 in Managua judging nearly 300 entries in Nicaragua's Cup of Excellence competition. PAGJINO, whose full name is Asociación Aldea Global Jinotega, is a nongovernmental organization working to strengthen agricultural production through loans and technical assistance to farmers in 42 communities around Jinotega, a municipality in northern Nicaragua.

The winning cup was made with coffee from the harvests of two farmers, both PAGJINO beneficiaries, who could not individually meet the minimum volume requirement to enter the contest. So they combined their stores and came up with a superior blend which PAGJINO processed. "We aim to assist small farmers in producing the best coffees and receiving a just price," Warren Armstrong, PAGJINO's executive director, explained the unexpected honor awarded to his NGO's special brew.

PAGJINO'S coffee will be auctioned over the Speciality Coffee Association of

America's Web site on July 1 but, according to Armstrong, only 15 sacks, each weighing 150 lbs., are for sale. "That's all we could afford to retain from this year's harvest," he said. "With prices dropping all the time, we couldn't risk even lower prices when the bumper Brazilian coffee crop floods the market this summer." Armstrong hopes the confirmed quality of PAGJINO's coffee will attract roasters willing to buy it at fair trade prices. Increased revenues from Nicaragua's biggest export product, he insists, will mean more investment in the crop and even better coffee in the future.

The IAF's grant to PAGJINO in 2000 is among more than 4,300 awarded to self-help projects the IAF has funded in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past three decades. Created by Congress in 1969 to provide assistance to the region's poor, the IAF has since invested nearly one-third of its budget in food production and agricultural projects.

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