

# Farmers facing ruin over climate change

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CLIMATE CHANGE is wreaking havoc in the world's coffee and tea growing regions and the next decade is likely to see many of the areas in which these crops are grown rendered unsuitable for cultivation, according to experts.

This bleak forecast has emerged from an initiative called AdapCC, a three-year collaborative project by Café Direct, the ethical hot drinks pioneer whose coffee beans are roasted and packaged in Ireland, and German Technical Co-operation.

Focusing on four key grower regions around the world, the initiative has shown how small farmers growing coffee and tea can successfully cope with the impacts of climate change and improve their access to financial and technical support.

It comes against the backdrop of a drought-driven record spike in Kenyan tea prices and steep falls in coffee harvests across the world this year, ranging from 28 per cent in Ethiopia to 50 per cent in Nicaragua, due to "extreme weather".

Coffee and tea production are among the most serious agricultural casualties of climate change, because crops tend to grow only within a very limited subtropical climatic range, and yields decline dramatically if the temperature rises even by one degree Celsius.

"Rising temperatures and changing patterns of precipitation will have a devastating impact for many countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Brazil, Peru, Mexico and Nicaragua that depend on tea and coffee as a vitally important export," AdapCC says.

As a result, coffee growers are being forced to ever-higher altitudes, rising on average by three to four metres per year. Small farmers, who produce most of the world's coffee, "could see their annual incomes slashed by up to 90 per cent over the next decade or so".

Developed over the past three years in Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru, AdapCC claims to be the first programme of its kind to pioneer a regionally-specific practical response to climate change, working with local producers and international experts in each region.

It says this has meant diversifying into other crops such as passion fruit in Kenya, using land to sell carbon credits in Peru and generally improving water planning or cultivating native tree species to bind soil structures and prevent mudslides after heavy rain.

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