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OUR STORY

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18 Million Trees and Counting

For more than 15 years, Conservation International and Starbucks have worked together on how to produce coffee in a way that is sustainable, transparent, and good for people and the planet.

In 2015, Starbucks partnered with Conservation International and made a bold commitment. For every bag of coffee sold in participating Starbucks' stores in the United States, one new rust-resistant coffee tree will be provided to farmers in places most impacted by coffee rust: Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala.

As part of this commitment, coffee trees are distributed to farmers who have been most impacted by coffee rust, a plant fungus that damages millions of coffee trees around the world, making it harder for farmers to produce high-quality coffee. In less than a year, the program has provided millions of trees across the three countries – but that is not enough. To help a single coffee farm thrive again, farmers may need thousands of new trees.

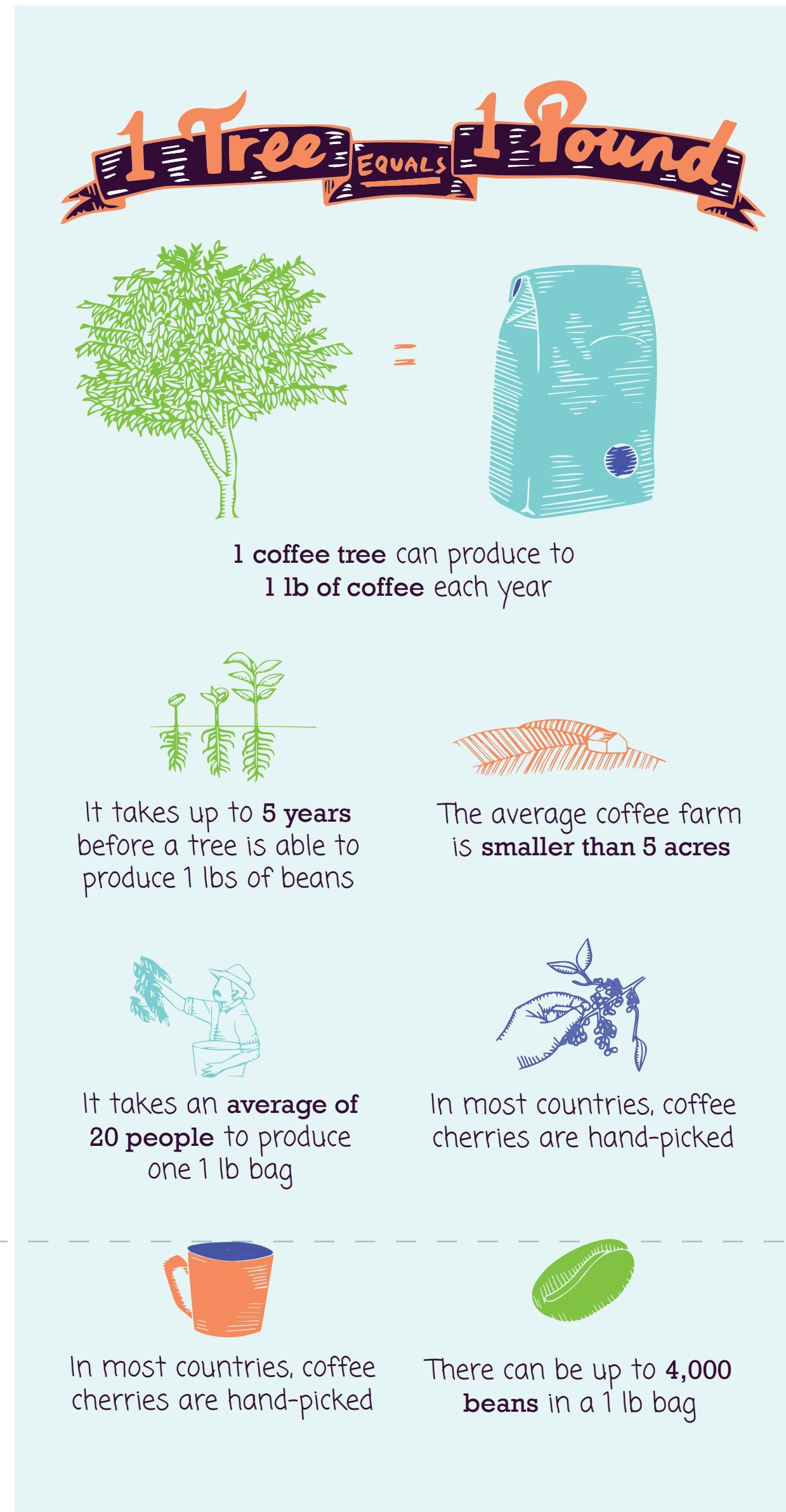
Renovation — replacing old trees with new ones — is one important way to keep farms healthy and productive. Because of climate change and significant pest and disease outbreaks in recent decades, farmers in many places are in desperate need of support.

However, replanting projects can have unanticipated impacts on forest conservation. For example, if farmers cut down old growth or shade trees in addition to replacing non-productive coffee trees, the consequence of deforestation and loss of forest connectivity can lead to deterioration of water resources and biodiversity.

As a partner in this effort, CI is working with Starbucks and the administrator of the nurseries to put in place the following safeguards:

- Farmers agree not to plant the new coffee seedlings in natural forest areas.
- Farmers agree to maintain any existing native shade tree species unless they compete significantly with the coffee trees.
- Farmers acknowledge that the decision to participate in the program to renovate a portion of their farm was made freely.

Conservation International not only monitors the program to ensure the quality of the planting materials that farmers receive, but works closely with local suppliers to verify that the safeguards were understood and respected by those receiving seedlings.



By the Numbers

To date:

- Starbucks has donated enough funds to Conservation International to plant 18 million rust-resistant coffee trees in just one year.
- This summer, with the help of Starbucks supplier ECOM Agroindustrial Corp., the first phase of distribution began when 10 million healthy coffee trees were distributed to farmers in need across El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.
- More than 6,200 farming families received new coffee trees helping to rehabilitate more than 2,500 hectares of farmland.
- Nearly 800 jobs were created to support the initial distribution of these coffee trees.
- Each healthy coffee tree will grow enough green coffee to roast and package one pound of finished coffee.

With many coffee-growing regions around the world feeling the impact of coffee rust on their quality and supply of Arabica coffee, supporting coffee farm renovation with rust-resistant varietals becomes a critical element in ensuring the longevity of the industry.

In celebration of National Coffee Day on September 29, 2016, Starbucks and Conservation International are continuing the "One Tree for Every Bag" commitment for the second year. Every time a customer purchases a bag of coffee in one of Starbucks' participating U.S. stores, Starbucks will help plant a rust-resistant coffee tree. So, on National Coffee Day, and every day, your purchase is helping to make sure that your coffee benefits farmers and the long-term viability of the industry.





What is Tree Rust?

Meet the world's most important coffee disease that you've never heard of - rust fungus, a.k.a. "la roya."

Its spores, which can devastate entire coffee farms, forced Sri Lanka to uproot all its coffee trees in the 1860s and start growing tea. Today, climate conditions have accelerated the fungus' growth in Central America, uprooting farmers and fueling a wave of immigration to the U.S. (Read how families are being impacted)

The current crisis started brewing in Guatemalan farms in 2010. Since then, it has affected 11 countries from Mexico to Peru, becoming the worst episode of coffee rust since the disease first appeared in our hemisphere in 1976. Central American countries, however, have been the hardest hit.

The disease shows up as yellow spots on the leaves of a coffee tree, but by then it's too late: photosynthesis stops, leaves drop, and coffee cherries stop growing. To wipe la roya out, farmers have to stump all trees and wait out the loss for two to three years – a hit many farmers can't absorb.

Coffee rust fungus lives in a Goldilocks-like climate range: not too hot, not too cold, and a little bit wet. It can't survive below 50 degrees, so it's usually restricted to elevations below 5,250 feet. Farmers were unprepared when the fungus started showing up on farms at altitudes reaching 6,550 feet.

Minimum temperatures at night have been rising in coffee-producing regions of Central America, even as maximum temperatures stay stable, said Peter Baker, a senior scientist for commodities and climate that advises the Central American coffee association PROMECAFE. Add that nighttime warmth to rainy conditions, and suddenly coffee rust is reaching higher altitudes.

"That is the alarm signal that climate has something to do with this," Baker said. He says they've also seen increases in other pests with strange names – red spider mites, coffee bera bera, ojo de gallo that may also be caused by changes in climate. "Pests and diseases, that's what we expect with weird weather."

Some farmers have also pointed to what they say is a more fungicide-resistant strain of coffee fungus. But experts say in those cases it is likely that farmers simply applied the pesticides too late. The Colombian coffee industry, which has kept meticulous samples and genetic records, has said there's no evidence that this fungus is different from past outbreaks.

Coffee behemoths, like Colombia, can weather such a plague.

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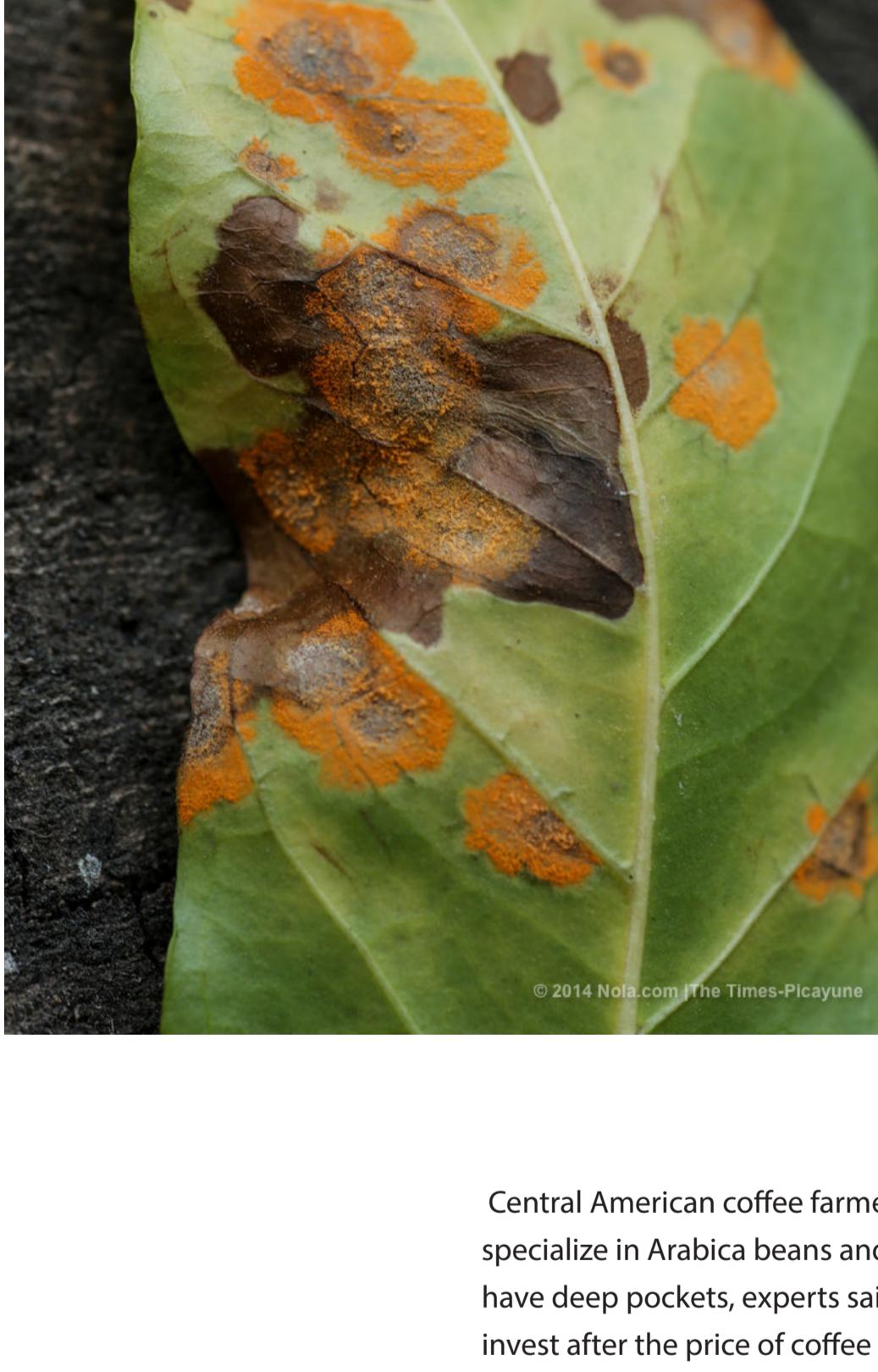
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Growers Federation spent more than \$1 billion replanting la roya

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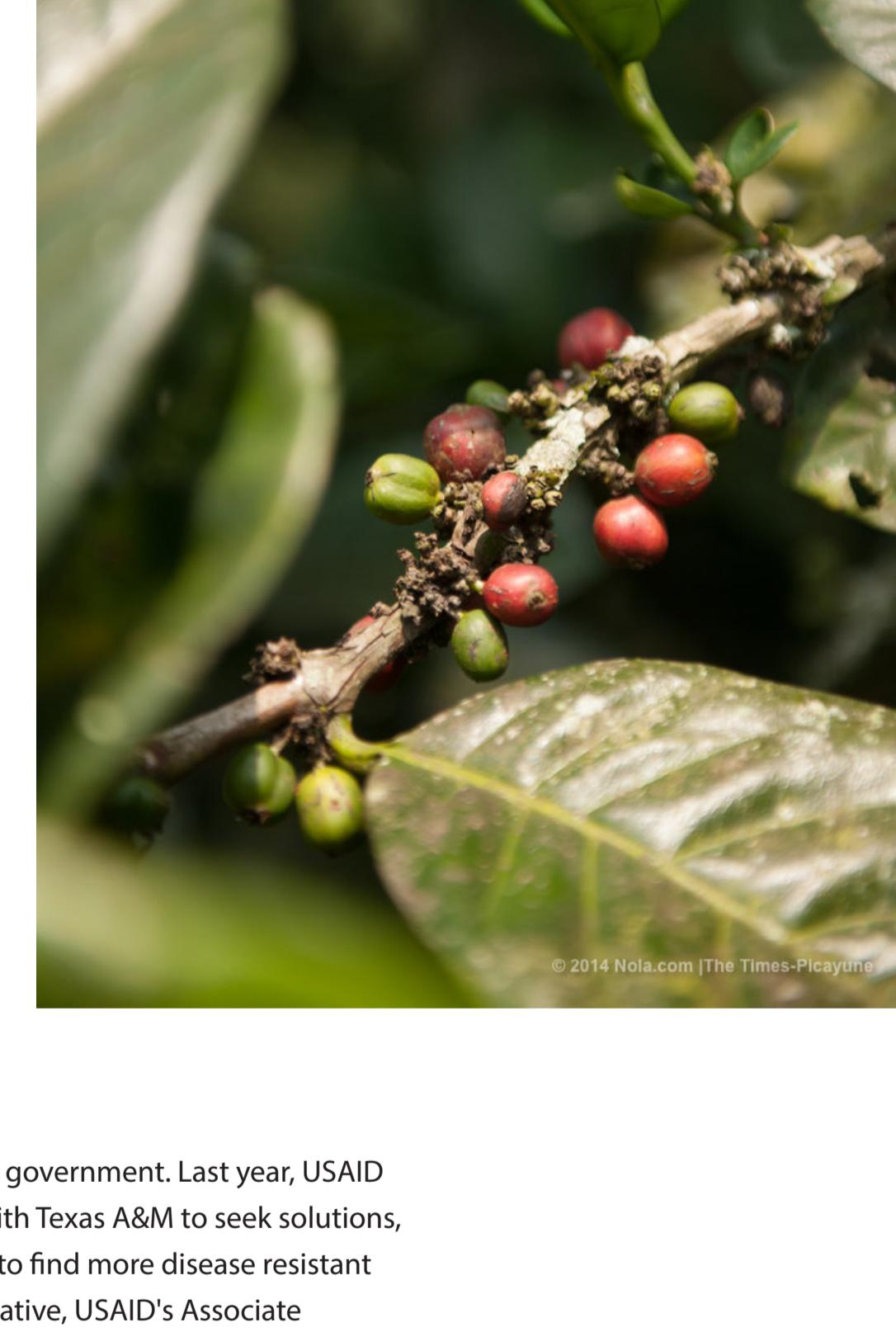
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Central American coffee farmers, mostly small operations who specialize in Arabica beans and high-end specialty coffees, don't have deep pockets, experts said. They have even less resources to invest after the price of coffee plummeted in 2012, owing somewhat to Colombia's recovery.

"Coffee production is at stake in Central America," said coffee trader David Piza, who has been working with small producers to find solutions. He said the decline in production is also hurting U.S. companies that depend on coffee beans from that part of the world.

His concern is shared by the U.S. government. Last year, USAID announced a \$5 million effort with Texas A&M to seek solutions, including cross breeding coffee to find more disease resistant varieties. In announcing the initiative, USAID's Associate Administrator Mark Feierstein made it clear that it was more than just about economics.

"We must tackle this outbreak to ensure farmers and laborers have stable incomes, don't start growing illicit crops, or be forced to migrate because they can no longer support their families," Feierstein said.



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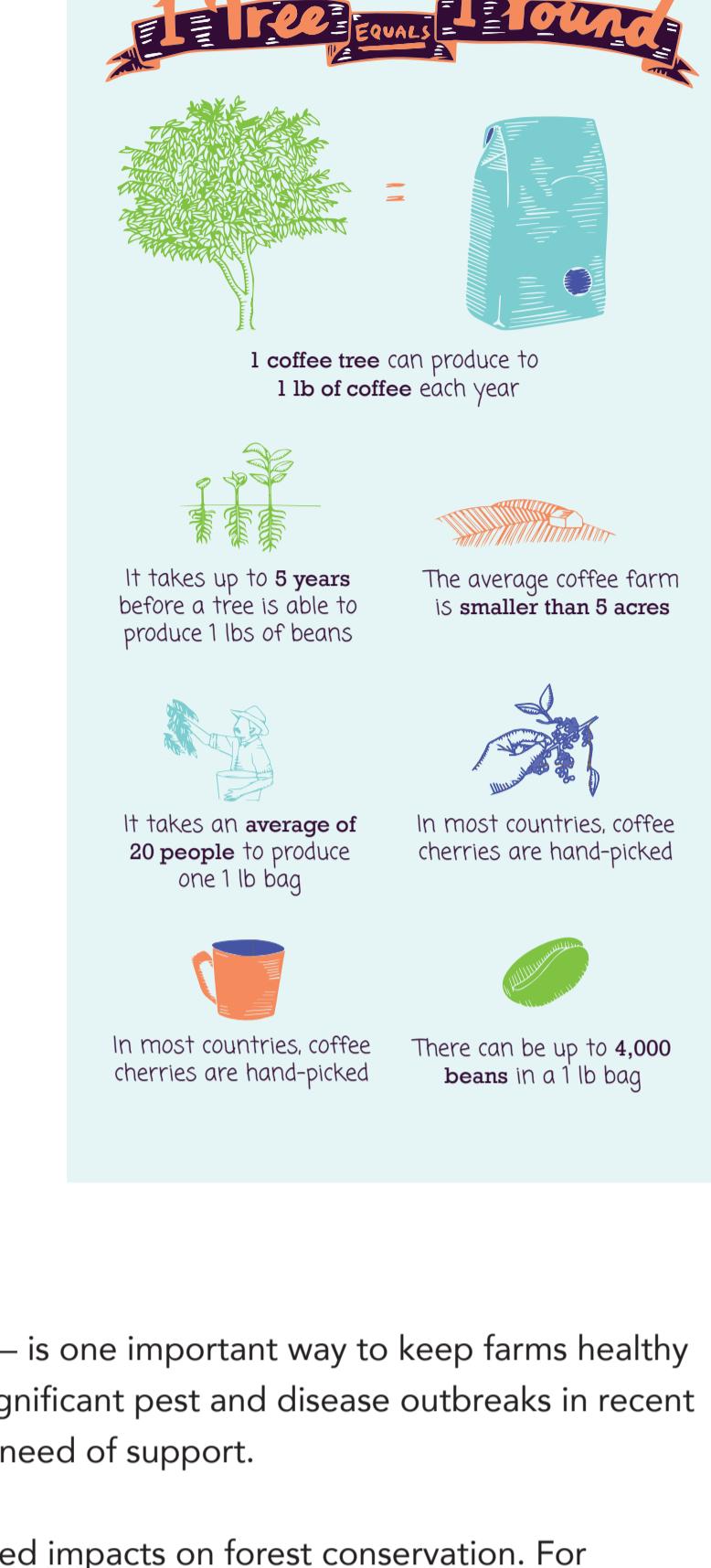
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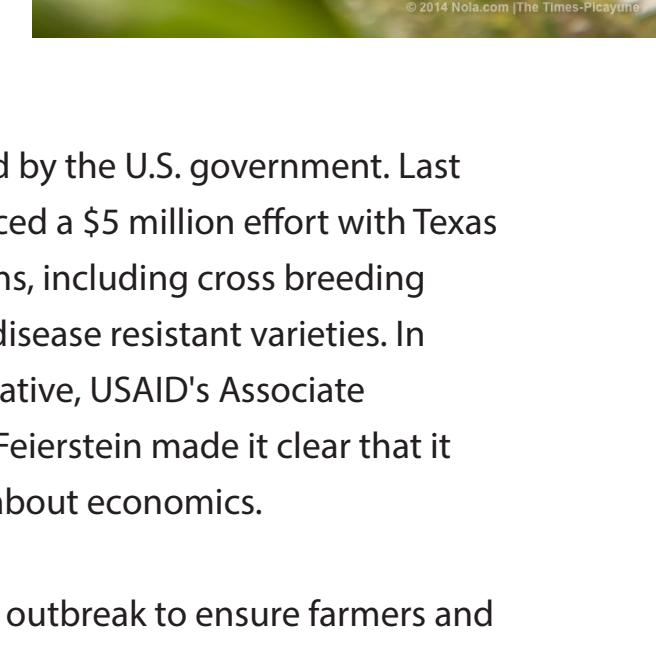
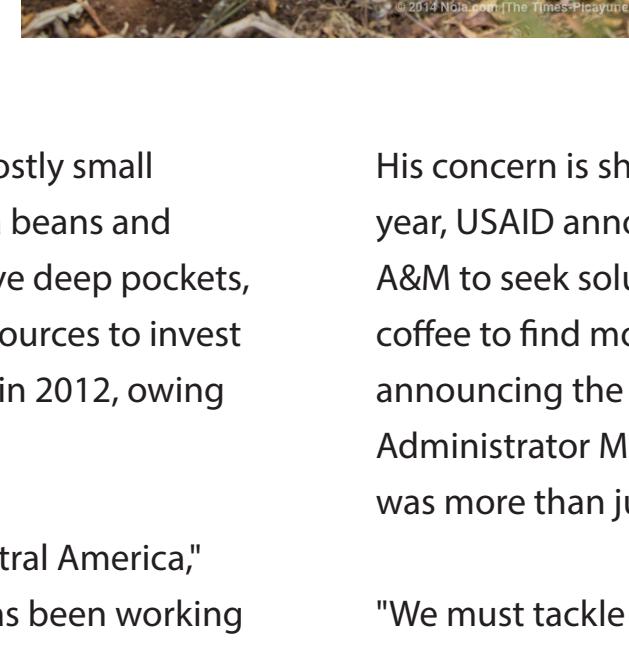
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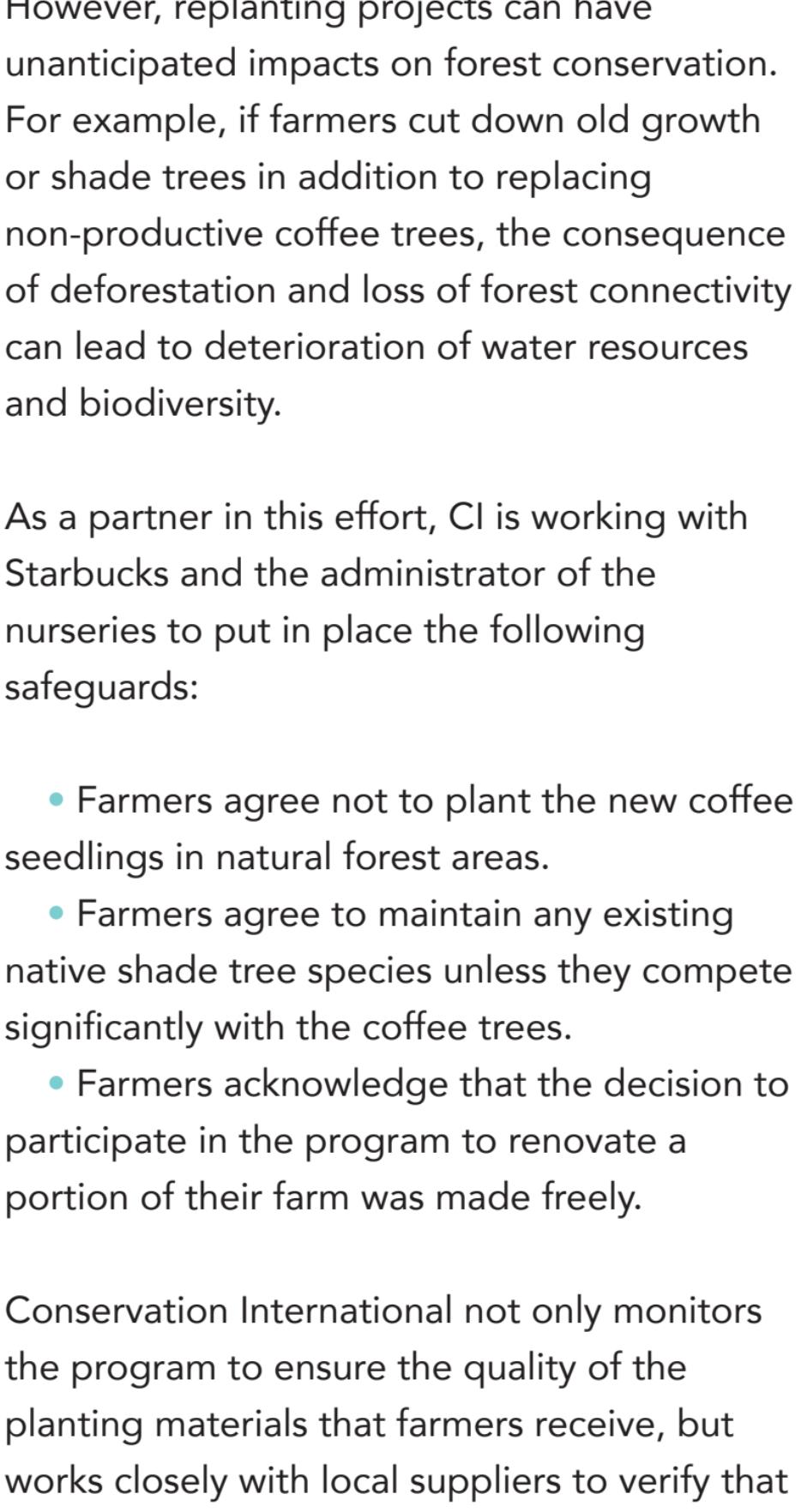
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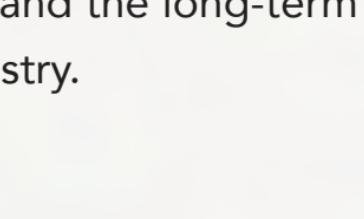
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