

# Increasing productivity with IT technology

The landscape of the coffee industry has changed drastically over the past two decades. Efficiency, sustainability and a desire to produce high-quality coffees that match consumer preferences have reshaped the supply chain from the ground up. There is a need for solutions to better serve the coffee community, enable greater investment in research, help navigate volatility and to drive smarter decisions in the face of adversity. Even good news, such as record-breaking prices for exclusive micro-lots, can distract from the more common occurrence of farmers' struggles to sustain crop yields and combat a growing number of threats.

Photos of the devastation left behind by the coffee berry borer, coffee leaf miner and coffee leaf rust have been pervasive and have cast a spotlight on concerns about the sustainability of Arabica coffee. Coffee farmers in many parts of the world are struggling to produce as much coffee as they have in the past with grave economic impact, raising concerns that coffee production at even current levels may be unattainable at some point in the future. A recent report from USDA showed that even the biggest producers like Brazil are not immune to challenges.

Given all of the above, there is an ever greater need to provide coffee farmers and organisations that work with them with access to technology that can help maximize their effectiveness and efficiency.

## Improving the efficiency of systems

To that effect, in early 2017 Eximware partnered with the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) and took over management of their 'Q Database', working closely with the CQI team to improve usability, data management and provide development and expertise. Working with the CQI, Eximware was able to provide, gather and assimilate user feedback to help CQI develop improvements to its systems.

More recently, in March 2018, Eximware announced a partnership with World Coffee Research (WCR), whose mission is to enable the global coffee industry to invest in R&D to transform the sector.

Eximware's expertise in commodity management technology provided WCR

**Eximware, the well-known provider of cloud-based commodity management and e-commerce marketplace sourcing solutions doesn't only work with roasters and traders – more recently it has also been helping organisations whose remit is to provide assistance to farmers**



World Coffee Research is developing new varieties of coffee to help farmers and Eximware is helping it manage donations

with the ability to benefit from productivity gains as the scale of its operations grow. Undertaking research that is helping breed stronger, more resilient, high-scoring varieties of coffee, WCR is helping to introduce new varieties and knowledge that can help farmers.

"We saw an opportunity for productivity gains given that many of the companies that were supporters of WCR were also users of Eximware's XM Marketplace for coffee sourcing and Partner XM for commodity management software," said Andy Dimitri, CEO of Eximware. "Working closely with WCR, we agreed to embed the WCR Check-Off Programme into our Partner XM platform workflow."

The check-off approach utilizes a toll-based funding mechanism that encourages supply chain participants to contribute and/or match contributions earmarked for WCR's research. As a participant of the check-off programme, roasters commit to donate a small amount per pound of green coffee that they buy. That amount is added to their invoice by importers who have the opportunity to match the donation and have also agreed to collect, record and pass the funds to WCR on a quarterly basis.

The inspiration for the fund came from long-standing financial support systems utilised by other agricultural industries

in the US. Roasters decide how many cents per pound or kilo purchased through participating suppliers to donate. Participating suppliers keep track of coffee sales to roasters, adding however many pennies per pound/kilo the roaster has indicated to the coffee purchased. The contribution is included as a cost of doing business on the roaster's invoice, similar to docking costs, brokerage fees, or warehousing costs. The supplier collects funds and disperses them to WCR four times a year. Given the importance of ongoing funding to WCR, the functionality provided by Eximware will make it easier for all participants to contribute and for WCR to administer the program.

Eximware will also be working closely with the WCR leadership team as well as industry subject matter experts to pursue other ways technology can help advance its mission including data management, mining and analytics. This will allow WCR to focus more of their funding on core mission rather than administration and manual information management.

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To learn more about how to participate in the Check-Off Programme or to contribute to World Coffee Research, contact Greg Meenahan, [greg@worldcoffeeresearch.org](mailto:greg@worldcoffeeresearch.org). ■ C&CI