

A photograph showing three hands holding coffee-related items: a cup of latte with a leaf design, a cup of coffee with a leaf design, and a black coffee grinder. The text is overlaid on this image.

# Café del Futuro: The USDA Puerto Rico Coffee Revitalization Project

## The Coffee Encyclopedia



*café del futuro the usda puerto rico coffee revita  
landscape wide view*

Image curation pending

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**Café del Futuro — "Coffee of the Future" — is the USDA-led research and revitalization project developing climate-resilient coffee varieties, sustainable farming systems, and farmer education programs to rebuild Puerto Rico's coffee industry for the challenges of the 21st century.** Anchored at the USDA Agricultural Research Service Tropical Agriculture Research Station in Mayagüez and partnering with the University of Puerto Rico, Hispanic Federation, TechnoServe, and Puerto Rican farmer cooperatives, the project represents the most comprehensive scientific effort

ever directed at Puerto Rican coffee. For understanding how federal research, academic partnerships, and farmer participation combine to shape the future of an agricultural industry, Café del Futuro is an essential case study.

## The Origin of the Project

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The Café del Futuro project emerged in response to the dual crisis of climate change and hurricane devastation that Puerto Rican coffee faced during the 2010s and 2020s. Hurricane Maria in 2017 destroyed approximately 85% of Puerto Rican coffee production, exposing the fragility of an industry that had been gradually recovering from earlier challenges. Climate projections indicating warmer temperatures, more intense storms, and changing rainfall patterns made clear that traditional varieties and farming methods would not be adequate for future conditions. The USDA responded by expanding its existing Tropical Agriculture Research Station coffee work into a comprehensive revitalization program.



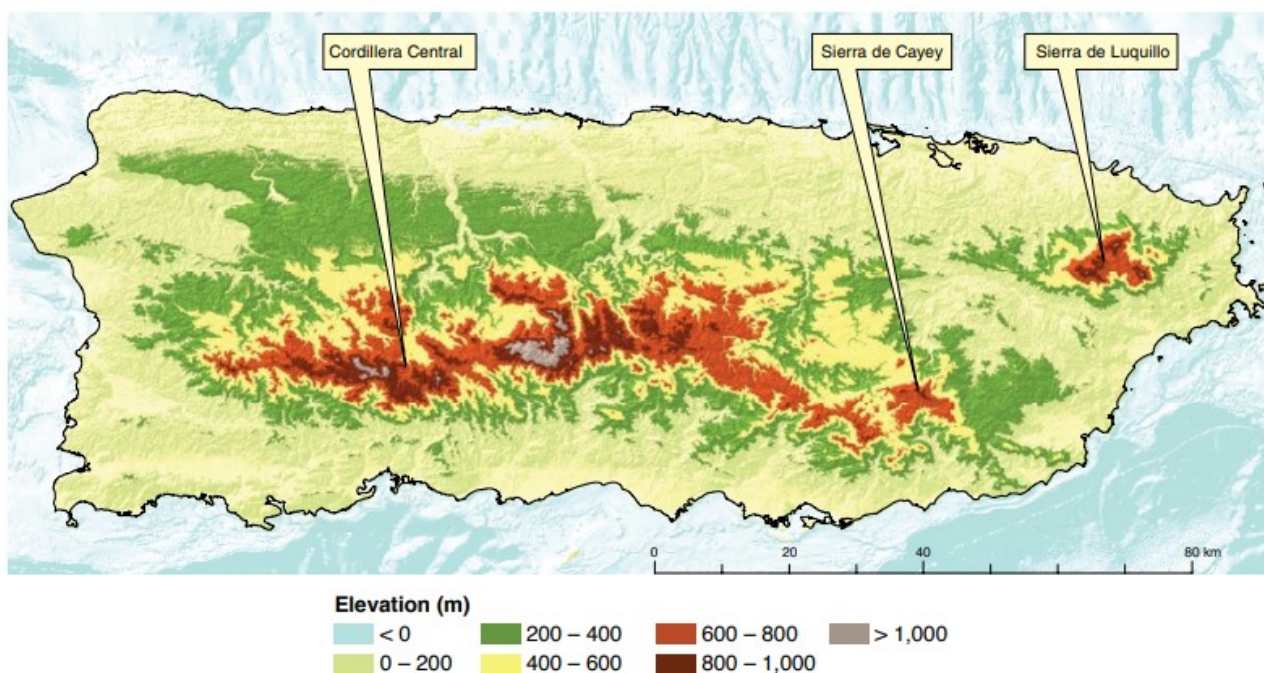
The project's philosophy combines scientific research with practical farmer participation. Research alone, without farmer adoption, cannot change an industry. Farmer practices alone, without scientific support, cannot adapt fast enough to rapid climate change. Café del Futuro explicitly bridges these through research that takes farmer priorities seriously

and farmer education that brings research results directly to production decisions.

## USDA Agricultural Research Service Work

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The USDA Agricultural Research Service Tropical Agriculture Research Station in Mayagüez has conducted coffee research for decades, evaluating varieties, studying diseases, and developing best practices for Caribbean coffee production. Café del Futuro builds on this foundation with expanded funding, additional personnel, and partnerships that extend the research's reach into the farming community. Primary research areas include variety development and evaluation, coffee leaf rust resistance, climate-resilient farming systems, post-harvest processing optimization, and integrated pest management.



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/v2irY8zenxE>

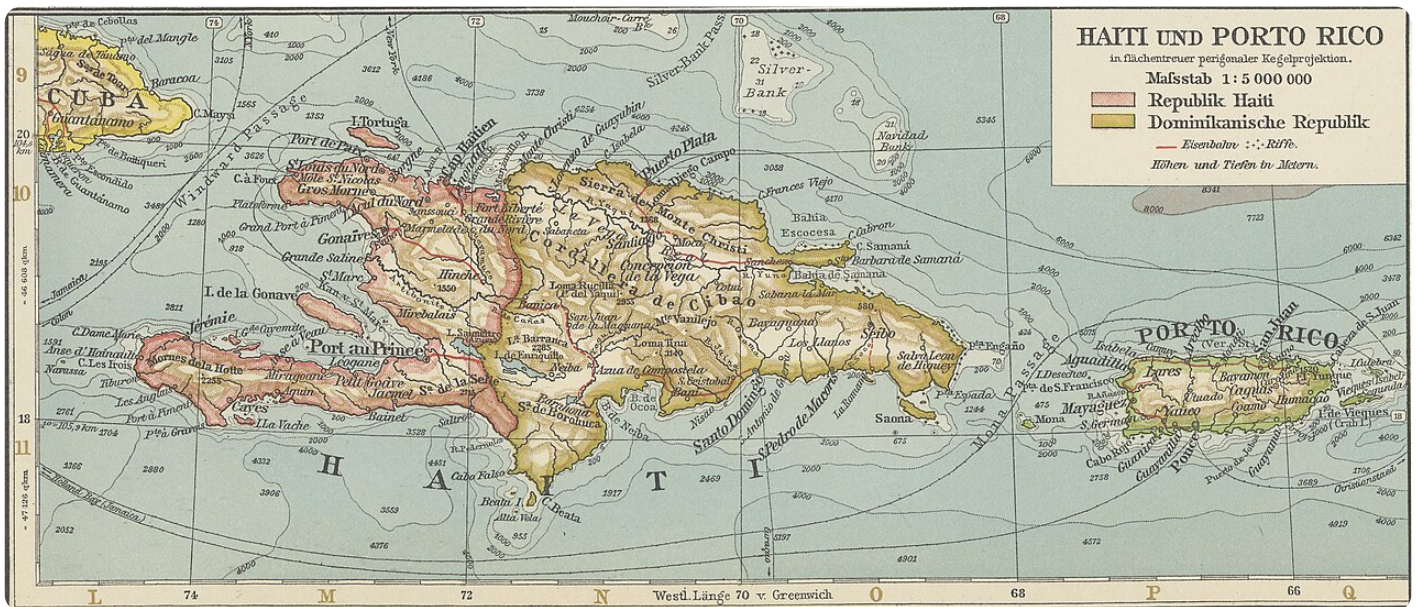
The variety work is particularly important. Puerto Rican coffee farmers historically relied on Typica, Bourbon, Limaní, and Frontón varieties, but climate change and intensified disease pressure require new options. USDA researchers evaluate varieties from around the world for Puerto Rican conditions, test hybrids developed elsewhere, and participate in international breeding programs that may produce the next generation of rust-resistant, climate-tolerant, quality-capable varieties. This work has long timelines — variety development typically takes 15-25 years from initial crosses to commercial release — but the project has accelerated adoption of the best available current varieties.

## **University of Puerto Rico Partnership**

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Café del Futuro partners closely with the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez College of Agricultural Sciences, whose extension service has been the primary interface between coffee research and Puerto Rican farmers for generations. UPR Mayagüez researchers participate in joint research projects, extension agents translate research findings into farmer education, and the college's students and graduates increasingly enter coffee

industry roles with the scientific training that future Puerto Rican coffee requires.



The partnership extends to specific research projects including coffee leaf rust resistance mapping, climate-adaptation variety trials, organic production system development, and post-harvest processing research. The combined capacity of federal and academic research institutions, applied through UPR's extension network, provides Puerto Rican coffee with more scientific support than almost any other Caribbean coffee origin receives. This institutional depth is a competitive advantage for Puerto Rican coffee's future.

## Hispanic Federation and TechnoServe Collaboration

Beyond federal and academic partners, Café del Futuro works with philanthropic and technical organizations that extended Puerto Rican coffee's rebuilding capacity during the post-Maria period. Hispanic Federation distributed approximately 2 million coffee seedlings to Puerto Rican farmers after Hurricane Maria, establishing the foundation that subsequent research and extension work could build on. TechnoServe provided on-farm technical assistance, business planning support, and market connection services that helped farmers convert Hispanic Federation seedlings into productive operations.



Café del Futuro integrates these philanthropic efforts with federal research and academic extension, providing farmers with comprehensive support that no single organization could deliver. The result has been coordinated assistance — seedlings, agronomic training, business planning, market access, and scientific research — that has accelerated post-Maria recovery and positioned Puerto Rican coffee for sustained growth.

## The Farmer Participation Model

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Café del Futuro's farmer participation model differs from top-down research-extension approaches historically common in agricultural development. Farmers are treated as

partners whose on-ground knowledge informs research priorities, whose farms serve as demonstration sites, and whose feedback shapes extension program design. Research findings are tested on participating farms before broader release, and farmer questions influence which research projects receive priority.

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*puerto rico the farmer participation model farmer  
harvest red cherries*

Image curation pending

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This model has both strengths and challenges. Strengths include better research relevance, faster adoption of useful findings, and deeper farmer engagement with scientific work. Challenges include managing expectations when research takes longer than farmers need, coordinating across many farm sites with different conditions, and maintaining consistent program delivery across the geographic range of Puerto Rican coffee country. Café del Futuro has generally managed these challenges well, and its farmer-participation approach has become a model for other agricultural development programs.

## Research Priorities Going Forward

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The project's research priorities reflect the challenges Puerto Rican coffee faces. Climate adaptation dominates the agenda — developing varieties and practices that

remain productive as temperatures rise, rainfall patterns shift, and storm intensity increases. Disease resistance remains important, particularly against coffee leaf rust and coffee berry borer. Sustainability research addresses water use, soil health, shade tree integration, and biodiversity support. Processing research evaluates how Puerto Rican farmers can capture more value through specialty-grade preparation of their coffee.



Economic research parallels the biological work. Researchers study the economics of different farm models, the value chains that connect farmers to consumers, and the policy environments that support or constrain the industry. This economic work recognizes that technical solutions cannot succeed without economic viability, and that farmer decisions are shaped by market conditions as much as by agronomic options.

## **The Long Horizon**

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Café del Futuro is a long-horizon project. Variety development takes decades. Climate adaptation will continue to require new interventions as conditions continue to change. Farmer education programs need continuous renewal as generations succeed each other. The project has been structured for this long horizon, with institutional partnerships designed for multi-decade cooperation rather than single-grant cycles. This structure gives Puerto Rican coffee a research support system that can persist through the changes the industry will face.

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*café del futuro the usda puerto rico coffee revista  
historic vintage photograph*

Image curation pending

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For consumers, the significance of Café del Futuro is this: the Puerto Rican coffee they drink today is already shaped by Café del Futuro research and will increasingly be shaped by it going forward. The varieties on Puerto Rican farms reflect the project's work. The farming practices farmers use reflect its extension efforts. The economic conditions that allow Puerto Rican coffee to compete globally reflect the market research the project has conducted. Supporting Puerto Rican coffee means supporting an industry that has real federal, academic, and philanthropic investment behind it — not a struggling sector but a sector with genuine scientific and institutional backing for its continued success.

## Key Facts — Café del Futuro

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- Lead organization: USDA Agricultural Research Service Tropical Agriculture Research Station
- Location: Mayagüez, Puerto Rico
- Academic partner: University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez College of Agricultural Sciences
- Philanthropic partners: Hispanic Federation, TechnoServe
- Historical context: initiated in response to Hurricane Maria 2017 coffee devastation
- Primary research areas: variety development, disease resistance, climate adaptation, sustainability
- Farmer participation: demonstration sites and feedback-driven research priorities
- Seedling distribution: approximately 2 million through Hispanic Federation post-Maria
- Research timeline: multi-decade commitment with long-horizon variety development
- Program scope: comprehensive industry revitalization integrating research and extension

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**What does Café del Futuro mean?** Café del Futuro translates to "Coffee of the Future" — the name reflects the project's focus on developing coffee varieties and practices that will sustain Puerto Rican coffee production through the climate and economic conditions of coming decades.

**Who funds Café del Futuro?** The project receives primary funding through the USDA Agricultural Research Service, with additional support from the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez, philanthropic organizations including Hispanic Federation, technical

organizations including TechnoServe, and occasionally corporate foundation partners.

**How do farmers benefit from the project?** Farmers receive access to improved varieties, technical assistance on farming practices, business planning support, market connection services, and participation opportunities in research that shapes the industry's future direction. Benefits are both direct, through specific assistance, and indirect, through the overall strengthening of the Puerto Rican coffee industry.

**Can visitors tour Café del Futuro research sites?** The USDA Tropical Agriculture Research Station in Mayagüez offers limited public access for research tours and educational programs. Some partner farms participating in demonstration plots allow visits during appropriate seasons. Advance contact through the station or UPR Mayagüez extension service is required for access.

**What makes Puerto Rico a good place for coffee research?** Puerto Rico's combination of coffee-growing terrain, existing industry infrastructure, climate change exposure, federal research presence, and academic research capacity makes it an ideal site for coffee adaptation research. Findings from Puerto Rican research inform coffee industries throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.

## Related Articles

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- [UPR Mayagüez: Puerto Rico's Coffee Research Program](#)
- [Coffee Leaf Rust \(Roya\) in Puerto Rico: The Silent Threat](#)
- [Puerto Rico Coffee Cooperatives and Economics](#)
- [Women in Puerto Rican Coffee: Farmers, Leaders, and Visionaries](#)
- [Puerto Rico Coffee Today: The 2026 State of the Industry](#)
- [Hispanic Federation Coffee Revitalization: Rebuilding After Maria](#)
- [TechnoServe Puerto Rico Coffee Technical Assistance](#)

## Buy Authentic Puerto Rico Coffee

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Support the farmers whose work is shaped by Café del Futuro research by choosing authentic Puerto Rican coffee. **[Buy Authentic Puerto Rico Coffee ?](#)**

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*This article is part of The Coffee Encyclopedia, sponsored by [PuertoRicoCoffeeShop.com](#) — the trusted source for authentic Puerto Rican coffee.*

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/Zhp6c0LmGiQ>

*Watch: Coffee Leaf Rust research at USDA Tropical Agriculture Research Station Mayagüez — Dr. Luz M. Serrato-Diaz presentation*

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