

Nestle scholarships help boost the coffee industry in Yunnan

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Nestle SA, the global food retailer, has awarded scholarships to 38 college students from families of coffee growers in Yunnan province, under its scheme to encourage higher levels of professional education.

The scholarships were given this year and last, to those majoring in agriculture-related subjects in order to boost the long-term prospects of the province's coffee industry.

Each award is worth 5,000

yuan (\$801) per year, and those considered outstanding can earn up to four years of funding until they graduate.

As one of the leading multinational companies investing in Southwest China's coffee sector, Nestle launched the scholarships last year. Students can register as applicants through the company's agricultural services department.

The awardees are selected based on merit, with factors including academic performance, social work experience and family finances taken into

5,000 yuan

The scholarship given to each of the 38 students from families of coffee growers in Yunnan province by Nestle SA in the past two years

account.

"Some of their parents have been working with us for the past 10 to 15 years and are very much part of the Nestle family. We are always looking at ways to strengthen our relations with our suppliers, the com-

munities and the farmers," said Gonzalo Contreras, senior manager of Nestle Agricultural Services China.

"Achieving sustainable development is our next challenge, and supporting the education of young people is one of our key projects to contribute toward meeting that goal. I have no doubt that our students will take advantage of this opportunity," Contreras said.

With China's rise as an emerging international coffee bean supplier and coffee consumer, multinationals are

stepping up their investment in the nation's proliferating coffee industry.

Thanks to its temperate climate, Yunnan produces about 98 percent of China's coffee. Most of the province's coffee is grown near Pu'er, a city that also famous for tea, but coffee's status has been rising along with investment from overseas companies.

Driven by a drought in Brazil and other Latin American coffee-producing countries, Yunnan's coffee export volumes and yields have both increased.

The price of coffee has jumped to about 23 yuan per kilogram from 13 yuan last year, according to the Yunnan Coffee Association, which is predicting the price will fluctuate between 25 and 35 yuan per kg over the next two years as global supply falls short of demand.

"There is great potential for coffee businesses in Yunnan to grow. Nestle is purchasing coffee from eight factories and so we are working very hard at putting the name of Yunnan firmly on the international coffee map," Contreras said.

Peng Junyu, a junior majoring in English at South-Central University For Nationalities and a scholarship recipient, said her parents are both coffee farmers and had greatly supported her in learning English even though her family was impoverished.

"The scholarship helped to pay for my tuition and I hope that more students from rural families will be offered better education," said Peng.

"I have a responsibility to let more people know that Pu'er produces high-quality coffee."