Context

Yaque del Norte river catchment:
- tropical dry climate (precipitation < 900 mm)
- 80% of the water used for the agricultural sector
- Pollution of water bodies
- Unsuitable policies in the last 50 years
- Inadequate use of soils, water demand exceeding availability
- Droughts and devastating climatic events

The AWS Pilot Project

2021: project started in 5 organizations, supported by the importers and the supermarket.

Objectives

Implement good water stewardship principles that are: «socially and culturally equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site- and catchment-based actions.» Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)

1. Main Challenges of the Plantations

Inefficient Irrigation System
- Flooding irrigation: high consumption-high losses
- Poor infrastructure
- No control over used water volumes nor quality
- No consideration of soil and climate conditions for irrigation
- 60% of water supply from irrigation but access to water insecure
- Significant physical, regulatory and reputational risks associated

Inadequate Management Practices
- Alternating between water stress and excess of water
- Lack of staff training
- Fear of water shortage
- Short term profitability target
- Lack of economic motivation
- Lack of awareness about water preservation

2. Opportunities

Develop实际 Strategies
- Agricultural practices for water retention and evacuation
- Strategies for saving water
- Mitigation of water risks in the fields

Implement Water Stewardship in Plantations & Basin:
Sustainable water stewardship according to the 5 step continual improvement framework (that enables sites to commit, understand, plan, implement, evaluate and communicate water stewardship):
- Governance: Involve with relevant stakeholders of the basin and associate with AWS implementers
- Make long term changes towards continual improvement
- Water balance: Monitoring and scheduling irrigation, infrastructure, training of the workers, securing water supply and anticipating risks

Conclusion and Perspectives

Early benefits of AWS implementing:
- New challenges with huge potential for improvement
- Major benefit created through data collection: realizing the site's and basin's shared risks and challenges, the importance of water preservation, and basin-wide actions and the stakeholder’s commitment

Major difficulties faced:
- Governance in the water sector institutionally backward, lack of regulation and coordination.
- Inequalities between smallholders and companies with large areas > 100 ha
- Difficulty to implement theoretical concepts into the fields, particularities of the agricultural sector
- Lack of economic motivation to implement this demanding standard

Continuation of the project:
- Implementation the rest of the standard up to certification. (First planned end of 2022/starting 2023)