

# Amigos de la Hoja de Coca: history of a pioneering coca leaf fair-trade

Farid Ghehiouèche and Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The leaves of the *Erythroxylum* “coca” plant are a well-known food, beverage, and nutraceutical in their native Andean region. A decade ago, the European non-profit “Amigos de la Hoja de Coca” (Friends of the Coca Leaf) operated a short-lived fair-trade in raw coca leaves between Bolivia and the European Union. The chronicles of this initiative can be insightful, as interest in natural, wellness, and self-care products continues rising in Europe.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Historical review of the inception, and documentation of the organisation of the scheme and its outcome, via all primary sources available.

**Findings** – From the 1990s to the early 2010s, civil society groups organised several campaigns to normalise coca leaf in Europe, finding echo at the European Parliament, culminating in 2012-2013 when a periodical distribution system was set-up: growers in Bolivia shipped 150 g. coca leaf packets directly to Friends of the Coca Leaf members in Europe. Initially, most parcels reached their recipients without issue but after technical hurdles and reduced political support, the scheme was eventually discontinued.

**Originality/value** – European civil society campaigns surrounding coca have been poorly documented. Historically, Friends of the Coca Leaf emerged alongside Cannabis social clubs, but only the latter has prospered. While Friends of Coca Leaf was short-lived, its political outcomes (both at the institutional level and via a fair and do-it-yourself trade initiative) may prove inspirational to current drug policy reform discussions.

**Keywords** Coca leaf, Drug policy, Fair trade, Farmer to consumer, Wellness market, DIY

**Paper type** Case study

Farid Ghehiouèche is based at the Forum Drugs Mediterranean–FAAAT, Paris, France and Auto-Support des Usagers de Drogues (ASUD), Paris, France.

Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli is an Independent Researcher based at Catalan Network of People who Use Drugs (CATNPUD), Reus, Spain and Forum Drugs Mediterranean–FAAAT, Paris, France.

## Introduction

In the Andes mountain range of South America, humans have been symbiotically related with “coca” (*Erythroxylum* Lam.) for about 8,000 years. Through millennia of cultivation and multiple uses, peoples from a great variety of ethnocultural backgrounds have developed and shared traditions, beliefs, knowledge and practices of the cultivation and medicinal, nutritional and ceremonial uses of coca. As the [WHO Secretariat \(2006, p. 1\)](#) notes:

[i]n Andean cultures the leaves of the coca bush *Erythroxylum coca* have traditionally been chewed or sucked with a pinch of alkaline ashes as a stimulant and appetite suppressant and to increase endurance at high altitudes. [...] Coca leaves have been used traditionally by people in some countries and regions for health benefits, for example, for the relief of gastrointestinal problems and respiratory ailments and treatment of altitude sickness.

Coca leaf and its derivatives also have notable nutritional value and present advantages as food supplements ([Bauer, 2019](#); [Duke et al., 1975](#)). A number of coca processing methods have even been patented in different countries for uses of the plant’s leaves as flavouring agents in beverages ([Royal Foods and Drinks, 2005](#)), chocolate sweetener ([Aharonian, 2016](#)) and a number of other food and beverage-related purposes ([Inter-Andean institutes of coca sciences, 2022](#)).

Received 18 October 2023  
Revised 16 December 2023  
14 April 2024  
Accepted 25 May 2024

Coca leaves' history has been closely tied with the European continent for various centuries. Although “the first recorded European encounter with coca dates from 1499” (Abduca, 2019, p. 107) after the Spanish conquest of South America, it took some time for coca to expand across Europe. Initially favoured by doctors and pharmacists (Tricot, 1991), the leaf began to be used outside medicine in 19th-century Europe, aided by the success of products like *Vin Mariani* (“Mariani Wine”, a coca-containing liquor introduced to the public in 1863, famously favoured by Popes and the European high society) and later *Coca-Cola*. The leaf also interested European pharmacists and chemists, one of which, Albert Niemann, identified the active compound in 1859, leading to the birth – on European soil – of cocaine and cocaine hydrochloride (C-HCl) use (Abduca, 2019; Appelboom, 1991; Grisaffi, 2021; Pietschmann, 2007, pp. 5–9). Although the use of C-HCl has remained present in Europe and increased (UNODC, 2023) even illegally, the use of coca leaf had almost entirely disappeared from the continent by the second half of the 20th century.

As of today, coca remains quasi absent from European shelves [1]. Yet, Western consumer's interests in better health, nutrition, mindfulness, appearance, sleep, wellness, self-care, etc., have driven a steadily rising demand for natural plant-based food and food supplements, generally; a trend that the European Green Deal may expand (Chiripuci *et al.*, 2022; Humphrey and Memedovic, 2006). Given these market expectations and the historical presence of coca leaves in Europe, it is not unrealistic to expect an increasing and renewed interest in nutraceutical benefits of coca derivatives in coming years.

This tendency shows interesting similarities with the renewed consumer interest in various derivatives of hemp (*Cannabis L.*), which has also undergone half a century of disgrace before recently regaining consumer interest and market traction (EIHA, 2020; Fike, 2017; UNCTAD, 2022). Yet, contrary to hemp, *Erythroxylum* cultivation remains almost entirely contained within its area of origins: the Andean and nearby Amazon regions (Braithwaite, 2015), where the plant is often considered sacred by indigenous peoples. There, as noted by Fontecha and Walker (2022):

Research and policies are still far from understanding the complex realities of coca cultivators. Most of the territories where coca grows lack formal markets, infrastructure, and formal institutions arrangements.

A decade ago, a partnership between cocalexes (farmers cultivating *Erythroxylum* [2]) and the European non-profit ENCOD [3] sought to explore new alternative production, marketing and trade schemes to sustainably develop impoverished coca-growing areas, while re-integrating coca in Europe. A charity was created, the “Amigos de la Hoja de Coca” (AHC; Spanish for “Friends of the Coca Leaf”), which operated several direct producer-to-consumer shipments of coca leaves in the early 2010s.

In light of possible renewed European consumer interest for coca leaf and its nutritional benefits, and the continued social and environmental challenges in Andean and Amazonian regions, this article documents chronologically a unique and inspiring experience. The results section explores the precedents behind (1995–2010) and history and experience (2010–2015) of the AHC. In the discussion, legal, environmental and socio-economic aspects of the AHC's trade model are reviewed as well as other lessons learnt from the AHC experience together with perspectives for the licit, fair and sustainable industrialisation and marketing of coca leaves.

## Approach

This paper presents a short review, undertaken in 2022–2023, of the history and key aspects of the AHC. The historical research method was followed to identify primary source materials, based on online database searches, reviews of AHC's publicly available documentation (written, photographic, video), contemporary articles, online and from *Cañamo archives* (“Library Pere Anguera”, Reus, Spain), accessible AHC's email discussions (about inception, organisation, practices, outcome) and archives, testimonials,

interviews from former members. Limitations include: format's constraints, absence of secondary sources, difficulty of accessing certain documents, including non-archived/non-cached online evidence.

## History

This section briefly reviews the complex history preceding the AHC's launch and the AHC's historical trajectory of the organisation.

In stark contrast to the deep psychopharmacological and cultural differences between the raw plant (coca leaves) and the molecules derived from it (*C-HCI*), they were bundled together throughout the 20th century as nations applied restrictions to the increasingly consumed cocaine derivatives. Firstly, in a national capacity. Rapidly, from the early 20th century, at the multilateral level (Pfeiffer, 2013, pp. 289–290; Pietschmann, 2007, pp. 9–10). After Second World War, coca leaves were withdrawn from the International Pharmacopoeia (UNOG Archives, 1948) and “the problem of chewing the coca leaf and also of the question of the limitation of its production” (CND, 1949, p. 2) were discussed by the international community. Restrictions over coca leaves and the people behind them peaked in 1961, when the “Single Convention on narcotic drugs, 1961” (C61) listed coca leaf in its Schedule I alongside cocaine and *C-HCI*, whereas governments pledged to gradually ban traditional coca leaf chewing; another treaty in 1988 reinforced the C61 (Chulver Benítez, 2020). Multilaterally, little change happened since then, leaving coca leaves subject to a high level of treaty-mandated restrictions.

It is in 1988 that coca started to be reclaimed as a political topic by Peruvian and Bolivian governments (Chulver Benítez, 2020, p. 43) culminating in 1994 with a significant political shift as the Presidents of both countries signed the bilateral “*Ilo Declaration*” (Cáceres Santamaría, 2013) where they agreed “to elaborate and execute a common strategy to revitalise coca leaf” (Fujimori and Sánchez de Lozada, 1994, p. 3). This was echoed by Andean grassroots advocacy movements (Novak and Namihas, 2013; Weil, 1995), which, by collaborating with European activists, prefigured the launch of the AHC's fair-trade programme in 2011–2012.

### *Coca '95 campaign*

A year after the *Ilo Declaration*, a delegation of indigenous leaders and cocalex representatives toured European capitals to defend the need for coca regulation, the recognition of the traditional practice of coca chewing as distinct from illicit uses and advocate for an end to the criminalisation of coca-growing communities and the destruction of their environments and livelihoods (ENCOD, 2009a; Weil, 1995). This so-called “*Coca '95 campaign*” (Cáceres Santamaría, 2013; Willinger, 2009) also stated as one of its goals to “give legal possibilities to market traditional coca leaf derivatives in Europe” (Mariátegui, 2009).

The campaign was actively supported by ENCOD, which helped articulate collectives and activities.

Notably, Evo Morales Ayma participated in the *Coca '95* tour as a representative of coca-grower unions. He would later be elected as member of the Parliament in 1997 and President of Bolivia in 2005 (Novak and Namihas, 2013, p. 197). Elected on the political promise of ending forced coca crop eradications, Morales undertook to include in the Bolivian constitution the recognition of the plant's significant traditional uses (Farthing and Ledebur, 2015; Oomen, 2010; Pérez Mendoza, 2016).

Simultaneously, at the turn of the 21st century, coca leaves were crossing the oceans again as websites started to propose shipments to Europe and South Africa (Cannabis Magazine, 2010; León, 2006). Generally operating from Peru, with a seal from the National Coca Company (ENACO: *Empresa Nacional de la Coca*), e-commerce sales and individual commercial coca shipments to Europe, particularly when prepared as tea bags or

powdered coca, have continued to date [4], against a backdrop of constant legal developments (Bouso *et al.*, 2022).

### *Coca Leaf: from the European Parliament (EP) to the United Nations*

On 15 December 2004, while discussing the EU's drugs strategy 2005–2012 (EP, 2004b), the EP adopted a recommendation, often called the "*Catania report*" (EP, 2004a). Considered a successful outcome of the *Coca '95 campaign* and subsequent political debates within different EP commissions and working groups, the *Catania report* proposed to:

Significantly increase development aid to drug-producing countries, by means of programmes to fund sustainable alternative crops and the radical reduction of poverty, exploring also the possibility of promoting and safeguarding production for medical and scientific purposes, [...] and to take into consideration the possibility of launching pilot projects for the industrial manufacture of legal products derived from plants covered by the 1961 Convention, such as coca leaf [...]; increase research into the use of plants that are currently illegal or in a grey area, such as hemp, opium or coca leaves, for medicinal applications, food security, sustainable agriculture, generation of alternative energy sources, substitution for tree- or oil-based products and other beneficial purposes (EP, 2004a)

That day, ENCOD was present with a display of coca teas and products for degustation (Johannsson, 2004). Dionicio Nuñez Tangara – a Bolivian parliamentarian, later Minister for Coca Leaf Affairs in Morales' government in 2012 – was also present at the EP that day to liaise with his European counterparts (Bustillos Zamorano, 2016; Opini3n, 2012).

The *Catania report* had more political than legal weight. Nonetheless, it laid down the rationale and philosophy behind another, more action-oriented text adopted a few years later, in 2008. On 23 April 2008, the EP, using its right of initiative, passed a resolution on "the role of civil society in drugs policy in the European Union" calling upon governments and EU institutions to:

Explore ways of cooperating with EU civil-society organisations involved in promoting substances derived from coca leaves for lawful use purely as a means of contributing effectively (by absorbing raw materials) to international action against drugs trafficking, ensuring at the same time the safe use of such substances (EP, 2009, p. 28).

On 4 March 2009, Giusto Catania – EP member behind the 2004 and 2008 texts (Mendoza, 2008) – organised the conference "Coca 2009: from persecution to proposal" (ENCOD, 2009a; 2009b; Mariátegui, 2009) at the Parliament. Speakers included Roberto Calzadilla (Bolivian ambassador to The Netherlands, 2008–2013, 2021 to present), Christián Inchauste (Bolivian ambassador to Belgium and the EU, 2007–2009) and Joep Oomen (Dutch journalist, then secretary and coordinator of ENCOD) (Oomen, 2009). Bolivia's Viceminister for Social Defense and Controlled Substances, Felipe Cáceres García, was announced as a speaker (Mariátegui, 2009) but ultimately could not attend (ENCOD, 2009b).

The "*Coca 2009*" discussion gathered various interested parties to analyse "past experiences and future perspectives of EU policy with regards to the coca leaf and a possible market for legal coca products in Europe" (ENCOD, 2009a), echoing the demand from the *Coca '95 campaign* and calls from the EP. During the event, Oomen mentioned the desire to work towards concrete proposals for "fair-trade" (Mathews, 2009) in coca, mentioning the agreement signed earlier with Bolivian counterparts and calling for increased collaboration between authorities and civil society (ENCOD, 2009b). Interestingly, Ambassador Calzadilla mentioned that some Asian countries had expressed interest in legal coca (ENCOD, 2009b).

*Treaty deadlock.* A week after the "*Coca 2009*" conference, the Bolivian Government triggered the procedure to amend the C61 to exempt traditional uses of coca (Pfeiffer,

2013). Bolivian Head of State Morales even famously chewed coca leaves during his speech at the March 2009 UN' Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to support his point (The Telegraph, 2009; Sárosi, 2009).

Unfortunately, the follow-ups from this amendment proposal were not encouraging (Pearson, 2020). A total of 21 countries presented objections to the proposed amendment and by "January 2011, it had become obvious that changes to the international drug control regime were unlikely to occur in the near future" (Pfeiffer, 2013, pp. 302–303).

### *Early stages: ENCOD's Plan C*

Simultaneously to the "Coca 2009" conference, almost as an answer to the resolution, ENCOD concluded a written agreement with various Andean coca-related groups – including NGOs, farmers' union, and the federation of municipalities from the Yungas, Bolivia (ENCOD, 2009b; ADEPCOCA, 2009).

One of the goals of the bid was to "identify and promote systems of fair-trade to commercialise traditional derivatives of the coca leaf in Europe" (ADEPCOCA, 2009, p. 2) as called for in the EP resolution. In the agreed text, ENCOD committed itself to the creation of:

A system to commercialise in Europe, through legal means and in respect of the rules of fair trade, the beneficial derivatives of the coca leaf in the framework of this agreement" (ADEPCOCA, 2009).

In addition, the agreement was conceived to:

Serve as a framework for the import into Europe of traditional coca products, through legal means. [...] include rules that guarantee the protection of the environment and the equal distribution of generated profits. [...] increase the legal demand for coca leaves, as a part of the solution to offer to coca growers in the Andean region a sustainable alternative to the illegal market (ENCOD, 2010a).

Another step was taken shortly after, in June 2010, during an ENCOD members meeting: the genesis of a direct producer-to-consumer shipping project emerged, temporarily named "Plan C" (ENCOD, 2010a; 2011b [see Figure 1]).

In September, ENCOD co-organised a debate at the Bolivian Senate with ministers, authorities, parliamentarians, farmers' unions, scholars and local interested parties

**Figure 1** Logo of "Plan C"



(ENCOD, 2010b; 2010d; Salazar *et al.*, 2010). During the meeting, “some concrete proposals” were presented (Oomen, 2010) such as:

The idea of creating a European association of coca leaf consumers (both Andean people living in Europe and Europeans related to the Andean region) who would claim their right to practice and exercise that culture, in which coca plays a fundamental role (Salazar *et al.*, 2010).

At the time, a potential cultural association that would advocate for the use of coca leaves in Europe was perceived as a way to support governmental initiatives to establish licit market segments, but not at that point as taking part directly in trade activities (ENCOD, 2010a; 2010c; 2010d).

In reaction to the stalemate that followed the failed amendment of the C61 proposed by Bolivia, the group of activists gathered around *Plan C* started to change their strategy and adopted a more-direct role in conducting trade relationships between the two continents, declaring in 2011:

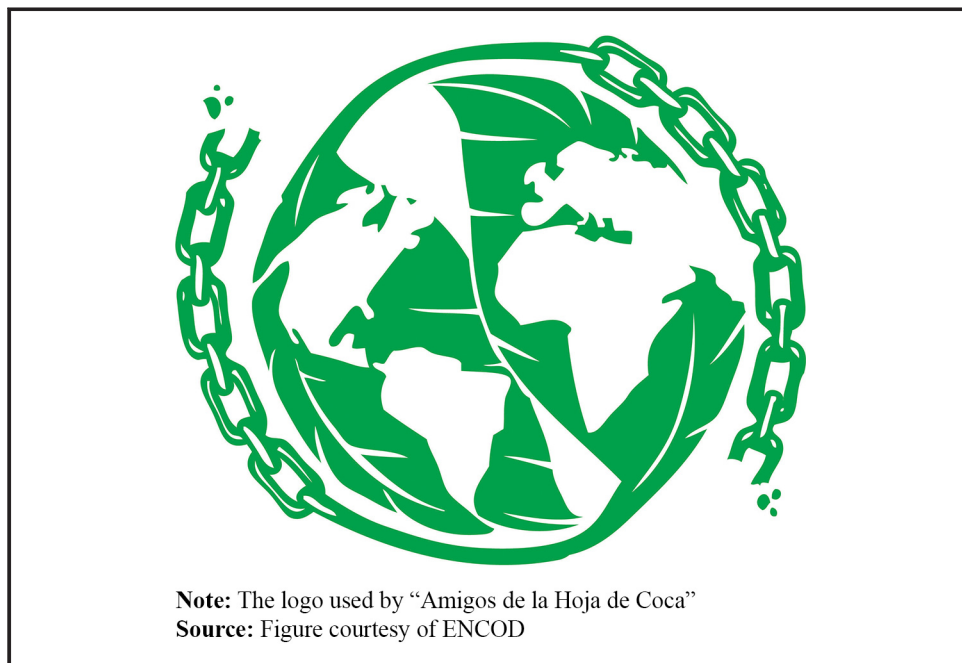
In the current geopolitical situation, Andean governments, including the Bolivian, cannot protagonise a concrete campaign to challenge the prohibition of coca leaves. [...] initiatives of civil society are needed. [...] Therefore, we are planning to establish a new association, the European Association of Coca Leaf Consumers (ENCOD, 2011a).

### *Launch of the association “Amigos de la Hoja de Coca”*

On 17–18 June 2011, during the Andean cultural event “Miracles of Pachamama” in Antwerp, Belgium (ENCOD, 2012), a group of 12 drug policy reform activists and coca leaf users led by Oomen launched the informal group “*Amigos de la Hoja de Coca*” (AHC, 2013; see Figure 2).

On 10 September, the group registered a non-profit organisation in Antwerp called “Culturele Vereniging ‘Vrienden van het Cocablad’” (“Cultural association ‘Friends of the

**Figure 2** Logo of the association “Amigos de la Hoja de Coca”





Coca Leaf””; [Belgisch Staatsblad, 2011](#)). Shortly after its creation, they organised launch events:

- Brussels, September 2011: debate and documentary screening, in the city’s European district; and
- Antwerp, December 2011: conference with Dionício Núñez and René Fernandez, Bolivian Ambassador to Belgium ([AHC, 2013](#)).

*Organisational model and practices.* The AHC’s subscription scheme required adult citizens residing in the EU to register as members of the Antwerp-based entity for a €25 yearly membership fee. Members were then able to opt into the coca leaf fair-trade programme and receive a maximum of one shipment per week of raw coca leaf or “*pijchu* (a portion for consumption)” at their preferred address ([Oomen and Negrety Condori, 2012](#)). As Oomen explained:

Composed of people of different nationalities residing in Europe, the association proposes to establish systems of legal distribution of coca leaf for the personal consumption of its members. Using legal means and respecting the rules of fair trade, we intend to collaborate with farmers in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia [...] Our objective is to install a mechanism that will provide a maximum shipment of 150 grams of coca leaf per week per member, at a cost of 15 euros. ([Oomen, 2012](#))

The only country from which farmers took part in the program was Bolivia ([Chulver Benítez, 2020](#), pp. 87–88). In Belgium, the AHC coordinated membership and payments and liaised with cocalex’s networks in Bolivia. Parcels were prepared and shipped directly by cocalex to individuals in Europe.

Reportedly, the organisation reached almost 100 members “in about 14 European countries” ([Oomen, 2014](#); [Oomen and Negrety Condori, 2012](#)).

*Coca shipments.* In April 2012, the AHC succeeded in shipping the first individual coca packets to some of its members. It was reported that a third of the parcels did not reach their destination ([ENCOD, 2012](#)). The second shipments in May were more successful. The third round, in June, was reportedly blocked at Bolivian and Peruvian transit post offices ([ENCOD, 2012](#)). As Oomen explained:

Of these packages, most reached their recipients without news. Only a few members (in the Czech Republic, Belgium and Spain) received an invitation from the local police to explain their intention to import coca leaves. For these cases the association had prepared a legal defence document that included all the arguments to explain that the coca leaf belongs to a millenary culture and importing it through fair trade is the best way to fight against illicit cocaine production. In the end, these cases were all erased without any consequences ([Oomen, 2014](#)).

During summer 2012, the AHC was faced with a series of hurdles to solve before continuing with its program ([ENCOD, 2012](#)), in particular:

- resolving and releasing the third shipments, still blocked in warehouses;
- absorbing currency conversion rates and increases in bank fees, which had resulted in a 5 € increase in the price for each individual *pijchu* from 15 to 20 €; and
- finding legal advice to strengthen the *de minimis* defence drawn up by the group.

That kept the AHC busy until April 2013, when the Bolivian post office notified the suspension of the scheme to the AHC leadership, who later claimed that the interruption had been backed by Bolivian authorities at the presidential level ([Oomen, 2014](#); [ENCOD, 2015](#)) [5]. The post office, on its side, argued that carrier airlines Lufthansa and BoA (only operators of Bolivia-EU cargo flights) had refused to continue carrying coca leaves on the grounds that the Universal Postal Convention bans parcels containing narcotic drugs ([ENCOD, 2013](#); [Oomen, 2014](#)).

### *Other attempted routes for the coca leaf*

After the suspension of shipments from Bolivia, the AHC explored the possibility of replicating the scheme in neighbouring Peru. However, while Bolivia's regulatory system is complex but flexible (Peñaco and Lohman, 2018), the system in Peru is more rigid: all licit production of and trade in coca is channelled through ENACO (DEVIDA, 2021; ENCOD, 2015).

The obligation to go through this intermediary resulted in increased prices for bulk coca leaf sales, at a level that AHC leadership deemed "disproportionate" (Oomen, 2014; ENCOD, 2015). The AHC was also concerned by the reduction of farmers' income, because of ENACO's policy, buying from cocalexes at a fixed price much lower than other buyers (Mistler-Ferguson, 2022).

The difficulty of reconciling these conditions of fixed and low prices for farmers with the idea of fair-trade that drove the original project, seems to have discouraged the AHC from further engaging in Peru, which never came to fruition.

The last activity set up by the AHC to revitalise the fair-trade programme was a field trip for its members to Bolivia and Peru. Organised 3–30 June 2015 (AHC, 2015; ENCOD, 2015; Oomen, 2015a) the so-called "Route of the Coca Leaf" was:

[. . .] a visit of a delegation of people living in the West who want to promote a legal market for the coca leaf and its derivatives. The purpose is to meet with people with whom we can formulate a common strategy to obtain this. Always in respect of the initial values promoting healthy products in a context of fair trade. (Oomen, 2015c)

Nine members engaged, meeting with farmers and local communities, activists, scholars, health-care professionals, traditional healers and government officials in the two countries. Unfortunately, the trip did not yield significant prospects to relaunch a trade initiative.

In an article published late 2015, Oomen announced plans to organise a new campaign of imports "in the upcoming months" (Oomen, 2015b). Unfortunately, his premature death shortly afterwards on 18 March 2016 ended this initiative.

After two decades of efforts and coca activism in Europe, the group that Oomen had facilitated the creation of did not rebound after his passing.

### **Discussion**

During the two decades reviewed, institutional action to facilitate the right to grow, use and trade in the coca leaf clearly failed. In parallel, however, numerous exchanges, discussions and political capacity-building occurred between Andean and European civil society stakeholders. The AHC represents a tipping point, with grassroots organisations answering the failure of political institutions to address their demands for change by switching their method towards a more direct action (reminiscent in part of do-it-yourself consumer motivations; Wolf and McQuitty, 2011).

Although this attempted fair-trade experience failed, it should be seen today as an interesting pilot or experiment to analyse. While the main goal of this policy paper was to describe and document this pioneering initiative, the AHC's outcomes and practices, as well as the multiple elements that led to its demise, are briefly discussed below.

### *Human rights and legal aspects*

Legally speaking, the AHC was inspired by the Cannabis Social Club (CSC) model (Pardal, 2022) and its legal doctrine of shared consumption, developed in previous years in Spain (Marks, 2019; Parés Franquero and Bouso, 2015; Oomen, 2006), later conceptualised by ENCOD (2006) with its European "code of conduct" for CSCs and nowadays recognised in the laws of various European countries like Malta or Germany. There are even some



documented uses of the expression “coca leaf social club” in reference to the AHC’s activities (ENCOD, 2012). As Oomen summarised:

Setting up clubs that organise a closed circuit for producers and consumers of cannabis (or other substances such as coca leaves) is not only a way to help people in their most urgent needs – it also shows that legalisation is a holistic concept. It is not only the taboo on drugs that should be broken, but also the free market dogma as the only way to settle economic transactions. That does not mean that drugs cannot be produced and distributed by commercial enterprises, but they should operate within a framework of transparency and social control. (Oomen, 2013)

The AHC claimed a legal backing based on human rights, more specifically the “freedom to choose to adopt a religion or a culture” (Oomen, 2010). In their view, such a fundamental right – already recognised in Andean countries where coca leaf chewing is allowed – should be universally accepted to allow for the chewing of coca beyond the borders of Andean countries. Oomen (2010) explained that it would constitute “the cornerstone for the legal defence of any friend of the coca leaf in case of legal issues”.

The two main arguments were that the AHC was helping to offer an alternative to the illegal market for cocalexers by buying their harvests and that it was promoting healthy uses of coca for medicinal, social and cultural purposes. The group had drafted a legal defence document in May 2011, but struggled to find a lawyer to assist them, while also recognising the need for a more elaborate legal defence (ENCOD, 2012).

The short-lived initiative did not leave enough time to resolve the legal hurdles faced. However, during its period of activity, neither the AHC nor any of its members were prosecuted or had any other legal consequences. The absence of penal or administrative action taken against AHC members, in a dozen of EU countries, suggests a certain robustness to the group’s legal premises.

Interestingly, more recently, the validity of the AHC’s legal point according to which the cultural right to consume coca traditionally is also enforceable outside of the tradition’s geographical areas of origin was in part confirmed by some local European penal courts (Sánchez Avilés and Langlois, 2017; Metaal *et al.*, 2019).

Legal considerations around coca also include other international treaties: human rights covenants; Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya protocol; FAO Plant Treaty.

In 2023, two Andean countries requested the WHO to scientifically review coca leaf (Reuters, 2023). Although this assessment (overdue since, 1965; Danenberg *et al.*, 2013) will enlighten the political debate, it is dubious that it could result in a change of legal status. As pointed out by Riboulet-Zemouli and Krawitz (2022, p. 12), coca leaves are subject to Schedule I controls irrespective of their presence in the actual Schedule: the mention of coca leaves in C61’s article 2(6) subjects coca to the control measures of Schedule I, even if coca was written off the Schedule.

*Analogy with low-tetrahydrocannabinol hemp products.* Besides the AHC’s historical ties and ethical similarities with the non-profit cannabis supply CSC model, other similarities with hemp products listed in Schedule I deserve attention.

Both plants appeal to consumer’s interest in healthy foods, nutraceuticals. Parallels may be drawn with the trend already observed in recent years of increased consumer demand for low-THC hemp extracts and derivatives, devoid of the characteristic “intoxicating” or mind-altering properties associated with the active compound THC (UNCTAD, 2022). Coca leaves are also devoid of the “intoxicating” properties generally associated with the isolated or semi-synthetically manufactured *C-HCl*.

Although listed in Schedule I like coca leaf, low-THC hemp products have been traded internationally without drug control restrictions. Further legal analysis of the pathways used for hemp trade, such as the provisions of article 2(9) of the C61, may help overcome the

complex legal framework for coca (Riboulet-Zemouli and Jeanroy, 2023), although hemp – and coca – specific provisions vary at times (Riboulet-Zemouli, 2022, pp. 58, 111).

### ***Agriculture and environmental aspects***

In Andean and Amazon regions, mass coca cultivation for classic market segments (and the methods of eradications applied to it) have been one of the main drivers for ecological damage in past decades (Llanos Layme, 2015; MamaCoca, 2021; UNODC, 2023, pp. 61–90).

As Oomen (2010) relates, in classic illicit coca markets, “the quality of products has no importance”, mentioning in particular the large variety of chemical herbicides and pesticides used to increase yields. These modern methods of production have a high environmental impact and are mainly driven by the demand for *C-HCI* manufacturing (UNODC, 2022, pp. 15–42).

In addition, the environmental destruction caused by law enforcement eradication operations – notably the aerial crop fumigations – dramatically increases these already devastating ecological impacts (MamaCoca, 2021).

These agricultural techniques and law enforcement strategies are in sharp contrast with traditional methods of cultivation and harvest, which are environmentally-friendly and produce healthy, safe and quality coca leaf products while taking part in the conservation of ecosystems (Llanos Layme, 2015).

Since its beginning, the AHC was characterised by its wish to work “with producer peasants [...] ready to abide by existing organic and sanitary standards” (Oomen, 2010) as a way to favour traditional, organic and sustainable methods of cultivation (Oomen, 2015b; Oomen and Negrety Condori, 2012).

The demand in Europe for organic, healthy and “green” products also corresponds to an interest in sustainable value chain markets, mindful of social and environmental impacts. This coupled demand for product quality and fair-trade is key to the AHC model's attractivity. As Humphrey and Memedovic (2006, p. 51) noted:

There are some niches for small farmers in global markets, and initiatives such as Fairtrade and local branding have increased farm incomes, or at least offset some of the damage caused by declining global prices for commodities such as tea and coffee. Similarly, small farmers have been successful in producing organic produce for global markets.

As of 2023, Peru and the EU have adhered to the treaty on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications (WIPO, 2023), a trade framework, which may have a role to play in potentialising such future coca fair-trade focused on local communities.

### ***Livelihoods and socio-economic aspects***

In economic terms, the AHC fair-trade programme shortened the number of intermediaries (Mathews, 2009) along the coca value chain. It relied upon more direct connections to farmers (again, echoing CSCs).

Within the AHC's scheme, the price for final consumers was originally set at 15 €, with “5 euros for the producer, 5 euros for the shipping costs of *pijchu*, and 5 euros for administrative fees such as the payment of money transfers to producers” (ENCOD, 2012; Oomen and Negrety Condori, 2012). It is not known how the increase to 20 € precisely repercutated on the different costs. Although data on the financial aspects of fair-trade certifications and programmes is scarce (van Lent, 2022), farmers receiving one third of the end-price is a share in profits superior to the average (FAO, 2009; Veldhuyzen van Zanten, 2024; WIPO, 2017).

Further development of the AHC model could resemble the “baristas” model and other independent coffee retail operators: an experimental market segment “akin to the wine industry’s flavour profile, which valorises the *terroir*, grape variety and craftsmanship” (FAO, 2009; WIPO, 2017, p. 45) in terms of quality, but also with a governance “known to be relational”. This market segment sharply contrasts with classical ones (bulk, soluble, capsules). Similarly, the AHC model departs from the largest market share of mass-produced coca derivatives like *Coca-Cola* or *C-HCI* (unrelated to traditional coca cultivation, uses or knowledge).

The AHC grassroots experience showed that consumers can effectively organise around common interests to overcome coca’s policy challenges through strategic networking.

### ***Lessons learnt and policy ideas***

Besides its short-lived experience, the rich background behind the AHC and its pilot attempt may provide a useful contribution to future coca regulations and prove inspirational to drug policy reform discussion, even for other herbal substances. The AHC model pinpoints a potential way to destigmatise licit trade in traditional psychoactive plants that have a low potential for abuse; organisationally, it represents an alternative to existing models of international free and unhindered trade, bringing the notion of fair-trade into the drug policy debate.

However, impacts should receive more attention: how would an AHC-like trade impact rural tourism? Would the transformation of derived products serve local industrial development or be externalised in developed countries? Could such a model reduce risks of biopiracy and traditional intellectual property capture by external stakeholders? Some ideas to address these issues are provided in the [Appendix 1](#).

In addition, a curb on the replication of the AHC today could be the carbon footprint of small individual shipments across continents (coupled with prices). The balance between advantages (reduction of intermediaries; reduced size of shipments to avoid legal hurdles) versus the environmental footprint, should be carefully assessed.

Further research is needed to assess these different issues and the balance cost/benefit under different parameters.

### **Conclusion**

A decade after its demise, the AHC experience had not been documented in literature, despite its singularity and interest for the historiography of social movements in drug policy and cocalex’s struggles.

Although various questions remain open, documenting this type of social innovations could inspire the design of policies for the conservation of coca and development of licit markets; lessons learnt can be an asset in the efforts to improve social, environmental and economic outcomes for the region.

Although European consumers’ interest for coca as a nutraceutical remain uncertain, in Andean and Amazonian regions, the demand from coca-growing indigenous peoples and local communities for a licit and dignified future has never been so relevant in a harsh socio-economic context (and particularly the post-conflict transition in Colombia; [Maxwell, 2019](#); [Petro, 2022](#)). As the founder of the AHC noted:

We live in a world globalised mainly by trade. Not only the products but also the ways of consuming them reach the other side of the border. With products also travels the cultural practice to which they correspond. Accepting products implies adopting at least in part the culture from which they originate. Therefore, the trade in products is a kind of cultural exchange. ([Oomen, 2012](#))

More than ever, the call from the EP in 2009 (p. 28) for “promoting substances derived from coca leaves for lawful use” should be heard: it is not only “a means of contributing effectively (by absorbing raw materials) to international action against drugs trafficking” aligned with the Green New Deal and Sustainable Development Agenda, but also a measure of humanitarian aid, international solidarity and historical justice. More than ever, pioneering cultural exchanges and grassroots innovations such as the AHC deserve to be documented, studied and considered.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to pay special tribute to the memory of Joep Oomen and Dr. Jorge Hurtado for their very special role on this planet, their legacy, and the inspiration they continue to provide across time, mountains and oceans. The authors thank our reviewers and editors of this special issue, as well as Drs. Constanza Sánchez Avilés, Fabian Steinmetz, and Antoniu Llorc Suárez for commenting on and improving earlier versions of this article, and the countless anonymous peer-reviewers of this article; also express appreciation to Michael Krawitz, Rajindra Puri, Axel Klein, and Cristina Garreta Girona; special thanks to Baldomero Caceres Santamaría, María Mercedes Moreno, and Antoniu Llorc Suárez. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- 1 The beverage Coca-Cola still includes a de-cocainised coca leaf extract as an ingredient today.
- 2 “Cocalerxs” is a Spanish-language term combining “cocaleros” and “cocaleras” and used to refer altogether to male and – numerous – female coca growers.
- 3 ENCOD (originally: *European NGO Council on Drugs and Development*, nowadays: *European coalition for just and effective drug policies*) is a platform grouping numerous grassroots anti-prohibitionist social movements throughout Europe.
- 4 At the time this article was redacted, a rapid internet search yielded five websites proposing the sales of coca leaf to Europe: [cocateaexpress.com](http://cocateaexpress.com); [thecocatea.com](http://thecocatea.com); [oknatura.com](http://oknatura.com); [cocateaexpress.com](http://cocateaexpress.com); [cocainka.com](http://cocainka.com).
- 5 This claim could not be further substantiated by data collected and has been disputed.

## References

- Abduca, R. (2019), “Coca leaf transfers to Europe”, *Transatlantic Trade and Global Cultural Transfers Since 1492*, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 106-126, available at: [rid.unrm.edu.ar/bitstream/20.500.12049/6839/1/Chapter\\_5\\_Abduca.pdf](http://rid.unrm.edu.ar/bitstream/20.500.12049/6839/1/Chapter_5_Abduca.pdf)
- ADEPCOCA (2009), “Agreement between departamental association of coca producers (ADEPCOCA), federation of peasants of the tropical region of Cochabamba (FETCTC)”, *Community of Municipalities of the Yungas Region . . . , Confederation of Peasant Federations of the Yungas Region (COFECAY), Association of Ecological Producers Organizations of Bolivia (AOPEB), Foundation la Hoja Verde. . . and [ . . . ] ENCOD (Belgium)*, ENCOD, Antwerp, available at: [encod.org/app/uploads/2009/02/AGREEMENT.pdf](http://encod.org/app/uploads/2009/02/AGREEMENT.pdf)
- Aharonian, G. (2016), “Patent publication number WO/2016/118806”, WIPO PatentScope, available at: [patentscope.wipo.int/search/en/detail.jsf?docId=WO2016118806&\\_cid=P11-L7M9UY-89657-1](http://patentscope.wipo.int/search/en/detail.jsf?docId=WO2016118806&_cid=P11-L7M9UY-89657-1)
- AHC (2013), “La hoja de coca tiene amigos en Europa. Betje N youtube channel [online]”, available at: [youtube.com/watch?v=L0Y0RoAwVUM](http://youtube.com/watch?v=L0Y0RoAwVUM)
- AHC (2015), “Informe de la 'Ruta de la hoja de coca'”, available at: [amigoshojadecoca.wordpress.com/2015/08/18/informe-de-la-ruta-de-la-hoja-de-coca/](http://amigoshojadecoca.wordpress.com/2015/08/18/informe-de-la-ruta-de-la-hoja-de-coca/)
- Appelboom, T. (1991), “Consumption of coca in history”, *Verhandelingen - Koninklijke Academie Voor Geneeskunde Van België*, Vol. 53 No. 5, pp. 497-505.

- Bauer, I. (2019), "Travel medicine, coca and cocaine: demystifying and rehabilitating Erythroxylum – a comprehensive review", *Tropical Diseases, Travel Medicine and Vaccines*, Vol. 5 No. 1, p. 20.
- Belgisch Staatsblad (2011), "Culturele vereniging vrienden van het cocablad, VZW [839.353.470] rubriek oprichting", Bijlagen bij het Belgisch Staatsblad, 28 September 2011:11146601, available at: [ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2011/09/28/11146601.pdf](http://ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2011/09/28/11146601.pdf)
- Bouso, J.C., Sánchez-Aviles, C., Castro, R., *et al.* (2022), "Coca leaf in court: cultural rights and the toxicological labyrinth", Molins de Rei: ICEERS, available at: [iceers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coca-report-Eng\\_20-7-2022-FINAL-2.pdf](http://iceers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Coca-report-Eng_20-7-2022-FINAL-2.pdf)
- Braithwaite, C. (2015), "Why doesn't anyone produce cocaine in Australia?" *Vice Australia*, November 4, 2015, available at: [vice.com/en/article/wd77n4/why-doesnt-anyone-produce-cocaine-in-australia](http://vice.com/en/article/wd77n4/why-doesnt-anyone-produce-cocaine-in-australia)
- Bustillos Zamorano, I. (2016), "Dionicio núnñez tangara: 'embajador' de la coca", *La Razón* (Bolivia), March 7th, available at: [la-razon.com/politico/2016/03/07/dionicio-nunez-tangara-embajador-de-la-coca/](http://la-razon.com/politico/2016/03/07/dionicio-nunez-tangara-embajador-de-la-coca/)
- Cáceres Santamaría, B. (2013), "La leyenda negra de la coca y el futuro de una industria promisoriosa", in: *IV Foro Internacional de la Hoja de Coca*, Centro de Investigación de Drogas y Derechos Humanos, Lima, pp. 56-65, available at: [fileserv.idpc.net/library/CIDDH-IV-foro-internacional-hoja-de-coca.pdf](http://fileserv.idpc.net/library/CIDDH-IV-foro-internacional-hoja-de-coca.pdf)
- Cannabis Magazine (2010), "Efedra prohibida – hoja de coca por internet [online]", available at: [cannabismagazine.net/efedra-prohibida-hoja-de-coca-por-internet/](http://cannabismagazine.net/efedra-prohibida-hoja-de-coca-por-internet/)
- Chiripuci, B., Popescu, M.F. and Constantin, M. (2022), "The European consumers' preferences for organic food in the context of the European green deal", *www.amfiteatruconomic.ro*, Vol. 24 No. 60, pp. 361-378.
- Chulver Benítez, P. (2020), *Hoja de Coca: Antecedentes y Perspectivas Para su Exportación*, Acción Semilla, La Paz.
- CND (1949), "Report on the commission on narcotic drugs (16 may - 3 June 1949)", ECOSOC, Official records: 4th year, 9th session; Supplement No. 9. Lake Success: UN.
- DEVIDA (2021), "Análisis de compra-venta de hoja de coca en el Perú", *Cuadernos de Política Nacional Contra Las Drogas*, Vol. 1.
- Duke, J.A., Aulik, D. and Plowman, T. (1975), "Nutritional value of coca", *Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 113-119.
- Danenberg, E., E., Sorge, L.A., Wieniawski, W., Elliott, S., Amato, L. and Scholten, W.K. (2013), "Modernizing methodology for the WHO assessment of substances for the international drug control conventions", *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Vol. 131 No. 3, pp. 175-181, doi: [10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2013.02.032](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2013.02.032).
- EIHA (2020), "Hemp, a real green deal", available at: [eiha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Hemp-a-real-green-deal\\_EN.pdf](http://eiha.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Hemp-a-real-green-deal_EN.pdf)
- ENCOD (2006), *Code of Conduct for a Cannabis Social Club in the European Union [Republished 2011]*, ENCOD, Antwerp.
- ENCOD (2009a), "Coca 2009: debate in the European parliament [archived webpage]", available at: [archive.org/web/20090210191728/http://encod.org/info/COCA-2009-FROM-PERSECUTION-TO.html](http://archive.org/web/20090210191728/http://encod.org/info/COCA-2009-FROM-PERSECUTION-TO.html)
- ENCOD (2009b), "Informe sobre el debate coca 2009", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/informe-sobre-el-debate-coca-2009/](http://encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/informe-sobre-el-debate-coca-2009/)
- ENCOD (2010a), "Plan C", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c/](http://encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c/)
- ENCOD (2010b), "Progress report of plan C", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/progress-report-of-plan-c/](http://encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/progress-report-of-plan-c/)
- ENCOD (2010c), "Plan C: progress report 2", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-2/](http://encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-2/)
- ENCOD (2010d), "Plan C: progress report 3", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-3/](http://encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-3/)
- ENCOD (2011a), "Plan C: progress report 4", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-4/](http://encod.org/en/actions-events/campaigns/2010-2013-campaigns/plan-c-progress-report-4/)

- ENCOD (2011b), "Annual report 2010 of the European coalition for just and effective drug policies", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/en/about-us/info-for-members/annual-reports/annual-report-2010/](http://encod.org/en/about-us/info-for-members/annual-reports/annual-report-2010/)
- ENCOD (2012), "Club social de la hoja de coca en Europa [archived webpage]", available at: [web.archive.org/web/20200811151343/https://encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/club-social-de-la-hoja-de-coca-en-europa/](http://web.archive.org/web/20200811151343/https://encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/club-social-de-la-hoja-de-coca-en-europa/)
- ENCOD (2013), "Asamblea general de los amigos de la hoja de coca", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/asamblea-general-de-los-amigos-de-la-hoja-de-coca/](http://encod.org/es/acciones-y-eventos/campana-coca/asamblea-general-de-los-amigos-de-la-hoja-de-coca/)
- ENCOD (2015), "Invitation to participate in 'Route of the coca leaf' [archived webpage]", available at: [web.archive.org/web/20150206091803/http://encod.org/info/Invitation-to-participate-in-Route.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20150206091803/http://encod.org/info/Invitation-to-participate-in-Route.html)
- EP (2004a), "European parliament recommendation to the council and the European council on the EU drugs strategy (2005-2012) (2004/2221(INI))", Strasbourg: EP, available at: [europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2004-0101\\_EN.html?redirect](http://europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2004-0101_EN.html?redirect)
- EP (2004b), "EU drugs strategy (2005-2012) – European parliament recommendation to the council and the European Council on the EU drugs strategy (2005-2012) (2004/2221(INI))", *Official Journal of the European Union*.
- EP (2009), "European parliament resolution of 23 April 2008 on the green paper on the role of civil society in drugs policy in the European Union (2007/2212(INI))", *Official Journal of the European Union*.
- FAO (2009), "The market for organic and fair-trade coffee: study prepared in the framework of FAO project GCP/RAF/404/GER", Rome: UN, available at: [fao.org/fileadmin/templates/organicexports/docs/Market\\_Organic\\_FT\\_Coffee.pdf](http://fao.org/fileadmin/templates/organicexports/docs/Market_Organic_FT_Coffee.pdf)
- Farthing, L.C. and Ledebur, K. (2015), "Habeas coca: bolivia's community coca control", New-York: Open Society Foundations, available at: [opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/dd3082d5-1bab-4fa0-9cb5-273a921ea32b/habeas-coca-bolivas-community-coca-control-20150706.pdf](http://opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/dd3082d5-1bab-4fa0-9cb5-273a921ea32b/habeas-coca-bolivas-community-coca-control-20150706.pdf)
- Fike, J. (2017), "Industrial hemp: renewed opportunities for an ancient crop", *Critical Reviews in Plant Sciences*, Vol. 35 Nos 5/6, pp. 406-424.
- Fontecha, M.M. and Walker, J. (2022), "Transitions to a sustainable agri-food system: making rural youth visible and heard in illicit economies", Bogotá: University of Guelph/Universidad de los Andes, available at: [fileserver.idpc.net/library/Sustainable\\_Transitions\\_EN.pdf](http://fileserver.idpc.net/library/Sustainable_Transitions_EN.pdf)
- Fujimori, A. and Sánchez de Lozada, G. (1994), *Declaración Conjunta de Los Presidentes de la República Del Perú y de la República de Bolivia [Tratados Bilaterales de la República Del Perú (1991-1998) N° 2183, Firmado el 07 de Julio de 1994]*, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Perú, Lima.
- Grisaffi, T. (2021), "A brief history of coca: from traditional use to the cocaine economy. Working paper. The university of reading", available at: [research.reading.ac.uk/coca-cocaine-bolivia-peru/wp-content/uploads/sites/127/2021/07/A-history-of-coca-Grisaffi-Website-V2.pdf](http://research.reading.ac.uk/coca-cocaine-bolivia-peru/wp-content/uploads/sites/127/2021/07/A-history-of-coca-Grisaffi-Website-V2.pdf)
- Humphrey, J. and Memedovic, O. (2006), "Global value chains in the agrifood sector", Vienna: UNIDO, available at: [unido.org/sites/default/files/2009-05/Global\\_value\\_chains\\_in\\_the\\_agrifood\\_sector\\_0.pdf](http://unido.org/sites/default/files/2009-05/Global_value_chains_in_the_agrifood_sector_0.pdf)
- Inter-Andean institutes of coca sciences (2022), "Coca - Patents, scientific papers, theses, books, videos", available at: [cienciadelacoca.org/CocaPatents.html](http://cienciadelacoca.org/CocaPatents.html)
- Johannsson, T. (2004), *The Long march - Adoption of the Catania Report on Drug Policies in the EU*, ENCOD, Antwerp.
- León, R. (2006), "Perú: primera exportación de mate de coca tendrá como destino sudáfrica", *Diario El Comercio* (Peru), January 22, 2006.
- Llanos Layme, D. (2015), "Cocales y economía campesina originaria", *Temas Sociales*, Vol. 37, pp. 270-319.
- MamaCoca (2021), "Cronología documentada de las fumigaciones, 1978-2021 [online]", available at: [mamacoca.org/Coca\\_cocaina\\_historia/Fumigaciones/cronologia\\_\\_documentada\\_de\\_las\\_aspersiones\\_aereas.html](http://mamacoca.org/Coca_cocaina_historia/Fumigaciones/cronologia__documentada_de_las_aspersiones_aereas.html)
- Mariátegui (2009), "Coca 2009: debate en el parlamento europeo", Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [nodo50.org/mariategui/coca2009debateenelparlamentoeuropeo.htm](http://nodo50.org/mariategui/coca2009debateenelparlamentoeuropeo.htm)



- Marks, A. (2019), "Defining 'personal consumption' in drug legislation and Spanish cannabis clubs", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 68 No. 1, pp. 193-223.
- Maxwell, M. (2019), "Indigenous communities in post-FARC Colombia struggle to destigmatize sacred coca leaf", Menlo Park: Mongabay, available at: [news.mongabay.com/2019/01/indigenous-communities-in-post-farc-colombia-struggle-to-destigmatize-sacred-leaf](https://news.mongabay.com/2019/01/indigenous-communities-in-post-farc-colombia-struggle-to-destigmatize-sacred-leaf)
- Mendoza, L. (2008), "Evistas' entre los eurodiputados", Santa Cruz de la Sierra: EJU.tv, available at: [eju.tv/2008/09/evistas-entre-los-eurodiputados](http://eju.tv/2008/09/evistas-entre-los-eurodiputados)
- Metaal, P., Sánchez Avilés, C. and Rebollo, N. (2019), *Migrants and Traditional Use: The Coca Leaf Travels from the Andean Amazon to the European Courts*, ICEERS Foundation, The Hague, available at: [iceers.org/migrants-and-traditional-use-the-coca-leaf-travels-from-the-andean-amazon-to-the-european-courts-2](https://iceers.org/migrants-and-traditional-use-the-coca-leaf-travels-from-the-andean-amazon-to-the-european-courts-2)
- Mistler-Ferguson, S. (2022), "Price differences keep Peru's coca flowing illegally into Bolivia", InsightCrime, available at: [insightcrime.org/news/price-differences-keep-perus-coca-flowing-illegally-bolivia](https://insightcrime.org/news/price-differences-keep-perus-coca-flowing-illegally-bolivia)
- Novak, F. and Namihas, S. (2013), "Las relaciones entre el Perú y Bolivia (1826-2013)", Serie: Política Exterior Peruana. Lima: Konrad Adenauer, available at: [Stiftung/InstitutodeEstudiosInternacionales.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7\\_dokument\\_dok\\_pdf\\_36112\\_1.pdf/9f5bbc3b-4cef-bffb-4633-35668ecd7db7?version=1.0&t=1539654927766](https://stiftunginstitutodeestudiosinternacionales.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7_dokument_dok_pdf_36112_1.pdf/9f5bbc3b-4cef-bffb-4633-35668ecd7db7?version=1.0&t=1539654927766)
- Oomen, J. (2006), *Hablemos Del Cannabis: Alternativas Europeas en Politicas de Drogas, el Papel de Los Ciudadanos*, Pensamiento Penal, Bilbao.
- Oomen, J. (2010), "Por una salida digna y soberana de la hoja de coca boliviana", *Cañamo*, Vol. 155, p. 20.
- Oomen, J. (2012), "La hoja de coca viajera", *Cañamo*, Vol. 170, p. 22.
- Oomen, J. (2013), "The end of the world as we know it", *ENCOD Bulletin*, Vol. 95.
- Oomen, J. (2014), "Private email to AHC members; 4 November 2014; 'an invitation to participate in the 'route of the coca leaf'".
- Oomen, J. (2015b), "Para una salida digna de la hoja de coca", *Cañamo*, Vol. 212, p. 32.
- Oomen, J. (2015c), "Private email to AHC members dated 20 march 2015, titled "last call for the coca leaf route".
- Oomen, J. and Negrety Condori, B. (2012), "El club de los amigos de la hoja de coca en Europa", *Cañamo*, Vol. 176, p. 24.
- Opinión (2012), "(Bolivia), February 9th 'dionisio núnuez fue posesionado como viceministro de la coca'", available at: [opinion.com.bo/articulo/el-pais/dionisio-nunez-fue-posesionado-como-viceministro-coca/20120209063900403671.html](https://opinion.com.bo/articulo/el-pais/dionisio-nunez-fue-posesionado-como-viceministro-coca/20120209063900403671.html)
- Pardal, M. (Ed.) (2022), *The Cannabis Social Club*, Routledge, Milton Park.
- Parés Franquero, Ò. and Bouso, J.C. (2015), "Innovation born of necessity pioneering drug policy in Catalonia", New-York: Open Society Foundations, available at: [opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/23886ebf-ac11-4d8f-b02b-a03d426cee44/innovation-born-necessity-pioneering-drug-policy-catalonia-20150428.pdf](https://opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/23886ebf-ac11-4d8f-b02b-a03d426cee44/innovation-born-necessity-pioneering-drug-policy-catalonia-20150428.pdf)
- Pearson, Z. (2020), "Bolivia, coca, culture and colonialism", in Bewley-Taylor, D. and Tinasti, K. (Eds), *Research Handbook on International Drug Policy*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 283-300.
- Peñaco, M. and Lohman, M.M. (2018), "Análisis crítico de la política pública de 'circulación y comercialización de la hoja de coca en su estado natural' DIGCOIN", Cochabamba: Centro de Estudios en Seguridad Ciudadana, Universidad de Chile, available at: [faaat.net/wp-content/uploads/Peñanco-Lohman-2018-analisis-critico-DIGCOIN-coca-Bolivia.pdf](https://faaat.net/wp-content/uploads/Peñanco-Lohman-2018-analisis-critico-DIGCOIN-coca-Bolivia.pdf)
- Pérez Mendoza, J.B. (2016), *Política y Legislación Internacional Sobre la Hoja de Coca: lecciones Del Caso Boliviano Para América Latina*, Purmamarka Ediciones, San Salvador de Jujuy.
- Petro, G. (2022), "Colombian president Gustavo Petro calls for an end to the war on drugs in historic UN address", Peoples Dispatch, available at: [peoplesdispatch.org/2022/09/20/colombian-president-gustavo-petro-calls-for-an-end-to-the-war-on-drugs-in-historic-un-address](https://peoplesdispatch.org/2022/09/20/colombian-president-gustavo-petro-calls-for-an-end-to-the-war-on-drugs-in-historic-un-address)

- Pfeiffer, S. (2013), "Rights of indigenous peoples and the international drug control regime: the case of traditional coca leaf chewing", *Goettingen Journal of International Law*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 287-324.
- Pietschmann, T. (2007), "A century of international drug control", *Bulletin on Narcotics*, Vol. 59 Nos 1/2, available at: [unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/bulletin/2007/Century\\_of\\_Drug\\_Control-E-WEB\\_FILE.pdf](https://unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/bulletin/2007/Century_of_Drug_Control-E-WEB_FILE.pdf)
- Reuters (2023), "Colombia, Bolivia to ask UN to remove coca leaf from narcotic list", February 22, 2023 [online], available at: [reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-bolivia-ask-un-remove-coca-leaf-narcotics-list-2023-02-22/](https://reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-bolivia-ask-un-remove-coca-leaf-narcotics-list-2023-02-22/)
- Riboulet-Zemouli, K. (2022), *High Compliance: A Lex Lata Legalization for the Non-Medical Cannabis Industry*, FAAAT editions, Paris.
- Riboulet-Zemouli, K. and Jeanroy, B. (2023), *Treaty Compliance Options for Cannabis Regulations in the EU: Models of Decriminalisation and Legal Regulation Compliant with International Law and EU Acquis*, Racionální politiky závislostí-CzechHemp, Prague.
- Riboulet-Zemouli, K. and Krawitz, M.A. (2022), "WHO's first scientific review of medicinal cannabis: from global struggle to patient implications", *Drugs, Habits and Social Policy*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 5-21.
- Royal Foods and Drinks (2005), "Patent publication number WO/2005/051101", WIPO PatentScope, available at: [patentscope.wipo.int/search/en/detail.jsf?docId=WO2005051101&\\_fid=EP14583689](https://patentscope.wipo.int/search/en/detail.jsf?docId=WO2005051101&_fid=EP14583689)
- Salazar, J., Oomen, J. and Negrety Condori, B. (2010), "Informe del primer encuentro 'por una salida digna y soberana Para la hoja de coca', 23 de septiembre 2010, senado nacional", Bolivia. Antwerp: ENCOD, available at: [docplayer.es/43101087-Informe-del-primer-encuentro-por-una-salida-digna-y-soberana-para-la-hoja-de-coca.html](https://docplayer.es/43101087-Informe-del-primer-encuentro-por-una-salida-digna-y-soberana-para-la-hoja-de-coca.html)
- Sánchez Avilés, C. and Langlois, A. (2017), *A Small Case in Spain Is a Big Victory for Smarter Drug Policy*, Open Society Foundations, New-York.
- Sárosi, P. (2009), *Chewing Coca at the UN*, Drug Reporter, Budapest.
- The Telegraph (2009), "Coca leaves are not cocaine, evo morales insists", *The Telegraph*, No. 12 March, available at: [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/bolivia/4976322/Coca-leaves-are-not-cocaine-Evo-Morales-insists.html](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/bolivia/4976322/Coca-leaves-are-not-cocaine-Evo-Morales-insists.html)
- Tricot, J.P. (1991), "Cocaine: half a century of therapeutic use (1880-1930)", *Verhandelingen - Koninklijke Academie Voor Geneeskunde Van België*, Vol. 53 No. 5, pp. 487-496.
- UNCTAD (2022), *Commodities at a Glance: A Special Issue on Industrial Hemp*, UN, Geneva.
- UNODC (2022), "World drug report 2022; booklet 4: drug market trends, cocaine, amphetamine-type stimulants, new psychoactive substances", Vienna: UN, available at: [unodc.org/res/wdr2022/MS/WDR22\\_Booklet\\_4.pdf](https://unodc.org/res/wdr2022/MS/WDR22_Booklet_4.pdf)
- UNODC (2023), "World drug report 2023; booklet 3: contemporary issues on drugs", Vienna: UN, available at: [unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23\\_B3\\_CH4\\_Amazon.pdf](https://unodc.org/res/WDR-2023/WDR23_B3_CH4_Amazon.pdf)
- UNOG Archives (1948), "Unification of pharmacopoeias committee: sessions", [Docket No. 758/4/1]
- van Lent, F. (2022), "Fair trade premiums: how much reaches the farmers?" Maastricht University News, 5 September 2022, available at: [maastrichtuniversity.nl/news/fair-trade-premiums-how-much-reaches-farmers](https://maastrichtuniversity.nl/news/fair-trade-premiums-how-much-reaches-farmers)
- Veldhuyzen van Zanten, C. (2024), *Key Issues: Living Income*, Fairtrade International, Bonn.
- Weil, A. (1995), "The New Politics of coca", *The New Yorker* 15 May 1995, available at: [newyorker.com/magazine/1995/05/15/the-new-politics-of-coca](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1995/05/15/the-new-politics-of-coca)
- WHO Secretariat (2006), "Contribution of traditional medicine to public health: coca leaf - Report by the secretariat", Executive Board, 120th Session [EB120/36]. Geneva: WHO, available at: [apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/EB120/b120\\_36-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/EB120/b120_36-en.pdf)
- Willinger, D.A. (2009), "14 Years ago: COCA 95: 'a necessary drug policy alternative from abroad'", available at: [freedomofmedicineanddiet.blogspot.com/2009/11/14-years-ago-coca-95.html](https://freedomofmedicineanddiet.blogspot.com/2009/11/14-years-ago-coca-95.html)
- WIPO (2017), "World intellectual property report 2017: intangible capital in global value chains", Geneva: WIPO, available at: [wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo\\_pub\\_944\\_2017.pdf](https://wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_944_2017.pdf)

WIPO (2023), "Lisbon agreement for the protection of appellations of origin and their international registration. . . ; status on May 11, 2023", Geneva: WIPO, available at: [wipo.int/export/sites/www/treaties/en/docs/pdf/lisbon.pdf](http://wipo.int/export/sites/www/treaties/en/docs/pdf/lisbon.pdf)

Wolf, M. and McQuitty, S. (2011), "Understanding the do-it-yourself consumer: DIY motivations and outcomes", *AMS Review*, Vol. 1 Nos 3/4, pp. 154-170.

## Further reading

Mathews, T. (2009), "Enhancing the global linkages of cooperatives - The FAIRTRADE option", *United Nations Expert Group Meeting on "Cooperatives in World in Crisis" 28-30 April 2009*, UN, New-York, available at: [un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/cooperatives/Tomy.pdf](http://un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs/2009/cooperatives/Tomy.pdf)

Oomen, J. (2009), "Charla convenios internacionales, COCA 2009, parlamente europeo", available at: [encod.org/app/uploads/2009/03/CHARLA\\_convenio.pdf](http://encod.org/app/uploads/2009/03/CHARLA_convenio.pdf)

Oomen, J. (2015a), "La ruta de la hoja de coca", *Cañamo*, Vol. 205, p. 30.

## Appendix 1

"Amigos de la Hoja de Coca: history of a pioneering coca leaf fair-trade"

*Drugs, Habits and Social Policy*. Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli & Farid Ghehiouèche

During the peer review process of the article, a reviewer suggested pathways to address the questions raised in the article's section on lessons learnt & policy ideas: "how would an AHC-like trade impact rural tourism? Would the transformation of derived products serve local industrial development, or be externalised in developed countries? Could such a model reduce risks of biopiracy and traditional intellectual property capture by external stakeholders?"

*The reviewer's proposals are reproduced below:*

« These recommendations aim to address potential impacts on rural tourism, support local industrial development, and safeguard against biopiracy and traditional intellectual property capture within the framework of the international coca leaf project.

### 1. Impact on rural tourism:

- Conduct a comprehensive impact assessment to understand the potential effects of an "Amigos de la Hoja de Coca"-like trade on rural tourism.
- Involve local stakeholders, including tourism operators and communities, in discussions and planning to ensure their perspectives are considered.
- Promote sustainable tourism practices that incorporate coca-related experiences, respecting both cultural and environmental aspects.
- Implement educational programs for tourists to create awareness about the coca leaf and its cultural significance, addressing any misconceptions.

### 2. Transformation of derived products:

- Encourage value-added processing of coca leaf products at the local level to boost local industrial development.
- Develop partnerships with local businesses and cooperatives to support the production of coca-derived goods.
- Monitor and regulate the export of coca-related products to ensure that value remains within the producing communities and countries.
- Promote fair-trade practices to ensure that local producers receive equitable compensation for their products.

### 3. Reducing risks of biopiracy and intellectual property capture:

- Establish a framework for protecting traditional knowledge related to coca and its uses.

- Promote legal mechanisms for patenting and protecting coca-related intellectual property.
- Collaborate with international organisations and legal experts to ensure that local communities have legal protection against biopiracy.
- Advocate for transparency and ethical business practices when engaging with external stakeholders, including corporations and research institutions, to prevent unauthorised exploitation of traditional knowledge. »

*Source:* By author

### Corresponding author

Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli can be contacted at: [kenzi@zemou.li](mailto:kenzi@zemou.li)

---

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:  
[www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm](http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm)  
Or contact us for further details: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)