

The Ethiopian journey was certainly a whirlwind tour! On arrival, we had a meeting at the new offices of **SCFCU** and their processing plant. Then it was onward from **Addis Ababa** to **Ziway**. There we meet **Hessen Ahmed** of **Soil and More** and toured the complex. The complex encompasses a large area of abandoned seemingly unproductive land. Through his composting production, Hessen is transforming the area into luscious soil and productive land. A live fence lines the perimeter, along with hundreds of healthy fruit trees growing in the revitalized nutrient dense soil. Various bird species inhabit the site so not only is there a visual before and after contrast, but an oral one as well! As I walked the complex, I felt that a visionary oasis was being created.

Revitalizing Land

The next day we travelled to **Virga Alem** for "*Composting 101*" at the **Furra Institute**. Led by Hessen, our farmer partners from SCFU made for an eager and attentive audience! Hessen's teaching method is captivating, and his enthusiasm for compost is contagious.

Walking the streets of Virga Alem, Ethiopia, children would run beside us to keep up with us. Their facial expressions serious until we'd smile at them, then they start to talk exuberantly, attempting to engage us. Their smiles are permanently pressed in my memory. Their gaze grounds me. I cannot walk that "heroic western mythos", I am only a privileged witness to the power of work that is done in supporting each other. Farmers and their children are the roots of our future. Again that word: "*privileged*", to be part of the work of **Cooperative Coffees**.

After the classroom work, we all went out to the community's processing plant centre to build a compost pile. Everyone got involved. It was definitely hands on learning and over the next couple of days we covered the proper composition, humidity, and temperature that make a productive compost pile. I am sure the hot weather helped and by the end of it, our compost pile looked great!



The Making of Compost



Back at the offices of SCFCU, we reported on the workshop and had a tour of their new processing plant in operation. Soil and More will continue to monitor and support the farmers with their composting efforts. The proof will be in the pudding, or should I say cherries, once farmers begin to use the nutrient rich compost on their plots.

As chair of **Cooperative Coffee's Impact Committee**, this was a powerful opportunity to see the change that can be wrought, from the ground up with a little dirt and as my Grandma used to say "a little elbow grease goes a long way".

Many thanks to our hosts, guides, and partners for the hospitality and sharing of knowledge.

Kevin

At SCFU, hand-sorting for quality

