

Session 4

Celebrating my country



‘Cocoa is like having a cow which you milk every day; with coffee it’s a once-a-year harvest.’

Harry Espino, a farmer with two children

Nicaragua is known as the land of lakes and volcanoes because of the number of lagoons and lakes it has, and the chain of volcanoes that runs from the north to the south along the Pacific side of the country. By 2006, tourism had become the second largest industry. The majority of tourists are from the US, Central or South America, and Europe, with the main attractions being the beaches, scenic routes, and the beautiful buildings in cities such as León and Granada. Of the many volcanoes, only around seven are now considered active, and many of the rest offer tourist activities such as hiking, climbing, camping and swimming in the crater lakes.



Coffee, chocolate and honey

Nearly two-thirds of Nicaragua’s coffee crop comes from the northern part of the central highlands, to the north and east of the town of Estelí. Harry Espino is one of many farmers there. He is married with two children, and farms both coffee and cocoa. Harry has noticed that the changing weather affects his coffee crop. He likes the fact that cocoa is harvested more than once a year, so it gives him and his family a year-round income.

Climate change has been a problem, and has allowed many diseases to develop in the coffee crop. Harry started planting cocoa a few years ago with the help of the technicians from Soppexcca, who showed him how to sow, handle disease, and plant the grafted plants. For many farmers, the future with climate disruption may mean that they can’t grow coffee any more, as coffee needs cooler weather to grow. If the temperature rises, they will need to shift into cocoa, the key ingredient in chocolate. Growing and producing different crops and products is called diversifying. It means that if one crop fails, there are other crops and products that still bring in money.



Bering Ramos, a young farmer, says that she didn’t have any idea how chocolate was made until she visited a chocolate factory that was close to her farm. While there, she was able to see the many processes that are needed to transform the cocoa to chocolate. Many cocoa farmers haven’t ever tasted chocolate!

Arlen Joel Lopez Pineda is a young farmer who lives near Jinotega. Climate change was affecting his crops. Soppexcca suggested a bee keeping project, and the following year he had good honey production. His farm also makes honey products like cough medicines, shampoo and honey chocolate – a creamy honey mixed with chocolate and peanuts.

Arlen explains that even farmers who keep bees are seeing the effects of climate change. ‘In the summer, it’s raining, and then it’s too hot and sunny, when it’s dry you have the flowers, and when the flowers are ready to be harvested by the bees, it rains, and the bees don’t come out of the hives. The farmers harvest the honey from February to May,



and there are three harvests. In the dry season, the bees are fed with a liquid mix of sugar and water to keep them strong. After that, a special screen is put in and they get to work producing the honey. Once the honey is extracted, it is put into a sediment tank, and then it is poured into the pots and labelled. Producing honey is something pretty. It is not polluting, and is helping to pollinate the flowers.'



Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for the beauty of Nicaragua. We pray that you will help the farmers find the best crops to grow and the best time to grow them. We thank you for the bees of the air and for the wonderful way that you have designed them to keep every other aspect of your creation going. We pray your protection over the bees and that you will help people understand just how important they are. Amen.

Active prayer

Take your seed bombs (see below) and pray a prayer over the soil or area in which you throw the seeds, asking God to bless the soil for good germination and attraction to bees.

Bible link *(International Children's Bible)*

Proverbs 25:16 *'If you find honey, don't eat too much. Too much of it will make you sick.'*

Proverbs 24:13 *'My child, eat honey because it is good. Honey from the honeycomb tastes sweet.'*

- Have you ever tasted the sweetness of honey? Why not try some on hot, buttered toast?
- Honey is good and pleasant, but too much is not good for you. Think about other things in your life that are good or fun, but too much of which can be bad for you. Too much fast food can make you fat; eating too many sweets rots your teeth; too much cake, biscuits and chocolate can cause health problems such as diabetes; watching your computer or mobile phone screen all day can affect your sleep.

Game **The chocolate game**

You will need: A Fairtrade wrapped bar of chocolate; a plate; a knife and fork; some dressing-up items – at least a hat, scarf, and gloves; two dice.

How to play: Put the Fairtrade chocolate on the plate with the cutlery nearby and sit the children around it in a circle. Take it in turns to roll the dice, passing them around the circle. When someone rolls a double, they leap into the centre of the circle, put on the dressing up clothes, and start to unwrap and eat the Fairtrade chocolate, using only the knife and fork. They keep going until someone else rolls a double, then that person takes over. If there is a large group, make two teams and see which team finishes the chocolate first.



Greta wonders... Why are farmers in Nicaragua having to change what they grow? What do the farmers in your local area specialise in, and have they had to change their methods of farming? In Nicaragua, many children would be helping on the farm as well as doing their school studies. Have you ever visited a working farm? What do you think it would be like working on a farm?

Action point

Make seed bombs. You need wildflower seeds (these are available from Commitment for Life), soil, flour, water and a mixing bowl. Mix 10 parts soil to 1 part flour. Slowly add water, and mix to form a sticky dough. Roll this into a golf ball-sized ball. Put seeds on a tray, and roll the ball over them until it is coated with seeds. Allow to dry for two days. It's then ready to throw in your garden or on a patch of unused ground.

Could you arrange a trip to visit a honey farm, or arrange for a beekeeper to visit the group to talk about why bees are so important for the environment? www.bbka.org.uk/find-beekeeping-near-you Or watch Bee Movie (2007) to see the importance of bees to the environment.

Activity

- Make Chocolate Krispies, and try using honey instead of golden syrup. See the resources page www.urb.org.uk/go-with-greta-and-connect for the recipe. Melt together 150g fairtrade chocolate, 100g butter and 4 tbsp honey or syrup. Gradually stir in 100g cereal. Allow to set.
- Make a coffee bean coaster. You need old CDs or DVDs, coffee beans, PVA glue and varnish. Glue your coffee beans one by one onto the top side of a CD, and allow the glue to dry completely. Once dried, you can varnish with clear varnish and then enjoy your mug of coffee resting on a bed of its own beans and its aroma.

