Mission report

Subject	Specialty Coffee Expo 2025 and connected events
Place and dates	Houston – 22 to 29 April 2025
ICO staff member	Vanúsia Nogueira, Executive Director
Purpose of travel	• Participate in the Specialty Coffee Expo 2025 (25-27/04/25) • Participate in the Re:co Symposium on the topic of green coffee identity (23-24/04/25) • Participate in the Board meeting of the Alliance of Coffee Excellence (ACE)/Cup of Excellence (CoE) Board meeting (28/04/2025)
Five-Year Action Plan/Programme of Activities relevance	• Strategic Goal III: Facilitating the development of projects and promotion programmes through public-private partnerships • Results and Deliverables from the PoA: <u>Planned Result III.A: Identification, development and fund mobilization of technical assistance and investment projects for exporting countries</u> o III.A.4 Advocacy and advice for the establishment of partnerships and collaboration with the donor community/mobilization of resources for coffee development projects. <u>Planned Result III.B: Enhancing the promotion of coffee consumption by strengthening cooperation with the private sector</u> o III.B.5 Consultations and advice in support of the monitoring and implementation of regional domestic consumption programmes o III.B.6 Outreach programmes, special events and information/promotional materials

OVERVIEW

1. <u>Specialty Coffee Expo 2025 - Houston</u>

The Specialty Coffee Expo is the leading global event for the coffee industry, bringing together producers, roasters, retailers, food and beverage professionals, and passionate enthusiasts. The event is hosted by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), and offers a vibrant show featuring the latest technology, high-quality products, and innovative solutions, along with educational lectures and hands-on workshops designed to refine skills and prompt growth, in the coffee

sector. Attendees can explore every aspect of the specialty coffee segment, from sourcing and roasting to brewing and retailing.

The following 18 countries were exhibiting at the Expo 2025 in Houston: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Ethiopia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Rwanda. Of these, the Executive Director held bilateral meetings with Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Indonesia, Mexico, and Peru.

The Executive Director participated in several lectures to gather in-depth information and updates on the latest trends and developments within the specialty coffee segment. This engagement aims to ensure that relevant and timely insights can be effectively communicated and transferred to ICO Members whenever relevant.

2. Re:co Symposium on the topic of green coffee identity

The Re:co Symposium's "Spotlight" series, convened a small, expert group ahead of the Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston to collaboratively explore and sharpen the definition of "green coffee identity" in light of rapid processing innovations. Participants aimed to determine whether an industry consensus or standard terminology is feasible, and to build a shared vocabulary that can guide the sector amid emerging processing revolution trends.

3. Board meeting of the Alliance of Coffee Excellence (ACE)/Cup of Excellence (CoE)

The Executive Director participated in the meeting of the Cup of Excellence (CoE) Board as one of its members. The Cup of Excellence programme was originally established through the Café Gourmet Project and supported by the ICO and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) between 1997 and 1999. Since its inception, the programme has provided valuable support to several ICO Member countries that produce high-quality Arabica coffees. Given its success, there is growing interest in expanding the programme to include Robusta-producing countries as well, in order to promote excellence and value addition in the Robusta coffee sector.

CONCLUSIONS/MAIN OUTCOMES

1. Specialty Coffee Expo 2025 – Houston

Among the key announcements made at the Expo:

(a) The Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) is taking over the management of the Q Grader programme from the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) as of 1 October 1 2025. The Q Grader programme will be integrated with SCA's Coffee Value Assessment (CVA) framework and referred to as the "evolved" Q Grader programme. Existing Q Grader certifications remain valid until their expiration dates. Q Graders are eligible for a fast track to the evolved Q system by completing a two-day CVA for Cuppers course by 31 December 2025. Full Press Release **here**.

(b) The Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) is promoting the Coffee Value Assessment (CVA) as a new, comprehensive framework for evaluating specialty coffees, aiming to improve understanding and drive increased consumption. The CVA moves beyond the traditional cupping system, offering a more detailed and transparent assessment of

coffee, considering not just flavour, but also factors like traceability, sustainability, and consistency. This approach is designed to foster a more informed and engaged coffee community, benefiting producers, buyers, and consumers alike. Colombia and Brazil are the first countries to make the CVA the official standard for their national specialty coffees. The ICO took part in both announcements and played an active role in the negotiations between the Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA) and SCA. Press release for **Colombia** and **Brazil**.

(c) The Specialty Coffee Association is introducing a more accessible pricing model to make learning more accessible, affordable, and equitable for coffee professionals everywhere. This new approach marks a significant step toward expanding access to high-quality coffee education across diverse regions and economic contexts, empowering a broader community of learners and fostering a more inclusive and resilient coffee industry. The ICO has been actively involved in this transformation process since its early stage, recognizing its strategic alignment with the objectives outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) in December 2023. This collaboration specifically aims to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of educational programs for coffee-producing countries. More details about the new pricing model **here**.

2. Re:co Symposium on the topic of green coffee identity

There is a need to work on multiple fronts in order to address the topic of infusions and flavourings with safety and professionalism. The main outcomes from the discussion were:

(a) Lack of specific scientific basis for the coffee industry (regarding applicable nomenclatures) and uncertainty around food safety criteria (chemical and biological risks – inputs vs. outputs)

(b) Lack of transparency along the value chain, posing risks to public health and to the entire value chain

(c) Topic to be discussed within the ICO through inputs by producing countries that were present at the event. SCA to bring up the topic within the Private Sector Consultative Board as one of its members. Possible focus:

(i) Basic standardization of technical terms in processing, supported by the scientific community.

(ii) Establish partnerships with research institutions for the development of chemical markers and methodologies to scientifically differentiate the proposed categories.

3. Board meeting of the Alliance of Coffee Excellence (ACE)/Cup of Excellence (CoE)

The decision to launch a new quality selection programme specifically dedicated to *canephora* (robusta) coffees has been confirmed. While structured similarly to a competition, it will not carry the Cup of Excellence (CoE) branding or format. Brazil will lead the way by implementing a pilot edition in the second half of 2025.

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