

Communication from PROMECAFE

1. The Executive Director attaches a communication from the Regional Cooperative Programme for the Technological Development and Modernization of Coffee Farming (PROMECAFE) regarding the draft “SCA Standard 110-2026 Green Coffee: Grading, Specifications, and Test Methods (for the Purpose of Trading)”, prepared by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA).

ACGT/P-072
September 24th, 2026**Mr Michael Wheeler**

Chair, International Coffee Council

Ms Vanúsia Nogueira

Executive Director, International Coffee Organization (ICO) — London, United Kingdom

Subject: PROMECAFE regional position on the draft SCA-110 standard (green coffee classification).

Dear Mr Wheeler and Ms Nogueira:

The Regional Cooperative Program for the Technological Development and Modernization of Coffee Farming (PROMECAFE) —which brings together the coffee institutes and institutions of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, along with IICA and CATIE— sets out its regional position on the proposed SCA-110 standard for the classification of green coffee, promoted by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) with the support of the International Coffee Organization (ICO).

We value the effort to modernize the classification of green coffee and to move toward a common language across origins. However, as a producing region, we state that the current proposal on the definition of specialty coffee and its classification grades is not acceptable, in the terms presented, to the member countries of PROMECAFE, since its implementation could generate significant impacts and adverse consequences for our coffee sectors, according to the scope and implications that have been presented to us. We consider that it requires technical adjustments and a broader consultation process before moving forward. We recognize that this is an open process —through a focus group— and that any ICO rule requires the consensus of its members; it is in this constructive spirit that we present the following considerations.

What the SCA-110 proposes

To situate our observations, we understand that the draft (June 2026) essentially proposes the following:

- To define specialty green coffee based on the **Coffee Value Assessment (CVA)**, by its distinctive attributes and the additional market value they generate.
- To establish **six grades (1 to 6)** according to the accumulation of attributes.
- That **each local coffee organization define which grades are considered “specialty” in its country.**
- To broaden the scope to **other species** (besides arabica: canephora/robusta, liberica, eugenioides, among others).
- A timeline foreseeing submission to the Standardization Panel in October, **publication of the standard in December 2026**, and a pilot project in 2027.



Our considerations

1. **Scope and meaning of the concept of specialty.** We value that origin has a role in the classification; however, having each country locally define which grades constitute “specialty”, together with the inclusion of other species, could make the term relative across markets and dilute the meaning of exceptional quality that the market and consumers recognize. We suggest establishing common minimum criteria that preserve the global consistency of the concept and protect superior quality. In addition, the inclusion of other species must be technically validated, considering that the provisional physical guide was developed for washed arabica coffee.
2. **Physical parameters of green coffee.** Green coffee quality also rests on verifiable physical parameters —moisture, density, screen size (granulometry) and water activity—, widely used in commercialization. We request that they be kept as an integral part of the classification and that progressive defect limits be established for all grades, in particular a defined maximum for category 2 defects in grades 2 and 3, currently without an established limit.
3. **Balanced application of the CVA methodology.** The CVA is a valuable tool for evaluating and describing attributes; however, the Descriptive Assessment should not, on its own, determine the classification, since the presence or intensity of an attribute does not necessarily equal quality. It must be balanced with the physical, affective and extrinsic assessments, without displacing technical cupping or the historical traceability of attributes.
4. **Recognition of the value of higher-quality coffees.** An excessive relaxation of the requirements could devalue the effort of thousands of producers and farming families —research, agronomic management, selective harvesting, processing, traceability—. Modernization must not mean a reduction of requirements; these efforts deserve to be recognized and protected through clear and demanding criteria.
5. **Preservation of origin.** Any standardization or recognition of specialty coffees must not cause the loss of origin. We propose that the grade nomenclature incorporate the country of origin —for example, “Arabica Coffee, [Origin], Grade 2”—, so that international comparability coexists with the identity and value of each origin.
6. **Accessibility and costs for the small producer.** The methodology may be costly and difficult to access for small producers and their organizations, as it requires, among others, the participation of at least three Q Graders, specialized equipment, sample preparation and shipping, and calibrated moisture meters. The draft does not present an analysis of these costs nor mechanisms for accompaniment, training or support for actors with lower technical and economic capacity; we request that these be incorporated.

Regional request

Accordingly, and gathering the voice of the member countries, we respectfully request:

1. **That the ICO, as the managing member of the process**, delay the start of the implementation timeline —currently foreseen for December 2026— in order to incorporate the observations of the producing countries.
2. **That the nature and scope of the standard be clarified** (voluntary, contractual, regulatory or indicative), preventing it from becoming a commercial barrier or generating confusion in the market and among consumers. We also note that the draft does not refer to “ICO contracts”, so we request that this point be clarified.
3. **That an agreed, technical and inclusive process be maintained**, leaving the door open to jointly build the proposal, in accordance with the request of the member countries.

We wish to emphasize that **we do not oppose innovation or the evolution of coffee evaluation methodologies**; on the contrary, we support them. Our interest is that any modernization strengthens—and does not weaken—the meaning of specialty and the recognition of the work of those who produce the highest-quality coffees.

Our commitments

Accordingly, PROMECAFE undertakes the following commitments:

1. Promote a regional technical exchange space among the producing countries to analyze the proposal, identify its implications and consolidate the region's main technical observations.
2. Build and present a regional position from Mesoamerica and the Caribbean, with concrete observations and proposals, before the organizations responsible for the initiative.
3. Follow up on and take part in the consultation processes of the ICO and the SCA, including the focus group convened by the ICO for September 22, 2026, and the joint session foreseen at World of Coffee Panama.
4. Promote training and technical transfer on the CVA and green coffee classification, through the institutes of each country.
5. Keep the topic on PROMECAFE's institutional agenda, ahead of the discussions foreseen for December 2026.

Guiding principle

We reaffirm that any methodology for classifying, evaluating or defining specialty coffee must place the producer and the farming family at its center. Its ultimate purpose must be to generate real benefits for those who produce our coffee:

- Better commercialization conditions.
- Greater recognition and value for quality.
- Access to differentiated markets.
- Transparency and trust in commercial relations.

- Economic sustainability and the permanence of families in coffee farming.

Innovation and new methodologies must serve coffee farming and must not become barriers that weaken the recognition of our producers' work. In that spirit, PROMECAFE reaffirms its willingness to engage in constructive, technical and inclusive dialogue, and its commitment to accompany this process for the benefit of coffee farming in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean.

Annex — Technical inputs for the working session

As a contribution to the focus group and the technical sessions, the region proposes to put on the table, among others, the following elements:

- Common minimum criteria that preserve the global consistency of the concept of specialty and protect superior quality.
- Incorporation and weighting of physical parameters: moisture, density, screen size (granulometry) and water activity.
- Progressive defect limits per grade, with a defined maximum for category 2 defects in grades 2 and 3.
- Technical validation of the inclusion of other species (the provisional physical guide was developed for washed arabica).
- Balance among the descriptive, physical, affective and extrinsic assessments of the CVA.
- Grade nomenclature that preserves origin (e.g., “Arabica Coffee, [Origin], Grade 2”).
- Cost analysis and mechanisms for accompaniment, training and support for small producers and organizations (Q Graders, equipment, samples and calibrated meters).

Quality, the foundation of specialty. The producer, at the center of the chain.

Sincerely,



Daniel Dubón

Executive Secretary — PROMECAFE

On behalf of the Board of Directors of PROMECAFE