



**ORGANIZACIÓN
INTERNACIONAL
DEL CAFÉ**

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**Informe de la 5.^a reunión del Grupo de
Discusión sobre Cafés Especiales
celebrada el 22 de septiembre de 2026**

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INFORME DE LA 5.ª REUNIÓN DEL GRUPO DE DISCUSIÓN SOBRE CAFÉS ESPECIALES CELEBRADA EL 22 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 2026

1. Este informe presenta las deliberaciones de la 5.ª reunión del Grupo de Discusión sobre Cafés Especiales, presidida por la Directora Ejecutiva, la Dra. Vanúsia Nogueira, y celebrada el 22 de septiembre de 2026.

2. Estuvieron presentes en línea, mediante el software Zoom, representantes de los siguientes países miembros: Angola, Brasil, Camerún, El Salvador, India, Noruega, Togo y la Unión Europea (incluidos Francia, Alemania e Italia). También participaron representantes de la Asociación de Cafés Especiales (*Specialty Coffee Association* – SCA).

Tema 1: Orden del día provisional

3. La Directora Ejecutiva presentó el orden del día provisional, incluido en el documento [FGSC-07/26](#), que fue aprobado por el Grupo de Discusión sin comentarios.

Tema 2: Informe de la 4.ª reunión del Grupo de Discusión sobre Cafés Especiales

4. La Directora Ejecutiva presentó el informe de la cuarta reunión del Grupo de Discusión, celebrada en San Pedro Sula, Honduras, el 13 de octubre de 2025, tal como figura en el documento [FGSC-06/26](#). El Grupo de Discusión aprobó el informe sin comentarios.

Tema 3: Norma propuesta para el café verde

5. La Directora Ejecutiva recordó que, tal como se refleja en los párrafos 20 y 24 del documento [FGSC-06/26](#), el Grupo de Discusión había acordado invitar a la SCA a participar formalmente en su labor. Informó a los participantes que la SCA había comenzado a trabajar en una definición común para el café de especialidad y también en una propuesta de norma para el café verde, que desde entonces se había discutido en 2026 en la sede de la Organización Internacional del Café (OIC) en Londres (febrero); en el World of Coffee de San Diego (abril); con los miembros de la Federación de Café de la ASEAN en el World of Coffee de Bangkok (mayo); y en el World of Coffee de Bruselas (junio), así como durante intercambios virtuales con los Miembros.

6. La Sra. Kim Elena Ionescu, Directora de Desarrollo Estratégico de la SCA, explicó que la propuesta consistía en una norma de clasificación para el café verde basada en la Evaluación del Valor de Café (*Coffee Value Assessment* – CVA), adoptada por la SCA en 2024 para reemplazar las normas que databan en su mayoría de alrededor de 2004, y en la definición de café de especialidad basada en atributos de la SCA de 2021.¹ Señaló que los grados nacionales medían

¹ La norma correspondiente se adjunta como Anexo I.

atributos diferentes y no podían compararse. Afirmó que una norma única proporcionaría a compradores y vendedores un lenguaje común, al tiempo que cambiaría solo un elemento de los contratos de café verde: la designación nacional, que sería sustituida por un grado de la SCA.

7. La Sra. Ionescu agregó que la CVA evaluaba la calidad a través de cuatro componentes: físicos (como la humedad y el tamaño del grano), descriptivos y afectivos (ambos realizados durante la cata) y extrínsecos (como el origen, la finca, la variedad y el procesamiento).²

8. El Sr. Mario Fernández-Alduenda, vicepresidente técnico de la SCA, informó que, en la reunión celebrada en Londres en febrero de 2026 entre la Asociación de los Cafés Finos de África (AFCA), la Asociación Brasileña de Cafés Especiales (BSCA), la Junta del Café de la India, la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros (FNC) de Colombia, la Asociación de Cafés Especiales de Indonesia (SCAI), la Asociación de Café y Cacao de Viet Nam (VICOFA) y la OIC, los participantes habían adaptado la definición de la SCA de café especial –que era descriptiva más que prescriptiva– al caso del café verde y habían comenzado a redactar especificaciones técnicas. Presentó la definición resultante:

El café verde de especialidad consiste en los granos enteros secos del género Coffea. Se reconoce por sus atributos distintivos, que se identifican mediante la Evaluación del Valor del Café, y debido a estos atributos, tiene un valor agregado significativo en el mercado.

9. El Sr. Fernández-Alduenda explicó que la definición excluía otras partes de la planta del café y el café sin granos, como el café producido mediante cultivo celular, y abarcaba todas las especies del género *Coffea*. Afirmó que la norma dividía el continuo que va desde el producto básico hasta el café de especialidad en seis grados, desde el Grado 6, que prácticamente no tiene especificaciones, hasta el Grado 1, con los requisitos más estrictos en las cuatro evaluaciones de la CVA, tales como un 10–12 % de humedad, ausencia de defectos de Categoría 1 y hasta 10 defectos de Categoría 2, una taza limpia libre de defectos sensoriales con al menos dos atributos sensoriales deseables, y acceso a información sobre la finca y el procesamiento. Destacó que no todos los grados eran de especialidad y que el valor adicional esperado libre a bordo (FOB) aumentaría del Grado 6 al Grado 1, con el «punto cero» fijado en el Grado 5, correspondiente al café habitual de buena calidad, del tipo que se intercambia en la bolsa de materias primas.

² La presentación de la SCA se adjunta como Anexo II.

10. El Sr. Fernández-Alduenda indicó que las organizaciones locales de café de los países productores establecerían las listas de atributos sensoriales deseables e indeseables, que se darían a conocer públicamente durante al menos tres años, y decidirían qué grados constituían café de especialidad en su país. Informó a los participantes que la SCA tenía previsto publicar la norma a mediados de 2027, en colaboración con el Grupo de Discusión y la OIC, y que se llevarían a cabo nuevos intercambios en las reuniones del Consejo Internacional del Café (CIC) en Ginebra el 29 de septiembre de 2026, en la conferencia de la Asociación Suiza del Comercio del Café (*Swiss Coffee Trade Association* – SCTA) en Montreux el 2 de octubre de 2026 y en World of Coffee Panamá el 22 de octubre de 2026. Invitó a la Secretaría a distribuir el último borrador de la norma.

11. La Directora Ejecutiva subrayó que la propuesta era un trabajo en curso, abierto a consulta y diálogo, y abrió el turno de comentarios.

12. El delegado de El Salvador señaló que los productores eran el único eslabón de la cadena de valor que se encontraba bajo presión, debido a su falta de rentabilidad, y que las normas de calidad del café ya estaban definidas a nivel mundial. Consideró que agregar especificaciones mientras se deja que cada país decida qué grados constituyen café de especialidad presentaba el riesgo de dificultades similares a las encontradas con el Reglamento de la Unión Europea sobre productos libres de deforestación (EUDR), y agregó que la propuesta no abordaba el café con fermentación prolongada o con sabores añadidos, lo que resultaría en una mayor carga para los productores. Señaló que existía un amplio consenso con este punto de vista en toda la región de PROMECAFE, incluyendo en la República Dominicana, Jamaica y Panamá.

13. El Sr. Fernández-Alduenda respondió que, si las normas existentes fueran lo suficientemente claras, el segmento del café de especialidad ya podría medirse. Sin embargo, el Grupo de Discusión ya había establecido que no existía una definición aplicable que permitiera a la OIC cuantificarlo, lo cual había motivado el trabajo de la SCA.

14. El delegado de El Salvador cuestionó hasta qué punto se había adoptado la CVA, señalando que pocos catadores la utilizaban.

15. La Sra. Ionescu reconoció que la adopción llevaba tiempo y señaló que, tras su alianza con el Instituto de Calidad del Café (*Coffee Quality Institute* – CQI) en 2025, la SCA había comenzado a gestionar el programa *Q Grader*, lo cual ayudaría a impulsar su adopción en todo el mundo.

16. El delegado de la UE-Italia recordó que uno de los objetivos clave de la definición era permitir la elaboración de estadísticas sobre los volúmenes de café de especialidad

comercializados y consumidos, algo que el anterior umbral de 80 puntos habría facilitado. Preguntó cómo se podría lograr esto en el marco de la CVA; por ejemplo, si se podría hacer mediante una casilla de selección en los certificados de origen.

17. La Sra. Ionescu afirmó que la SCA colaboraría con instituciones de los países exportadores de café para comprender cómo funcionaba la clasificación en la práctica. Explicó que la norma propuesta eliminaba la subjetividad de las calificaciones al basarse en atributos descriptivos identificados por catadores capacitados, especificaciones físicas como la humedad e información extrínseca, como los datos de las fincas. Coincidió en que se necesitaba un sistema más objetivo para medir el mercado del café de especialidad.

18. El delegado de la UE-Italia sugirió que un análisis estadístico de los resultados otorgados por diferentes catadores sobre la misma muestra podría respaldar la calibración. Aunque reconoció el valor de la clasificación de calidad («*Q grading*») y de la CVA, no estaba del todo convencido de que la CVA pudiera armonizarse en todas partes y consideró que se necesitaba un sistema que fuera lo más objetivo posible.

19. El Sr. Fernández-Alduenda explicó que, tras 20 años de experiencia con su anterior protocolo de cata, la SCA había constatado que la calibración solo funcionaba dentro de cadenas de suministro individuales o en mercados con preferencias claras, y que la creciente diversidad de mercados, métodos de procesamiento, variedades y especies hacía imposible una calibración universal y un acuerdo global sobre el significado de una calificación de 80 puntos.

20. El delegado de El Salvador afirmó que el café no podía reducirse a unas pocas características, ya que las preferencias variaban. A modo de ejemplo, se refirió a la variedad *Pacamara*, que a algunos consumidores les gustaba y a otros no, y sugirió que el Grupo de Discusión identificara otras formas de medir el mercado del café de especialidad.

21. La Directora Ejecutiva señaló que no había prisa, y recordó que el trabajo del Grupo de Discusión había partido de la ambición de los Miembros de medir el tamaño del mercado del café de especialidad, lo cual había puesto de manifiesto la ausencia de una definición común. Hizo hincapié en que la OIC solo podría incorporar una definición o norma con el consenso de los Miembros, incluso en cuanto a su uso con fines estadísticos, y que no había un plazo fijo. Acogió con satisfacción la participación de países consumidores, como Noruega.

22. El Director Ejecutivo de la BSCA, el Sr. Vinicius Estrela, informó que el programa *Cup of Excellence* había introducido este año un enfoque en el que se pedía a los catadores que identificaran perfiles de café, lo cual había mejorado la alineación y la calibración, incluso en la puntuación. Consideró que, según la experiencia de la BSCA, la definición de café verde de

especialidad ayudaba a conectar a los países productores con los consumidores y facilitaba la comunicación a lo largo de la cadena de valor.

Tema 4: Otros asuntos

23. No se trataron otros asuntos. La Directora Ejecutiva señaló que la SCA asistiría a las reuniones del CIC en Ginebra la semana siguiente, lo que brindaría nuevas oportunidades para el debate.

Tema 5: Fecha de la próxima reunión

24. La Directora Ejecutiva informó a los participantes que la próxima reunión del Grupo de Discusión se organizaría después de las reuniones en Ginebra y que se consideraría la posibilidad de celebrar futuras reuniones de forma presencial.

SCA Standard 110-2026

Green Coffee: Grading, Specifications, and Test Methods (for the Purpose of Trading)

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SCA Standard 110-2026 was developed under the SCA's standards development program with the assistance of the following contributors:

SCA's Standard Development Panel

Yi-Ling Wu

Luiz Roberto Saldanha Rodrigues

Nzamura Mbaho Malliavin

Crystal Glaspie

Simon James

Expert Group

African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA)

Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA)

Coffee Board of India

Colombian Coffee Growers Federation (FNC)

International Coffee Organization (ICO)

Specialty Coffee Association of Indonesia (SCAI)

Ms. Sunalini Menon

Vietnamese Cocoa and Coffee Association (VICOFA)

SCA Staff

Yannis Apostolopoulos (Chief Executive Officer)

Kim Elena Ionescu (Chief Strategy Development Officer)

Mario Fernández-Alduenda (Technical VP)

Mirna Nagi-McGowan (Research and Knowledge Program Manager)

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Green Coffee: Grading, Specifications, and Test Methods (for the Purpose of Trading)

1. Preface

The objective of this Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) standard is to classify green coffee by grade for trading purposes. To this end, green coffee is classified into six grades. Green coffee grades shall meet defined specifications across the four assessments of the SCA's Coffee Value Assessment: Physical, Descriptive, Affective, and Extrinsic.

Accordingly, for test methods, this standard refers to the existing CVA standards (SCA-102, SCA-103, SCA-104, and SCA-105). In the case of the Physical Assessment, for which an SCA standard has not yet been published, this standard refers to the legacy *Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide*.

2. Scope

This standard classifies green coffee by grade for trading purposes, establishes the specifications for each grade, and references the Coffee Value Assessment (CVA) as test method, with the Descriptive Assessment being mainly considered. Although this standard provides a definition of green specialty coffee, the determination of which grades meet that definition within each producing country is the responsibility of the respective producing-country specialty coffee organization (PC-SCO).

The procedure for an organization to be recognized as a PC-SCO is outside the scope of this standard. Additionally, the procedures that a PC-SCO may follow to further define in-country quality specifications, and potentially to verify, test, or certify coffees, are outside the scope of this standard. The appeal and arbitration procedures are also outside the scope of this standard. This standard specifies that Q Graders shall be used for sensory assessment; however, the training, testing, certification, and quality control of Q Graders are outside the scope of this standard.

3. Normative References

The following are normative references for this standard:

- *SCA Standard 102 (2024) – Coffee Value Assessment: Sample Preparation and Tasting Mechanics*
- *SCA Standard 103 (2024) – Coffee Value Assessment: Descriptive Assessment*
- *SCA Standard 104 (2024) – Coffee Value Assessment: Affective Assessment*
- *SCA Standard 105 (2025) – Coffee Value Assessment: Extrinsic Assessment*
- *The Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide: SCA Handbook (Edition 3)*. Specialty Coffee Association. 2017 (temporary, until the publication of *SCA-107 Coffee Value Assessment: Physical Assessment*)
- *ISO 24115:2012 – Green coffee: Procedure for calibration of moisture meters (Routine method)*

4. Terms and Definitions

4.1 General

Green coffee. A raw material constituted by the hulled, dried beans of the genus *Coffea*.

Green specialty coffee. Green coffee that is recognized for its distinctive attributes, which are identified using Coffee Value Assessment, and because of these attributes, it has significant extra value in the marketplace.

Coffee Value Assessment (CVA). A holistic evaluation system that assesses a coffee's value through

multiple dimensions of attributes—physical, sensory (descriptive and affective), and extrinsic—as described in the SCA standards 102, 103, 104, and 105 (see section 3).

Producing-country specialty coffee organization (PC-SCO). The entity in each producing country responsible for defining the country-specific attributes for those specifications in this standard that are explicitly left open to geographic definition.

Q Grader. A licensed coffee professional who has been certified by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) to evaluate and communicate coffee quality with a high degree of sensory accuracy, consistency, and shared language using the Coffee Value Assessment.

4.2 Physical Assessment

Moisture. The water content of green coffee, expressed as wet basis (w/b), and determined using an instrument calibrated according to ISO 24115:2012.

4.3 Descriptive Assessment

Cup cleanliness. The extent to which a cup is free of undesirable flavors ("clean"). Undesirable flavors are origin-specific, measured through the CVA Descriptive Assessment, and defined by the local PC-SCO. Cup Cleanliness may affect the impression of quality in the Affective Assessment of the coffee, especially regarding the sections of Fragrance, Aroma, Flavor, and/or Aftertaste (see 7.2.2).

Flavor contamination. An unwanted alteration of a coffee's sensory profile caused by exposure to external odors, chemicals, microorganisms, packaging materials, or cross contact with other foods. In coffee, such contamination is commonly perceived either as a flavor note outside the *SCA/WCR/UC Davis Cup Tasters Flavor Wheel* (such as "detergent" or "blue cheese") or as an excessively intense, unwanted flavor note within the Wheel (e.g., petroleum, animalic, isovaleric acid, pepper). Flavor contamination may affect the impression of quality in the Affective Assessment of the coffee, especially regarding the sections of Flavor, and Aftertaste (see 7.2.3).

Desirable Sensory Attributes. Sensory attributes considered desirable in coffee from a specific origin. Desirable sensory attributes are measured through the CVA Descriptive Assessment, and defined by the local PC-SCO.

High -intensity attributes. The count of cupping sections—fragrance, aroma, flavor, aftertaste, acidity, sweetness, and mouthfeel—with a mean intensity greater than 10.0, as measured in the CVA Descriptive Assessment. See SCA 103 (2024).

Astringency. A mouth-drying mouthfeel. A drying, puckering, or tingling sensation on the surface and/or edge of the tongue and mouth. Exemplified by alum solution.

4.4 Affective Assessment

Sensory defect. An olfactory or gustatory property of the coffee that is broadly seen as negative. SCA 104 (2024) limits the options for sensory defects to phenolic, moldy, and potato.

4.5 Extrinsic Assessment

Farming information. Information related to the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of coffee fruits. Within the extrinsic assessment in SCA 105 (2025), the *Farming* category includes the following attributes: country, region, name of farm or cooperative, name of producer(s), species, variety or blend of varieties, harvest date/year, and other.

Processing Information. Information related to how green coffee beans are prepared for stable transportation and storage from the coffee fruit. Within the extrinsic assessment in SCA-105 (2025), the *Processing* category includes the following attributes: name of processor(s) (wet mill/processing station, dry mill, other), process type (washed, natural, other), process description, and decaffeinated.

4.6 Temporary definitions (see Section 8)

Physical defects. The number of full defects, as per *The Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide*.

Category 1 defects. As per *The Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide*, full black, full sour, dried cherry, fungus damage, foreign matter, and severe insect damage.

Category 2 defects. As per *The Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide*, partial black, partial sour, parchment, floater, immature / unripe, withered, shell, broken / chipped / cut, hull / husk, and slight insect damage.

5. Classification

Depending on the attributes it presents across the different CVA assessments, green coffee is classified in six grades. Each grade is indicated by a number: 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1.

6. Specifications

Each grade of green coffee shall meet a different set of specifications across the different CVA assessments. The specifications for each grade of green coffee are summarized in Table 1 (which is split into two parts below).

Table 1 Specifications of green coffee by grade, and test methods for each specification (Part 1, grades 6, 5, and 4)

Specification	Grade 6	Grade 5	Grade 4	Test Method
<i>6.1 Physical</i>				
Moisture	- ^a	-	10-12% ^b	7.1
Physical defects	-	-	-	8 (Temporary)
<i>6.2. Descriptive</i>				
Cup cleanliness	-	-	Clean cup	7.2.2
Flavor contamination	-	Free	Free	7.2.3
Desirable sensory attributes	-	-	-	7.2.4
High-intensity attributes	-	-	-	7.3
Astringency	-	-	-	7.2.5
<i>6.3 Affective</i>				
Sensory defects	-	Free	Free	7.4
<i>6.4 Extrinsic</i>				
Farming information	-	-	-	7.5.1
Processing information	-	-	-	7.5.2
<i>Expected FOB extra value addition^c</i>	(-)	0	(+)	<i>Not tested</i>

Table 24 Specifications of green coffee by grade, and test methods for each specification (part 2, grades 3, 2, and 1)

Specification	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Test Method
<i>6.1 Physical</i>				
Moisture	10-12% ^b	10-12% ^b	10-12% ^b	7.1
Physical defects	Free from Category 1 defects	Free from Category 1 defects	Free from Category 1 defects, and up to 10 Category 2 defects	8 (Temporary)
<i>6.2. Descriptive</i>				
Cup cleanliness	Clean cup	Clean cup	Clean cup	7.2.2
Flavor contamination	Free	Free	Free	7.2.3
Desirable sensory attributes	-	At least one	At least two	7.2.4
High-intensity attributes	At least one	At least two	At least two	7.3
Astringency	-	Not allowed	Not allowed	7.2.5
<i>6.3 Affective</i>				
Sensory defects	Free	Free	Free	7.4
<i>6.4 Extrinsic</i>				
Farming information	At least one (general)	At least two, including farm name	At least three, including farm name	7.5.1
Processing information	Required	Required	Required	7.5.2
<i>Expected FOB extra value addition^c</i>	(++)	(+++)	(++++)	<i>Not tested</i>

Notes:

(a) The dash, "-", denotes no specification.

(b) Moisture content is expressed in wet basis.

(c) The expected FOB extra value is not prescriptive and is given for indicative purposes. The (-), 0, (+), (++) , (+++) , and (++++) signs are given to express the magnitude of extra value (free on board – FOB) relative to the local FOB value of commodity coffee, and range from below the commodity coffee value, in the case of Grade 6 to several times the value of commodity coffee, in the case of Grade 1.

6.1 Physical specifications

6.1.1 **Moisture.** Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 shall have moisture between 10.0 and 12.0%.

6.1.2 **Physical defects.** Grades 1, 2, and 3 shall have 0 (zero) full Category 1 defects. In addition, grade 1 shall have up to ten full Category 2 defects. See section 8.

6.2 Descriptive sensory specifications

6.2.1 **Cup cleanliness.** Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 shall present a clean cup.

6.2.2 Flavor contamination. Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 shall be free of flavor contamination.

6.2.3 Desirable sensory attributes. Grade 2 shall present at least one desirable attribute, and grade 1 shall present at least two desirable attributes.

6.2.4 High-intensity attributes. Grade 3 shall present at least one high-intensity attribute; grade 2 and grade 1 shall present at least two high-intensity attributes.

6.3 Affective sensory specifications

6.3.1 Sensory defects. Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 shall be free of sensory defects (moldy, phenolic, and potato).

6.4 Extrinsic specifications

6.4.1 Farming information. This refers to the number of non-confidential fields that shall be available for each grade among the following farming information fields: *region, name of farm or cooperative, name of producers, and variety or varieties*. For grade 3, at least one field of farming information shall be available; for grade 2, at least two fields shall be available, including the name of farm or cooperative, and for grade 1, at least three fields of information shall be available, including the name of farm or cooperative.

6.4.2 Processing information. For the grades where it is required, processing information shall include process type and may additionally include the name of processor(s), and the process description. For grades 1, 2, and 3 the availability of processing information is required.

7. Test Methods

7.1 Moisture

A moisture-content measuring instrument based on capacitance shall be used to test moisture in green beans. The instrument shall be calibrated against moisture data obtained using the method in ISO 24115:2012. The sample used shall depend on the type of instrument. Replicate measurements (3–5) should be performed. The results are reported in percentage of moisture in wet basis.

7.2 Descriptive qualitative attributes

7.2.1 General procedure. The cup cleanliness, absence of flavor contamination, desirable sensory attributes, and absence of astringency are tested through CVA Descriptive Assessment. A minimum of 3 Q Graders shall assess the coffee, using the CVA Descriptive Assessment (see SCA-103), though the Q Graders may assess the same coffee asynchronously and at separate locations. A descriptor is considered *present* in a coffee if it is reported by a majority of the participating Q Graders. See the Appendix for examples.

7.2.2 Cup cleanliness. Each PC-SCO shall define the descriptors that cause a *lack* of cup cleanliness in coffees produced in that PC-SCO's country. Those descriptors shall be selected from the CVA Descriptive Assessment and may be complemented with specific descriptors from *the SCA/WCR/UC Davis Coffee Tasters Flavor Wheel*. The list of descriptors that cause the cup to become unclean shall be published by the PC-SCO, shall be publicly available, and shall remain stable for at least 3 years after each amendment to the list. For a coffee to express cup cleanliness,

the selected descriptors shall not be present (see 7.2.1). The PC-SCO may also provide guidelines on how the impression of quality is affected by a lack of cup cleanliness under the Affective Assessment.

7.2.3 Flavor contamination. Each PC-SCO shall define the descriptors from within *the SCA/WCR/UC Davis Coffee Tasters Flavor Wheel* that may indicate a flavor contamination in coffees produced in that PC-SCO's country, whenever the sensory note is unwanted and excessive. The list of Flavor Wheel descriptors that are common expressions of flavor contamination shall be published by the PC-SCO, shall be publicly available, and shall remain stable for at least 3 years after each amendment to the list. The absence or presence of these descriptors shall be tested as described in 7.2.1. The PC-SCO may also provide guidelines on how the impression of quality is affected by a lack of cup cleanliness under the Affective Assessment.

A different case is that of flavor contaminations expressed as flavor notes from outside the *Flavor Wheel*, for they cannot be foreseen. If a majority of the Q Graders report a descriptor from outside the *Wheel* in the CVA Descriptive Assessment of a coffee, no matter if their freely elicited descriptors are different, the coffee shall be treated as potentially contaminated, and a confirmatory descriptive assessment shall be done by a different group of Q Graders. If descriptors from outside the *Wheel* are reported by at least two thirds of cuppers in the confirmatory session, the coffee shall be considered contaminated.

7.2.4 Desirable sensory attributes. Each PC-SCO shall define the descriptors that represent desirable sensory attributes in coffees produced in that PC-SCO's country. Those descriptors shall be selected from the CVA Descriptive Assessment and may be complemented with specific descriptors from *the SCA/WCR/UC Davis Coffee Tasters Flavor Wheel*. The list of descriptors that represent desirable sensory attributes shall be published by the PC-SCO, shall be publicly available, and shall remain stable for at least 3 years after each amendment to the list.

When a coffee is assessed, descriptors that belong to the same category on the middle ring of *the SCA/WCR/UC Davis Coffee Tasters Flavor Wheel* are considered equivalent (e.g., "orange" and "lime" are both classified under "citrus"). To determine the presence of a desirable sensory attribute as per 7.2.1, equivalent descriptors reported by different Q Graders shall be aggregated under the same category. To assess compliance with 6.2.3, the number of desirable sensory attributes in a coffee shall be counted. For this count, equivalent descriptors shall be considered a single desirable attribute.

7.2.5 Astringency. The absence of astringency will be tested following the procedure in 7.2.1.

7.3 High intensity attributes

The attributes' intensity is tested through CVA Descriptive Assessment. A minimum of 3 Q Graders shall assess the coffee, using the CVA Descriptive Assessment (see SCA-103), though the Q Graders may assess the same coffee asynchronously and at separate locations. The mean intensity of each attribute (fragrance, aroma, flavor, aftertaste, acidity, sweetness, and mouthfeel) shall be calculated, taking into accounts all the Q Graders' results. Attributes showing a mean intensity above 10.0 shall be counted as high-intensity attributes.

7.4 Affective Assessment (Sensory defects)

The absence of sensory defects is tested through CVA Affective Assessment. A minimum of 3 Q Graders shall assess the coffee, using the CVA Affective Assessment (see SCA-104), though the Q Graders may assess the same coffee asynchronously and at separate locations. A defect is considered *present* in a coffee if it is reported by a majority of the participating Q Graders, even if the reported defect type is not the same for all of these Q Graders.

The local PC-SCA may provide guidelines on how a lack of Cup Cleanliness or the presence of Flavor Contamination in the cup should impact the impression of quality in the Affective Assessment, under the sections of Flavor and Aftertaste, as well as under the sections of Fragrance and Aroma, if detected.

7.5 Extrinsic attributes

A coffee's extrinsic attributes shall be compiled through Extrinsic Assessment (see SCA-105).

7.5.1 Farming information. A farming information field shall be counted whenever non-confidential information is available for each of the following fields: *region*, *name of farm or cooperative*, *name of producers*, and *variety or varieties*. When the coffee lot is a blend from several farms, the *name of farm or cooperative* field and the *name of producers* field may be counted as present, as long as the names of all the sourced farms or all the lot's producers are available and non-confidential. In the case of multiple varieties or variety blends, the names of all the varieties in the blend shall be available and non-confidential. In other words, a "variety mix" or "variety blend" shall not count as variety information, unless all the varieties in the blend are known. Unofficial variety names (heirloom, landraces, farm mutations, farmer's selection, family or farm-named, and marketing or trade variety names) are permitted but not recommended.

7.5.2 Processing information. For processing information to be counted as present, the processing type shall be available and non-confidential. This requires for the coffee to be classified as washed, natural, or "other," for the processing information field to be counted. However, in the case of "other" processing type, the type shall be further specified for the processing information field to be counted. The "other" processing type may be specified, for example, as "honey," "wet-hulled," "mechanically demucilaged," etc. The availability of other types of processing information, such as the name of processor(s), or the process description, is recommended but not required.

8. Temporary Provisions

The CVA Physical assessment is undergoing research phase at the time this standard is under development. Once ready, it will be published as *SCA-107 Coffee Value Assessment: Physical Assessment*. Until it is published, the definition, testing, and calculation of physical defects in green coffee refers to those in *The Washed Arabica Green Coffee Defect Guide: SCA Handbook (Edition 3)*. Specialty Coffee Association. 2017, as follows:

A 350 g sample of green coffee shall be used. All the beans in the sample shall be visually examined, one by one. The beans meeting the criteria in the *Defect Guide* (pages 6–35) shall be separated and grouped by defect type. The full defect equivalents of each physical defect type are calculated based on the number of beans of each defect per full defect equivalent, as described on the table of defect equivalents (Table 2). Full defect equivalents of each type are rounded down to the nearest integer. The full defect equivalents of each category (category 1 and category 2) are added up and reported by category.

Table 2 Defect Equivalents

Category 1 Defective Beans	Full Defect Equivalent	Category 2 Defective Beans	Full Defect Equivalent
Full black	1	Partial black	3

Category 1 Defective Beans	Full Defect Equivalent	Category 2 Defective Beans	Full Defect Equivalent
Full sour	1	Partial sour	3
Dried cherry / pod	1	Parchment / pergamino	5
Fungus damaged	1	Floater	5
Foreign matter	1	Immature / unripe	5
Severe insect damage	5	Withered	5
		Shell	5
		Broken / chipped / cut	5
		Hull / husk	5
		Slight insect damage	10

Appendix (Informative): Examples of Descriptive Qualitative Attributes Measurement

This appendix illustrates the measurement of descriptive qualitative attributes, such as cup cleanliness, flavor contamination, and desirable sensory attributes, through a few examples.

A.1 Cup Cleanliness

A PC-SCO has established the following list of descriptors that cause a lack of cup cleanliness:

- Papery/Musty (entire subcategory)
- Isovaleric acid
- Hay-like
- Peapod
- Beany
- Under-ripe

A.1.1 Example 1. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "under-ripe", and another reported "musty/earthy". Outcome: there are insufficient mentions of undesirable descriptors; therefore, the coffee is reported as having a "clean cup".

A.1.2 Example 2. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, two cuppers reported "under-ripe", while one reported "musty/earthy". Outcome: since a majority (2/3) identified an undesirable descriptor (under-ripe), the coffee is reported as having an "unclean cup".

A.1.3 Example 3. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "under-ripe", another reported "musty/earthy", and a third reported "moldy/damp". Outcome: since a majority (2/3) of cuppers identified descriptors within the papery/musty subcategory – classified entirely as undesirable – the coffee is reported as having an "unclean cup".

A.2 Flavor Contamination

A PC-SCO has established the following list of descriptors that may indicate flavor contamination, whenever the sensory note is unwanted and excessive:

- Unwanted, excessive fruit flavors: cherry, grape, peach.
- Chemical (entire subcategory)
- Unwanted, excessive whiskey flavor

A.2.1 Example 4. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "peach", while another reported "salty". Outcome: there are insufficient mentions of undesirable descriptors; therefore, the coffee is reported as being "free of flavor contamination".

A.2.2 Example 5. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, all cuppers reported an excessive "peach" flavor, overshadowing all other coffee flavors. Outcome: this is taken as a flavor contamination in the coffee.

A.2.3 Example 6. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "detergent", while another reported "fabric softener". Neither descriptor belongs to the Flavor Wheel. Thus, as per 7.2.3, the coffee was treated as potentially contaminated, and a confirmatory descriptive assessment was conducted by a different group of three Q Graders. In this second session, one cupper reported "soap" and another reported "bleach". Therefore, the coffee is reported as "presenting a flavor contamination", as two thirds of the second panel reported

descriptors outside the Flavor Wheel.

A.3 Desirable Sensory Attributes

A PC-SCO has established the following list of desirable sensory attributes:

- Floral category
- Berry subcategory.
- Brown spice subcategory

A.3.1 Example 7. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "jasmine", while another reported "strawberry". Outcome: there are insufficient mentions of desirable sensory attributes from the same category. Therefore, the count of desirable sensory descriptors in this coffee is reported as zero.

A.3.2 Example 8. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "jasmine" and another reported "rose". Outcome: both descriptors are categorized as "floral", and are counted as a single desirable sensory attribute for that coffee.

A.3.3 Example 9. In an assessment conducted by three Q Graders, one cupper reported "floral", another reported "jasmine", and 1a third cupper reported both "raspberry" and "blackberry". Outcome: the two berry descriptors by the third cupper are not counted, as the berry category was reported by just one cupper. The "jasmine" and "floral" descriptors are treated as equivalent; therefore, the count of desirable sensory attributes for this coffee is reported as 1 (floral).



505 Technology Dr., Suite 340
Irvine, California, 92618,
United States

sca.coffee



2026

GREEN COFFEE GRADING STANDARD

What it means for coffee trade and quality.

September 2026

INTRODUCTION

Background: Specialty Coffee Association

- The SCA sets voluntary standards for the global coffee industry with the aim of facilitating trade.
- As of 2024, the SCAA's *Specialty Grade Standard* has been superseded by the SCA's Coffee Value Assessment (CVA).
- The foundation of the CVA is an attribute-based, descriptive definition of specialty coffee published in 2021.



INTRODUCTION

Many exporting countries use grading systems for their coffee

Kenya AA

Brazil Soft

Green coffee trading contracts likely include the green coffee grade as a specification.

Mexico High Grown



INTRODUCTION

These grades measure different attributes

Some are based on cup quality, others are based on bean size, and others on farm elevation!

The complexity of 21st Century green coffee grading has made these grades obsolete.

For that reason, specialty coffee contracts today include other specifications, such as the cupping score.



INTRODUCTION

A shared system could be simpler

Coffee trading would be simpler if producing countries used the same grading system, and if traders didn't need to learn multiple grading systems.

Coffee-producing member countries of the International Coffee Organization

42 exporting members



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

- Mexico
- Colombia
- Cuba
- Venezuela
- Honduras
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Peru
- Nicaragua
- Bolivia
- Costa Rica
- Brazil
- Panama

AFRICA

- Cote d'Ivoire
- Angola
- Sierra Leone
- Zambia
- Liberia
- Zimbabwe
- Ghana
- Malawi
- Togo
- Rwanda
- Nigeria
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Tanzania
- Gabon
- Kenya
- Central African Rep.
- Ethiopia
- DR Congo
- Madagascar

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- Yemen
- Philippines
- India
- Indonesia
- Nepal
- Timor-Leste
- Thailand
- Papua New Guinea
- Vietnam



INTRODUCTION

The coffee grade could be more useful

The coffee grade would be meaningful for the 21st Century industry if it captured a coffee's attributes across all the relevant dimensions.



Physical

Moisture,
size, etc.



Descriptive

Sensory attributes



Affective

Impression
of quality



Extrinsic

Information
attributes



INTRODUCTION

A common language could benefit both sellers and buyers

A well-designed coffee grading system could support producers to position their coffees for specialty markets, while still allowing traders to retain the decisions on each coffee's value.



INTRODUCTION

The grade is only one component of a green coffee contract

Current:

“**High Grown EP** Arabica coffee, cupping score 84.5+, maximum 8 secondary defects, zero primary defects, moisture 10-12%, screen 16+, crop current harvest.”

Future:

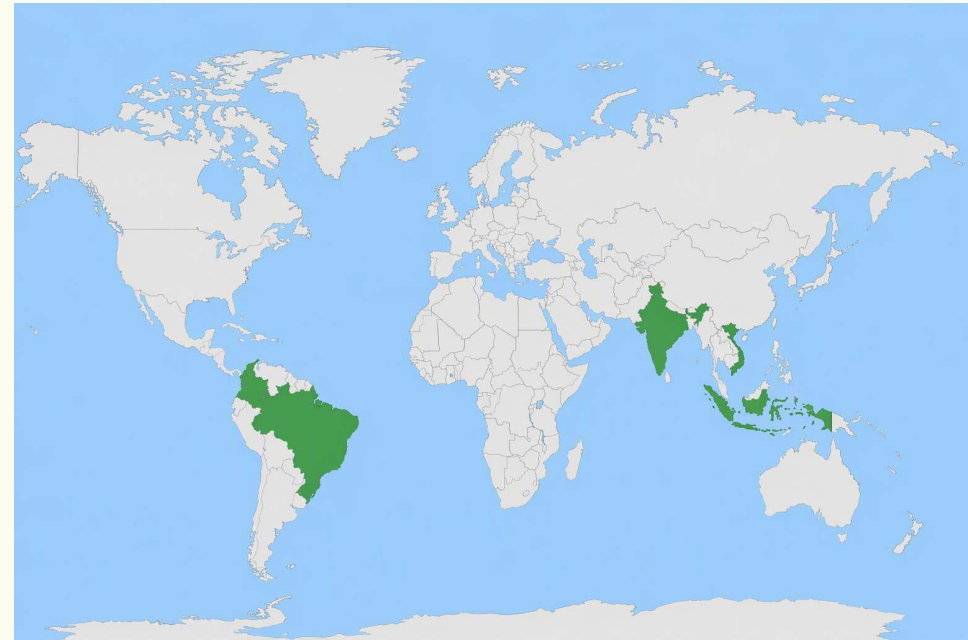
“**Grade SCA 2** Arabica coffee, cupping score 84.5+, maximum 8 secondary defects, zero primary defects, moisture 10-12%, screen 16+, crop current harvest.”



FEBRUARY 17-18, 2026, MEETING AT ICO OFFICE IN LONDON, AND SEVERAL MEETINGS SINCE

We met to discuss the meaning of specialty coffee in commerce and explore the potential for a grading standard for green coffee

- African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA)
- Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA)
- Coffee Board of India
- Colombian Coffee Growers Federation (FNC)
- International Coffee Organization (ICO)
- Specialty Coffee Association (SCA)
- Specialty Coffee Association of Indonesia (SCAI)
- Vietnamese Cocoa and Coffee Association (VICOFA)

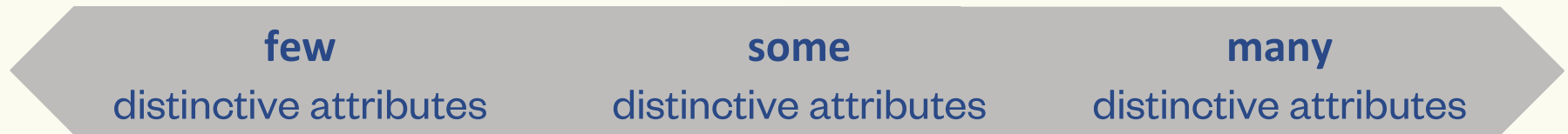


THE SCA DEFINITION OF SPECIALTY COFFEE

Specialty coffee is a coffee or coffee experience that is recognized for its distinctive **attributes**, and because of these attributes, it has significant extra **value** in the marketplace.



Attributes Continuum

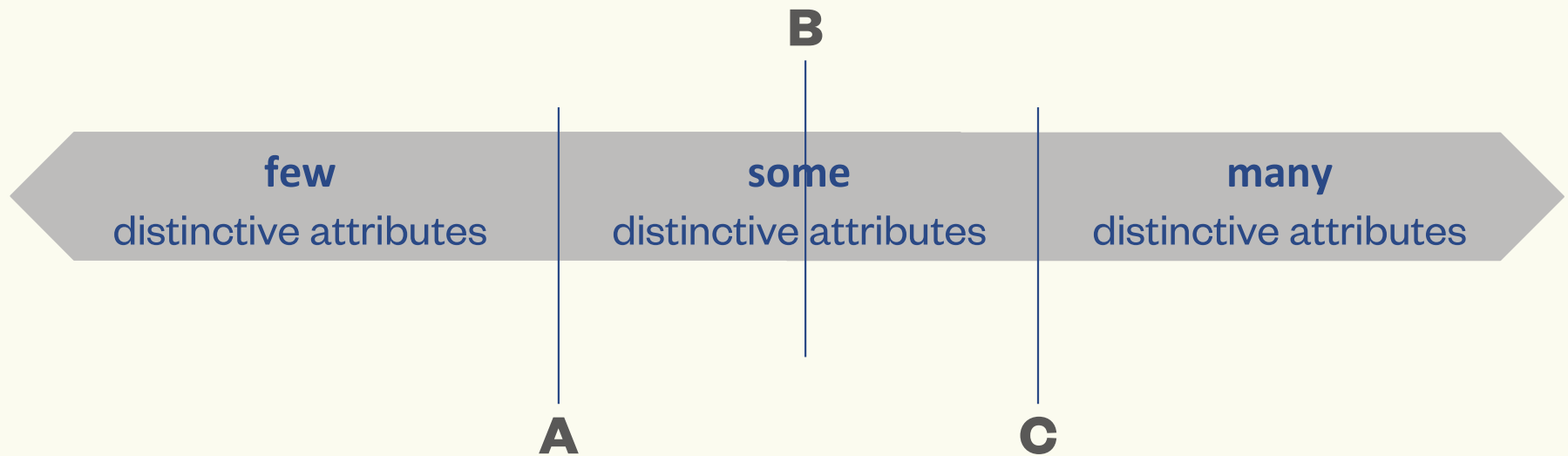


Commodity

Specialty



Attributes Continuum



DEFINING GREEN SPECIALTY COFFEE GLOBALLY

Green specialty coffee is the hulled, dried beans of the genus *Coffea*. It is recognized by its distinctive attributes, which are identified using the Coffee Value Assessment, and because of these attributes, it has significant extra value in the marketplace.



DEFINING GREEN SPECIALTY COFFEE GLOBALLY

Green specialty coffee is the hulled, dried beans of the genus *Coffea*. It is recognized by its distinctive attributes, which are identified using the Coffee Value Assessment, and because of these attributes, it has significant extra value in the marketplace.

Other parts of the coffee plant are not green coffee. Bean-less coffee is not green coffee.



DEFINING GREEN SPECIALTY COFFEE GLOBALLY

Green specialty coffee is the hulled, dried beans of the genus *Coffea*. It is recognized by its distinctive attributes, which are identified using the Coffee Value Assessment, and because of these attributes, it has significant extra value in the marketplace.

Includes Arabica, Canephora, Liberica, Eugenoides, and other species with potential commercial value.



Green Coffee Grading Standard – June 2026 Draft

DRAFT SPECIFICATIONS

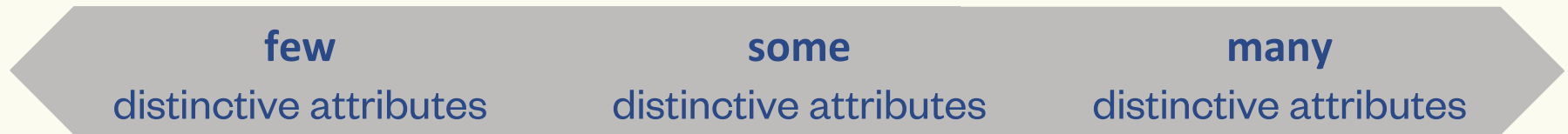


Private & Confidential

Specialty Coffee Association

18

Attributes Continuum

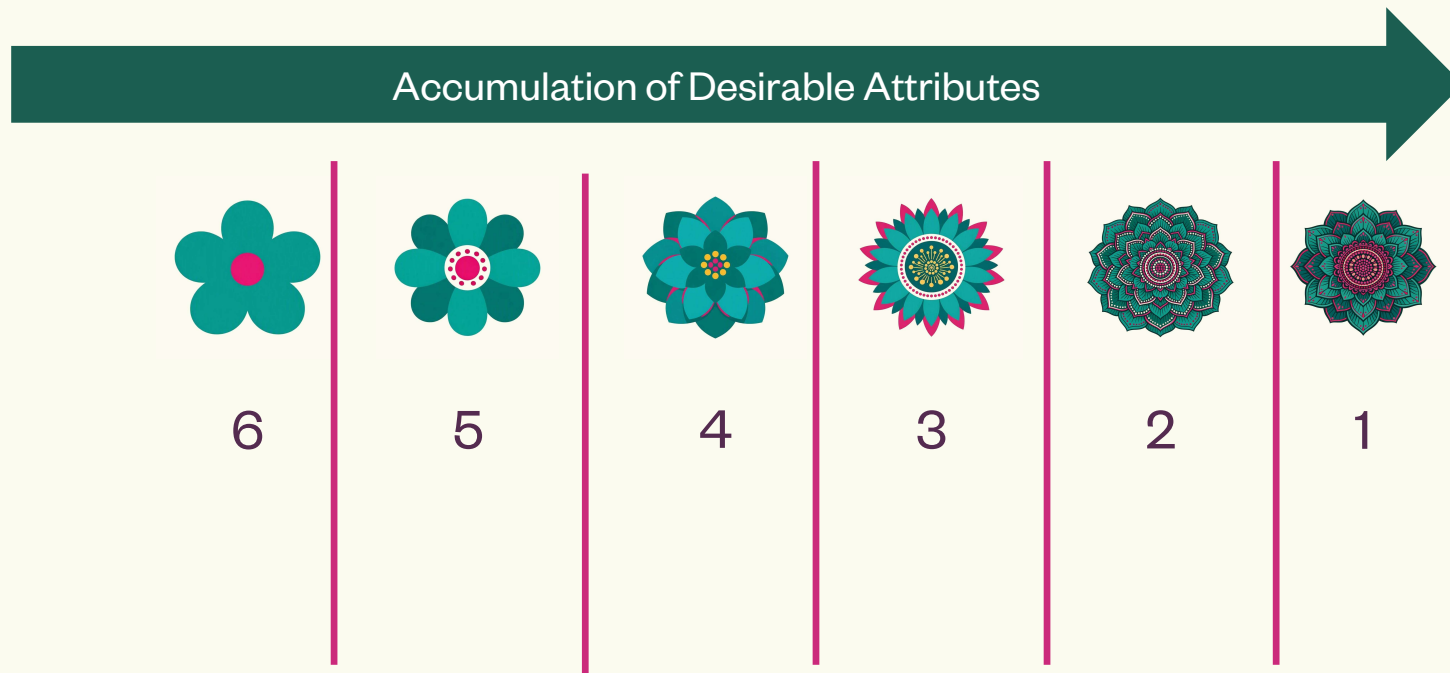


Commodity

Specialty



SIX GRADES FOR GREEN COFFEE





6



5



4



3



2



1

few

distinctive attributes

some

distinctive attributes

many

distinctive attributes

Commodity

Specialty



Specification	Grade 6	Grade 5	Grade 4
6.1 Physical			
Moisture	-	-	10-12% ^a
Physical defects	-	-	-
6.2. Descriptive			
Cup cleanliness	-	-	Clean cup
Flavor contamination	-	Free	Free
Desirable Sensory Attributes	-	-	-
High-intensity attributes	-	-	-
Astringency	-	-	-
6.3 Affective			
Sensory defects	-	Free	Free
6.4 Extrinsic			
Farming information	-	-	-
Processing information	-	-	-
<i>Expected FOB extra value addition^b</i>	<i>(-)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(+)</i>



Accumulation of Desirable Attributes

Specification	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1
6.1 Physical			
Moisture	10-12% ^a	10-12% ^a	10-12% ^a
Physical defects	Free from Category 1 defects	Free from Category 1 defects	Free from Category 1 defects, and up to 10 Category 2 defects
6.2. Descriptive			
Cup cleanliness	Clean cup	Clean cup	Clean cup
Flavor contamination	Free	Free	Free
Desirable Sensory Attributes	-	At least one	At least two
High-intensity attributes	At least one	At least two	At least two
Astringency	-	Not allowed	Not allowed
6.3 Affective			
Sensory defects	Free	Free	Free
6.4 Extrinsic			
Farming information	At least one (general)	At least two, including farm name	At least three, including farm name
Processing information	Required	Required	Required
<i>Expected FOB extra value addition ^b</i>	(++)	(+++)	(++++)

Accumulation of Desirable Attributes




Flavor contamination. An unwanted alteration of a coffee's sensory profile caused by exposure to external odors, chemicals, microorganisms, packaging materials, or cross contact with other foods. In coffee, such contamination is commonly perceived either as a flavor note outside the *SCA/WCR/UC Davis Cup Tasters Flavor Wheel* (such as “detergent” or “blue cheese”) or as an excessively intense, unwanted flavor note within the *Wheel* (e.g., petroleum, animalic, isovaleric acid, pepper).



DEFINING DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES NATIONALLY

Local Coffee Organizations Classify Attributes

Cup Cleanliness

The extent to which a cup is free of undesirable flavors (“clean”). Undesirable flavors are origin-specific, measured through the CVA Descriptive Assessment, and **defined by the local coffee organization.**

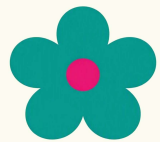
Desirable Sensory Attributes

Sensory attributes considered desirable in coffee from a specific origin. Desirable sensory attributes are measured through the CVA Descriptive Assessment, and **defined by the local coffee organization.**

These attributes will be publicly available and remain stable for at least 3 years before being revised in each country



DEFINING SPECIALTY COFFEE GRADES NATIONALLY



6



5



4



3



2



1

Specialty Coffee for
Country A



6



5



4



3



2



1

Specialty Coffee for
Country B



Green Coffee Grading Standard – June 2026 Draft

NEXT STEP:

To publish the standard by mid-year 2027.



ONGOING FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS

September 29: International Coffee Council in Geneva, Switzerland

October 2: Swiss Coffee Trade Association in Montreux, Switzerland

October 24: World of Coffee in Panama City, Panama

SCA is available for other meetings and presentations – please reach out



THANK YOU



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Specialty Coffee Association

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