

**Report of the 5th meeting of the Focus
Group on Specialty Coffee held on
22 September 2026**

Item 1: Draft Agenda	1
Item 2: Report of the 4th meeting of the Focus Group on Specialty Coffee.....	1
Item 3: Proposed standard for green coffee	1
Item 4: Other business	4
Item 5: Date of next meeting.....	4

**REPORT OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE FOCUS GROUP ON SPECIALTY COFFEE
HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2026**

1. This report presents the discussions of the 5th meeting of the Focus Group on Specialty Coffee (FGSC), presided by the Chair, the Executive Director, Dr Vanúcia Nogueira, and held on 22 September 2026.

2. Representatives of the following Member countries were present online using Zoom software: Angola, Brazil, Cameroon, El Salvador, European Union (including France, Germany and Italy), India, Norway and Togo. Representatives of the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) also participated.

Item 1: Draft Agenda

3. The Executive Director presented the draft Agenda, contained in document [FGSC-07/26](#), which was adopted by the Focus Group with no comments.

Item 2: Report of the 4th meeting of the Focus Group on Specialty Coffee

4. The Executive Director presented the report of the 4th meeting of the FGSC, held in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on 13 October 2025, as contained in document [FGSC-06/26](#). The Focus Group approved the report with no comments.

Item 3: Proposed standard for green coffee

5. The Executive Director recalled that, as reflected in paragraphs 20 and 24 of document [FGSC-06/26](#), the Focus Group had agreed to invite the SCA to participate formally in its work. She informed the participants that the SCA had started to work on a common definition for specialty coffee and also on a proposed standard for green coffee, which had since been discussed in 2026 at the headquarters of the International Coffee Organization (ICO) in London (February); at World of Coffee San Diego (April); with the members of the ASEAN Coffee Federation at World of Coffee Bangkok (May); and at World of Coffee Brussels (June), as well as during virtual exchanges with Members.

6. Ms Kim Elena Ionescu, Chief Strategy Development Officer of the SCA, explained that the proposal was a grading standard for green coffee based on the CVA, adopted by the SCA in 2024 to replace standards dating mostly from around 2004, and on the SCA's 2021 attribute-based definition of specialty coffee.¹ She noted that national grades measured different attributes and could not be compared. She stated that a single standard would give buyers and sellers a common

¹ The relevant standard is attached as Annex I.

language while changing only one element of green coffee contracts – the national designation – which would be replaced by an SCA grade.

7. Ms Ionescu added that the CVA assessed quality through four components: physical (such as moisture and bean size), descriptive and affective (both carried out during cupping) and extrinsic (such as origin, farm, variety and processing).²

8. Mr Mario Fernández-Alduenda, Technical Vice President of the SCA, reported that, at the meeting held in London in February 2026 between the African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA), the Brazil Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA), the Coffee Board of India, the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia (FNC), the Specialty Coffee Association of Indonesia (SCAI), the Viet Nam Coffee and Cocoa Association (VICOFA) and the ICO, participants had adapted the SCA definition of specialty coffee, which was descriptive rather than prescriptive, to the case of green coffee and had begun drafting technical specifications. He presented the resulting definition:

Green specialty coffee is the whole 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.

9. Mr Fernández-Alduenda explained that the definition excluded other parts of the coffee plant and bean-less coffee, such as coffee produced through cell culture, and covered all species of the genus *Coffea*. He stated that the standard divided the continuum from commodity to specialty coffee into six grades, from Grade 6, with virtually no specifications, to Grade 1, with the strictest requirements across the four CVA assessments, such as 10–12% moisture, no Category 1 defects and up to 10 Category 2 defects, a clean cup free of sensory defects with at least two desirable sensory attributes, and access to farm and processing information. He stressed that not all grades were specialty grades and that the expected free-on-board (FOB) extra value would rise from Grade 6 to Grade 1, with the “zero point” set at Grade 5, corresponding to usual good-quality, exchange-type coffee.

10. Mr Fernández-Alduenda indicated that local coffee organizations in producing countries would establish the lists of desirable and undesirable sensory attributes, to be made public for at least three years, and would decide which grades constituted specialty coffee in their country. He informed participants that the SCA planned to publish the standard by mid-2027, proceeding hand in hand with the FGSC and the ICO, and that further exchanges would take place at the meetings of the International Coffee Council (ICC) in Geneva on 29 September 2026, the Swiss

² The SCA’s presentation is attached as Annex II.

Coffee Trade Association (SCTA) conference in Montreux on 2 October 2026 and World of Coffee Panama on 22 October 2026. He invited the Secretariat to circulate the latest draft of the standard.

11. The Executive Director underlined that the proposal was a work in progress, open to consultation and dialogue, and opened the floor for comments.

12. The delegate of El Salvador stated that producers were the only link in the value chain under pressure, owing to their lack of profitability, and that coffee quality standards were already defined globally. He considered that adding specifications while leaving each country to decide which grades constituted specialty coffee presented a risk of difficulties similar to those encountered with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), adding that the proposal did not address coffee with extended fermentation or added flavours, resulting in an increased burden to producers. He noted that there was broad agreement with this view across the PROMECAFE region, including in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Panama.

13. Mr Fernández-Alduenda responded that, if existing standards were sufficiently clear, the specialty coffee segment could already be measured. However, the FGSC had already established that there was no actionable definition enabling the ICO to quantify it, which had motivated the work of the SCA.

14. The delegate of El Salvador questioned the extent to which the CVA had been adopted, noting that few cuppers used it.

15. Ms Ionescu acknowledged that adoption took time and noted that, following its partnership with the Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) in 2025, the SCA had begun managing the Q Grader programme, which would help drive adoption worldwide.

16. The delegate of the EU-Italy recalled that a key purpose of the definition was to enable the production of statistics on the volumes of specialty coffee traded and consumed, which the former 80-point threshold would have facilitated. He asked how this could be achieved under the CVA, for example whether it could be done through a tick box on certificates of origin.

17. Ms Ionescu stated that the SCA would work with institutions in coffee-exporting countries to understand how grading operated in practice. She explained that the proposed standard removed the subjectivity of scores by relying on descriptive attributes identified by trained cuppers, physical specifications such as moisture, and extrinsic information such as farm data. She agreed that a more objective system was needed to measure the specialty coffee market.

18. The delegate of the EU-Italy suggested that statistical analysis of the results given by different cuppers on the same sample could support calibration. While recognizing the value of

Q grading and of the CVA, he was not fully convinced that the CVA could be aligned everywhere and considered that a system that was as objective as possible was needed.

19. Mr Fernández-Alduenda explained that, after 20 years of experience with its former cupping protocol, the SCA had found that calibration worked only within individual supply chains or markets with clear preferences, and that the growing diversity of markets, processing methods, varieties and species made universal calibration, and global agreement on the meaning of an 80-point score, impossible.

20. The delegate of El Salvador stated that coffee could not be reduced to a few characteristics, as preferences varied. By way of example, he referred to the *Pacamara* variety, which some consumers liked and others did not, and suggested that the FGSC identify other ways to measure the specialty coffee market.

21. The Executive Director stated that there was no rush, recalling that the work of the Focus Group had started from the ambition of Members to measure the size of the specialty coffee market, and that this had revealed the absence of a common definition. She stressed that the ICO could incorporate a definition or standard only with the consensus of Members, including on its use for statistics, and that there was no fixed deadline. She welcomed the participation of consuming countries, such as Norway.

22. The Executive Director of the BSCA, Mr Vinicius Estrela, reported that the Cup of Excellence programme had this year introduced an approach asking cuppers to identify coffee profiles, which had improved alignment and calibration, including in scoring. He considered that, in the experience of the BSCA, the green specialty coffee definition helped connect producing countries with consumers and made it easier to communicate along the value chain.

Item 4: Other business

23. There were no requests for other business. The Executive Director noted that the SCA would attend the ICC meetings in Geneva the following week, providing further opportunities for discussion.

Item 5: Date of next meeting

24. The Executive Director informed participants that the next meeting of the FGSC would be organized after the meetings in Geneva and that consideration would be given to holding future meetings in person.

SCA Standard 110-2026

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

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

Table of Contents

1. Preface	6
2. Scope	6
3. Normative References	6
4. Terms and Definitions.....	6
5. Classification.....	8
6. Specifications.....	8
7. Test Methods	10
8. Temporary Provisions.....	12
Appendix (Informative): Examples of Descriptive Qualitative Attributes Measurement.....	14

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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>	<i>(-)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(+)</i>	<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).



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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

Mexico High Grown

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



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:

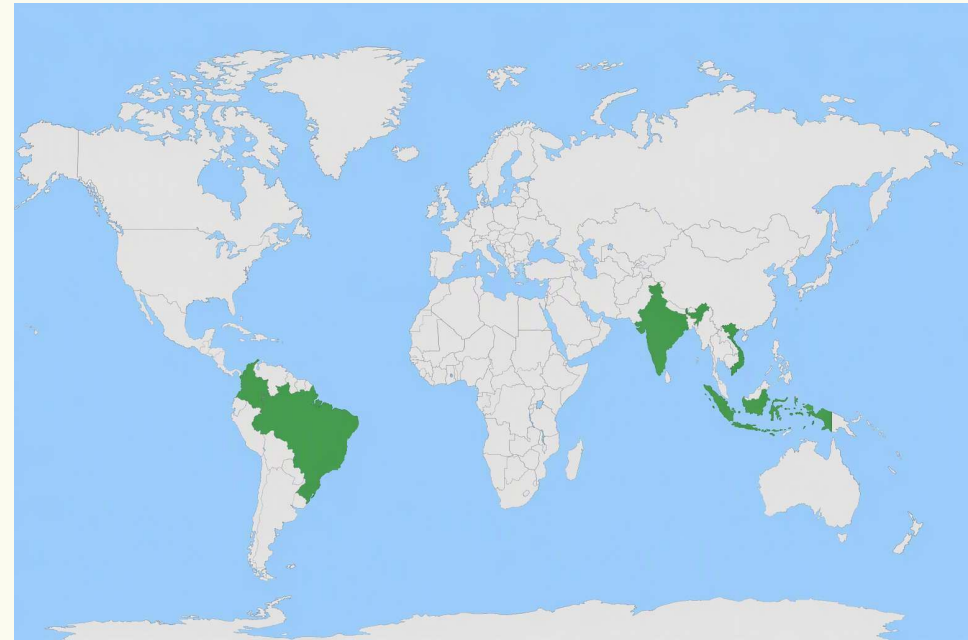
“**Grade SCA 2** Arabica coffee, cupping score 84.5+, maximum 8 secondary defects, zero primary defects, moisture 10-12%, screen 16+, crop current harvest.”



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)

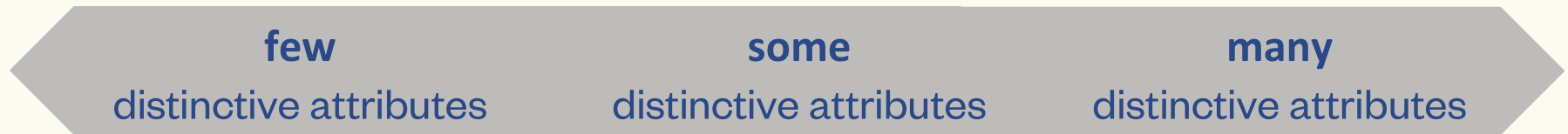


THE SCA DEFINITION OF SPECIALTY COFFEE

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

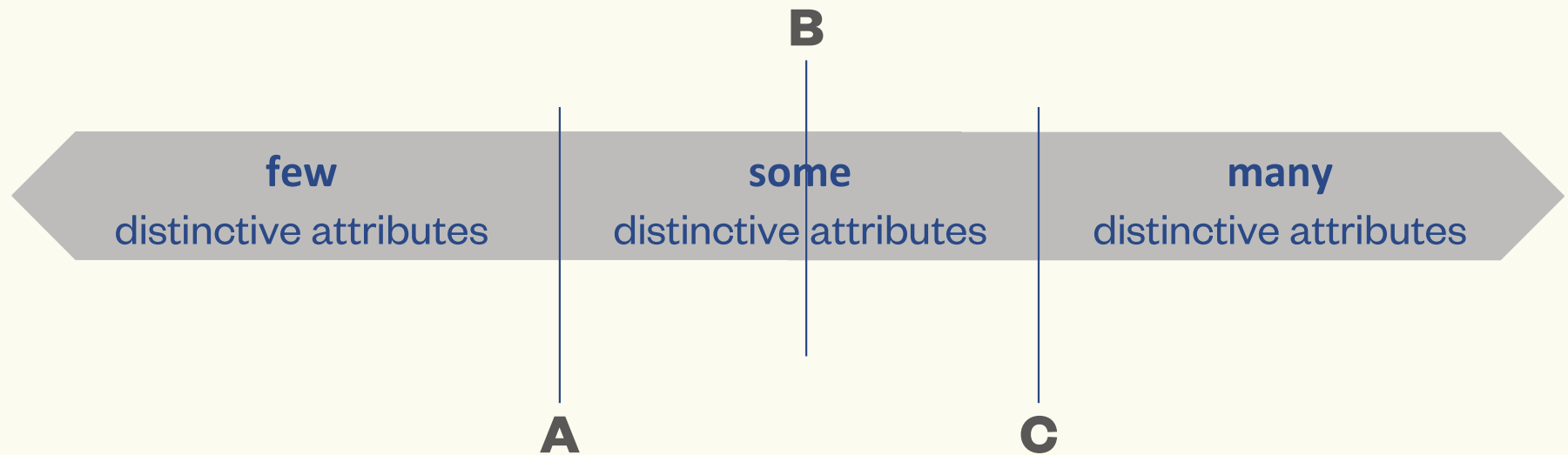


Commodity

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

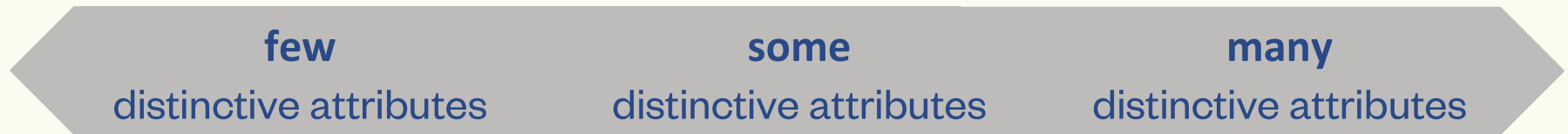


Private & Confidential

Specialty Coffee Association

18

Attributes Continuum

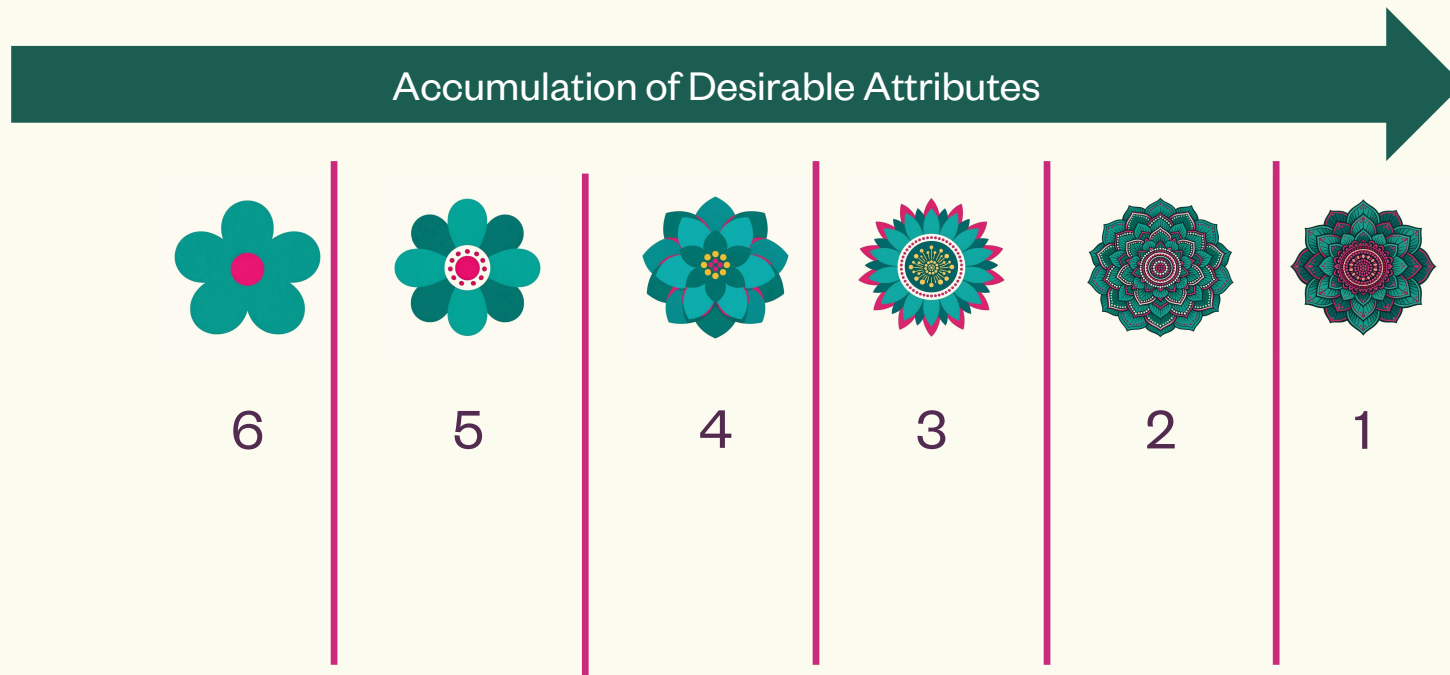


Commodity

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.**

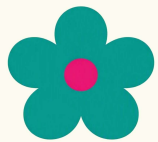
Desirable Sensory Attributes

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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36