



International Coffee Organization
Organización Internacional del Café
Organização Internacional do Café
Organisation Internationale du Café

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Updated guidelines on how to improve coffee quality by preventing mould growth

Background

1. The Executive Director presents his compliments and wishes to alert Members of the problems which may occur if coffee is allowed to become mouldy. Mould formation in coffee poses a threat to quality and can lead to the formation of toxins which could, if detected in significant quantities, cause the rejection of shipments. The Organization is actively involved in the prevention of mould formation through the ICO/FAO/CFC project *Enhancement of quality in coffee by prevention of mould formation* (see document EB-3620/97 Rev. 1 of 30 April 1997 for a summary).

2. In order to assist operators throughout the chain to implement preventive measures, the European private coffee sector in conjunction with the project team has drafted the attached practical guidelines updated in May 2001. These are based on the conclusions of two special workshops on mould formation held during the conferences of the *Association scientifique internationale du Café* (ASIC) in Nairobi in 1997 and Helsinki in 1999 as well as on the first results of the above-mentioned ICO/FAO/CFC project.

Action

Members are requested to circulate the guidelines to appropriate institutions in their countries to assist in implementing their recommendations. Further information may be obtained from:

The Coffee Science Information Centre (CoSIC)
12 Market Street
Chipping Norton
Oxon OX7 5ES (U.K.)
Website: www.CoSIC.org
Email: CoSIC@BTInternet.com



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IMPROVE YOUR COFFEE QUALITY BY THE PREVENTION OF MOULD GROWTH

Good quality coffee receives bigger payments. In order to protect your revenues from coffee, it is essential that you provide only the best quality commodity available.

USE GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE RESULTS :

1) DURING HARVEST

- The soil under the tree should be covered with a clean sheet of plastic during picking to avoid cherries getting contaminated by dirt or mixed up with mouldy cherries (“gleanings”) from previous harvests.
- Cherries that have fallen to the ground are known to be susceptible to mould growth and therefore should not be used.
- Process fresh cherries as quickly as possible. Avoid storage of cherries, especially ripe and over-ripe ones, as any period of storage (in a bag or in a pile) increases the likelihood of mould growth.
- Do not dry on bare soil: Use trays or tarpaulins. Mould spores from previous lots are known to remain on the ground and this could result in clean cherries being contaminated during drying.
- The layer of drying cherries should be not more than 4 cm thick after the first 2-3 days of drying.
- Drying cherries must be regularly raked (5-10 times per day).
- Protect cherries during drying from rain and night dew.
- Avoid all re-wetting of partially dried and dried cherries, protecting them from moisture and rain.

2) DURING PRIMARY PROCESSING

- Site processing plant in a dry area, not in a swamp.
- Dispose of pulp from wet processing away from clean dry coffee. Compost it before using it as mulch in the field
- Keep equipment and facilities clean, separating residual partially processed material, and accumulation of dust and discarded material.
- Clean coffee from all husk material – more than 90% of mould comes from husks in sun dried cherries.
- Remove as many defects (husks, un-hulled cherries or mouldy beans) as possible.
- Use clean bags for storing and transporting cleaned dried beans.
- Keep separate cleaned dried beans from discarded material.
- Prevent recontamination by avoiding contact of clean green beans with dust, husks and dirty bags.
- Do not store cleaned, dry green coffee near rejects and husks.
- Processing should achieve a **uniform green bean moisture content that is as low as feasible, but certainly not higher than 12,5%.**

3) DURING TRANSPORT AND STORAGE

- Cover bags during transport and storage to prevent re-wetting.
- Load and unload trucks or containers only in dry weather or under cover.
- Do not use damaged containers and prevent water leaks.
- Make sure that pallets or wooden floors of trucks and container are dry.
- Store coffee in well-ventilated and leak-proof warehouses. Store away from the walls.
- Cover bags/loose beans in container with waterproof or water-absorbent cover to prevent re-wetting of the top layer of coffee from condensation.
- Provide good quality control tests (including cupping) and ensure that they are adhered to, especially to check for moisture and defects.

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