



Organización Internacional del Café  
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Organisation Internationale du Café

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Private Sector Consultative Board  
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**Proposal for an international convention  
on sustainable coffee**

## **Background**

The attached proposal for an international convention on sustainable coffee has been received from the Eastern African Fine Coffees Association (EAFCA), for consideration by the Private Sector Consultative Board at its meeting on 20 May 2002.

## **Action**

The PSCB is requested to consider this document, following which it could be presented to the Executive Board at a later date.

## **PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON SUSTAINABLE COFFEE**

Coffee is an important crop in the lives of millions of people, and more than 80 countries are involved in its cultivation, with over 6 million tonnes produced on almost 28 million acres. Coffee is second only to oil as the most traded commodity in international trade, and provides employment to over twenty million people in some of the poorest countries in the world. Coffee trees help in absorbing carbon from the atmosphere and contribute to cleaning our air, thus reducing the pollution in our atmosphere. Depending on agronomic practices and the farming systems within which coffee is produced, the environmental impact of coffee deserves attention, and effort must be made to promote good environmental practices and the necessary incentives for positive practices. The coffee industry in developing countries accounts for the livelihood of many millions of poor families, an important socio-economic dimension, with a great impact on poverty.

In the developed countries, consumers have increasingly become more and more sophisticated in their desire for coffee of unique quality, while many have become more and more conscientious. This is due to various social and environmental issues, as witnessed by an increasing number of retail coffee companies promoting various “cause related” coffees. Given the global slump in coffee prices at the commodity exchanges and the subsequent collapse of producer prices in the developing countries, a humanitarian crisis has loomed over many of these countries and both governments and the donor community have faced increasing pressure from the effects of the related economic decline in these communities.

The International Coffee Organisation hosted a conference on “Coffee and the Environment” in 1996, at which several issues on coffee production and environmental sustainability were discussed. In September of the same year, the first sustainable coffee symposium was held in Washington, DC, USA, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Following these meetings, the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) has routinely included discussions on sustainable coffee production and marketing in its annual conferences. While progress has been made in highlighting the importance of coffee production as an economic activity in producing countries, and the plight of producers took centre stage at the ICO’s World Coffee Conference in 2001, a new level of international cooperation on coffee matters needs to be considered. This is in view of the impact of coffee on the environment, as well as the social and economic welfare of producers, and economic stability in several countries. In view of all the above, it would help to build on the existing cooperation on coffee matters under the International Coffee Organisation (ICO) and establish a broad-based Global Convention on Coffee Sustainability.

### **Building the Global Vision for Sustainable Coffee**

Under the auspices of the ICO, international cooperation of coffee matters is already a given. To enhance the achievement of ICO’s objectives as stated in its Articles, there is need to build consensus around coffee as an important crop that can maintain and enhance a diverse and sustainable tropical environment

### **BUILDING THE ALLIANCE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TREE CROPS PROGRAM**

With this vision, an alliance can be built, by bringing the coffee industry, donor community and NGOs together to identify coffee’s threats and opportunities. The alliance can then work together in finding solutions, with a special focus on environmental conservation as well as socio-economic concerns (poverty issues, etc).

The Africa Bureau of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has already taken the initiative to support a Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), which encompasses coffee among other tree crops, and is currently being implemented in West Africa and Eastern Africa, with the main donor partners being the World Bank and USAID.

The proposed alliance would be aimed at the following:

- Consolidating an international consensus on sustainable coffee through the “Declaration of Intent”
- Establishing an International Sustainable Coffee Program under the auspices of the ICO.
- Promoting Strategic Partnerships between Small Coffee Farmers and the Coffee Industry and the Donor Community. The objective here would be to develop the concept from the industry’s Sustainable Coffee Program in Latin America and the new initiative in Africa, and provide opportunities for partnering, say in Africa through the *Sustainable Tree Crops Program*

### **What are the roles of the partners?**

#### **1. Donors**

- Conduct macroeconomic and sectoral policy dialogue
- Outreach to the farmer to put innovations into practice, including adoption of appropriate technology in enhancement of environmental conservation or reduction of environmental degradation.
- Support coffee producers, buyers, and exporter groups in improving the quality of coffee
- Establish an international alliance for donors to support the international agricultural research centres that encourage research in quality improvement and alternative uses for low-grade coffee
- Support the establishment of a framework for trading carbon credits related to coffee production.

#### **2. Industry**

The industry (particularly roasters & trade houses) can play a key role in the transfer of technology to the producing countries to help in quality management at the farm level (for example introduction of cupping skills at the level of the coop or farmer association, to enhance appreciation of good quality, etc.). The transfer of technology can also help in improving or facilitating the processing of coffee to stimulate or promote domestic consumption in those countries. The training of farmers and exporters in quality issues and acceptable practice would enhance compliance with consumer requirements (including EU and USDA rules and phytosanitary requirements).

#### **3. Producers Organisations**

Producer organisations need to promote better farm management practices, social and environmental responsibility, and good corporate governance in farm-level organisations.

#### **4. Governments**

Governments in the consuming countries need to support NGOs and other agencies that develop projects or programs aimed at achieving the objectives stated in the International Coffee Agreement, and which promote the proposed alliance. Governments in producing countries need to support programmes aimed at local coffee promotion, alternative uses of coffee and research in the manufacture of a range of products from coffee rejects.