



Mission Statement on Sustainable Green Coffee

1. Background

The food industry relies on long-term supply of quality agricultural raw materials as the basic ingredients for their products. It is hence in its own interest as it is in the interest of the overall society, to provide a sustainable supply of such raw materials in competitive conditions, meet the food and fibre needs of populations (with respect to safety, availability, affordability) and conserve and possibly improve the natural environment as well as the socio-economic conditions of local communities. Thus, SAI Platform and its members want to play an active role in the development, recognition and implementation of sustainable practices for mainstream agriculture. Sustainable agricultural practices are being developed within SAI Platform for selected commodities of outstanding importance. Therefore, a specific working group on coffee has been formed.

Coffee is an important commodity in international trade. It is a permanent tree crop characterised by cyclical movement of production volumes often induced by price fluctuations as well as natural factors. Under free market conditions, prevailing in the coffee sector since the cancellation of the quota system of the coffee agreement in 1989, structural deficiencies such as insufficient technical and financial support to farmers, inefficiencies in the supply chain as well as incompatible framework conditions are becoming increasingly more obvious. Unsustainable production practices have developed in many parts of the world endangering at the same time the natural resources used as well as adequate coverage of the social needs of the producing community. Extremes of these deficiencies can be observed in the present situation, where in a number of producing countries, coffee is produced at an economic loss.. Current large stocks further deteriorate the market conditions. The decline in income results in a reduction of foreign exchange earnings while poverty increases in rural areas. Farmers may survive with great difficulties in the coffee business, or they may abandon their farms or switch to alternative crops, for which options are often quite limited. Farm unemployment is rising considerably and migration processes into urban centres are increasing.

The Working Group on Green Coffee believes that the concept of sustainability will serve the interests of all stakeholders in the coffee sector. It offers the potential to secure long term availability of a quality coffee produced economically while improving environment and social conditions. It represents a structural approach which can help to resolve the aspects and consequences of the current coffee crisis but, more importantly, shall result in a more balanced demand and supply situation in the long term. The Working Group also is convinced that sustainable green coffee practices for the mainstream coffee market would have several positive effects, including: protecting the environment; improving the livelihoods of coffee farmers; and improving the quality of green coffee.

SAI Platform active participants in the Working Group are representatives of the coffee trade and industry. Cooperation with important stakeholders as well as involvement of further dedicated companies is envisaged.

2. Vision and Objectives

The members of the Working Group on Coffee share the same overall vision:

Sustainability shall be the guiding principle in the coffee sector, meaning that the entire green coffee supply chain should become sustainable over time.

This, in the eyes of the Working Group, requires the achievement of the following goals:

- Establishment of a common sustainability standard for coffee. To contribute to this objective the Working Group shall define the industry point of view on good agricultural practices and post harvest treatment of coffee. Therefore the Working Group will develop the "Industry Position Paper on Sustainable Coffee Production and Supply" and "Sustainable Green Coffee Practices".
- Design of suitable indicators of sustainable practices allowing verification and a system to implement it.
- Broad implementation of sustainable production and post-harvest practices. This shall be realised gradually over time by a market-based approach and through the involvement of further stakeholders - such as Inter-governmental Organisations (IGOs), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Governments etc - that support this change in financial, technical and political terms.
- A neutral platform (Coffee Stewardship Council for instance) which hosts the practices, indicators and verification systems, will be explored.
- A gradual and continuous increase in the amount of sustainable coffees traded and consumed world-wide.

The Working Group on Green Coffee shall become the expert voice of the industry in relation to sustainability, aiming to be viewed as a valuable partner for the development of sustainable agriculture.

3. Methodology

Efforts of the Working Group on Coffee are geared towards the mainstream market. It follows a pragmatic and efficient approach including the definition and identification of simple and effective indicators that shall allow thorough monitoring of implementation and/or improvement of sustainable practices. Stakeholders shall be duly involved in these processes in order to further develop the definition of the Sustainable Green Coffee Practices as well as assuring wide endorsement of the concept of sustainability in the coffee sector.

Practical work shall initially be based on existing experiences. Further development of approaches might require specific project and study work encouraged and potentially even realised by members of the Working Group in cooperation with other stakeholders including international organisations.

Results of the Working Group on Green Coffee shall be communicated and discussed with other initiatives sharing the same vision.

All participants are committed to a food supply that is affordable, competitive and efficient, and will ensure that all activities of the Working Group shall be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws by securing appropriate legal guidance.

The Working Group on Green Coffee will endeavour to continuously improve the overall approach on the basis of feedback received from stakeholders as well as according to monitoring results of the entire process.

The Working Group shall play an active role in promoting the implementation of sustainable green coffee practices.