



## Civil Society Organisations and the 4C Association

### 4C: What it is

Coffee is very important for developing countries: after oil it is the second most traded commodity between South and North. Worldwide



approximately 100 Million people depend directly or indirectly on incomes from the coffee sector.

The social, economic and environmental conditions in this important supply chain are in many cases unfavourable. Coffee

has the highest volatility of all commodities traded and the efficiency of mainstream production is not optimised. As a consequence, incomes for small producers and their families are often low, and there are environmental losses.

Since the 70s various initiatives have been supporting small scale producers in improving their living conditions through better marketing possibilities thanks to certificates and premium prices. At the same time they have been active in raising public awareness on the challenges many farmers are facing, - thus bringing producers closer to consumers. They have a very positive impact on the lives of many people in the developing world but despite considerable growth rates of these initiatives, many farmers have only limited access to these premium prices. There is a need for a baseline approach addressing coffee producers in the so called mainstream market.

The Common Code for the Coffee Community (4C) Association now offers a complementary approach to existing standard and sustainability initiatives: 4C aims at making a difference with **every** cup of coffee.

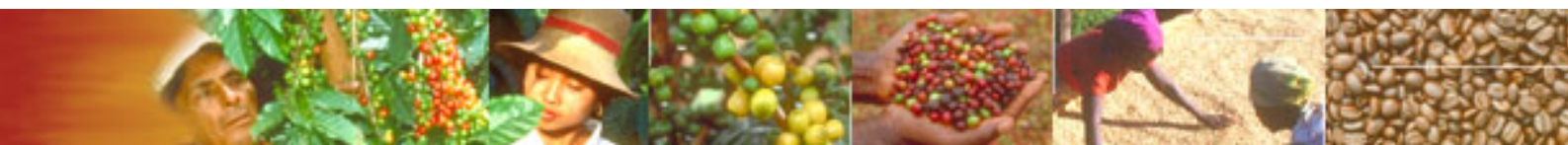
Basis of the 4C system is a code of conduct which provides guidance for improvement. It introduces a baseline standard for sustainability in coffee production, processing and trading worldwide. The 4C code of conduct is addressing all three dimensions of sustainability in a basic way: social conditions, the environment and the economic wellbeing of people involved. It is applicable to the enormous amounts of coffee which are traded in the conventional markets and thus addresses a large target group.

### Mainstreaming sustainability.

Producers are guided in a process of applying good agricultural and management practices to increase their efficiency and profitability. 4C provides a framework for improved market access and close cooperation along the chain. In addition, 4C offers support services to implement the practices and improve the quality of product and production. In the long-term it is envisaged that the majority of all coffee meet basic social, economic and environmental standards. This baseline is combined with a commitment to continuous improvement.

### The concept in detail

4C aims at poverty reduction in coffee producing countries, protection of the environment and improvement of farmers' living conditions. Main criteria





## Common Code for the Coffee Community

of the Common Code for the Coffee Community are: labour conditions, working hours, child labour, deforestation, wastewater management, soil fertility, technical assistance, diversification – to name a few.

In all its dimensions 4C builds on a rather low entrance level but requires continuous improvements accompanied by support mechanisms. Step by step producers they might approach higher standards or certification schemes. With 4C concept the subsequent reduction of poverty in rural areas and the protection of the environment in many "hot spot" regions can be initiated in one approach.

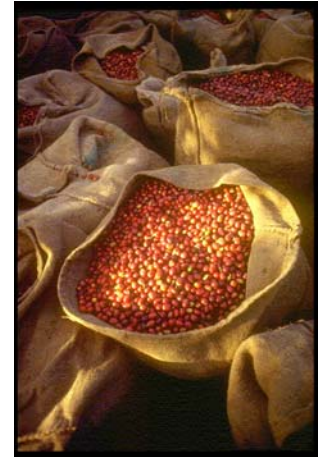
With entering the 4C system, the worst practices in the coffee production, processing and trading are excluded (e.g. banning of the use of pesticides which are forbidden by international conventions). On this basis a continuous improvement process of the applied practices is initiated – for example producers reduce and optimize use of agrochemicals and improved working conditions.

Through harmonizing the principles of local, national or regional codes with 4C (benchmarking), other sustainability initiatives will be accepted as equivalent to 4C. As a result, also producers whose production systems are certified under these codes can market their coffee in the 4C supply chain. This provides the possibility to sell supplementary amounts of certified coffee in the 4C network without further auditing.

The 4C Code of Conduct for producers is completed by Rules of Participation for coffee trade and industry which ensure a clear commitment to support producers.

### Reasons for joining

Organisations and groups from the Civil Society are an essential pillar of the 4C Association. Thanks to the constructive support of different Civil Society organisations, 4C includes many elements that carry the handwriting of NGOs and Unions. With its participatory process and transparent dialogue 4C incorporates elements to trust in and creates a beneficiary situation for all stakeholders:



#### **Multi-stakeholder involvement**

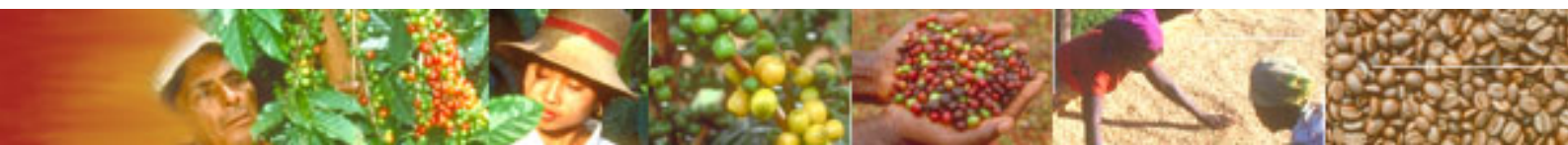
All elements of the Association have been developed in a multi-stakeholder process, including producers, trade and industry and Civil society organizations. This ensures that 4C is both providing benefits to the producers and having an impact on overall sustainability.

#### **Strong producer representation**

It is producers' lives 4C is talking about, so they have the say: producers have been strongly involved in the process and now form the biggest group in the decision making body - the 4C Council.

#### **Responsibility for trade and industry**

Fair enough: A Code of Conduct for producers and Rules of Participation for trade and industry! The final buyers, like roasters and soluble coffee manufacturers as well as retail with private label coffee commit to buy





## Common Code for the Coffee Community

increasing amounts of 4C coffee over time. As such, the efforts producers undergo in order to comply with the 4C Code are accompanied by an increasing demand for 4C compliant coffee. At the same time, coffee trade and industry dedicate part of the membership contributions to support activities for producers.

### Adequate Communication

4C does not claim to guarantee sustainability, but rather provides a first step. Its members are proud to be on the right track! Clear Communication Guidelines ensure that this message is transmitted correctly. They provide a binding framework for all members. The use of the 4C logo is not permitted on the final coffee pack, but members may refer to their 4C membership with a statement on the coffee pack. Communication will be low key and based on information and complementarities to existing initiatives.

### Democratic set up of 4C

Membership in the 4C Association is voluntary and open to all interested organisations, companies and individuals. All members form the General Assembly, which elects the 4C Council as the decision making body. All bodies mirror the tri-partite structure of 4C with producers, trade and industry and of course civil society groups.

### Verification

4C builds on a self-assessment and a verification process undertaken by independent third party verifiers. However it is less demanding than certification. This makes the system and its benefits more easily accessible for producers who are aiming at getting on the track towards sustainability. The verification is paid by 4C and will

preferably be conducted by local verifiers.

### Being a member - having a say.

The membership of 4C gives the opportunity to accompany and shape such a far-reaching initiative. 4C provides a platform for a direct dialogue and exchange between the different actors – which is the basis for making a difference in mainstream.

### Completion of support portfolio

No more “deep versus broad”! A considerable amount of initiatives offer certified coffees. These products guarantee a high level of sustainability and often offer an extra premium to producers. These price difference only a limited number of consumers is willing to pay. Participation in 4C enables civil society groups to support high standards with premium prices for farmers and in parallel addressing producers for the conventional market in an improvement process. 4C can be seen as a springboard to higher standards with premium prices.



Together we can make a difference! Join us today.

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