



Coffee Producers and the 4C Association

4C: What it is

Coffee producers form the basis for a huge economic sector. The social, environmental and economic conditions vary from coffee region to coffee region, but the essential challenges producers are confronted with, are comparable: They often are highly dependent on the other actors along the coffee supply chain and are not protected against cyclic market fluctuations. Coffee has the highest volatility of all commodities traded and the efficiency of mainstream production is not optimised.



Therefore, one main objective of the **Common Code for the Coffee Community Association** (4C Association) is to strengthen the producers' position in the supply chain by enabling them to produce a better product in an optimized production process: improving the productivity, product quality, introducing basic social and environmental principles, optimizing the supply chain and increasing the product efficiency.

Mainstreaming sustainability.

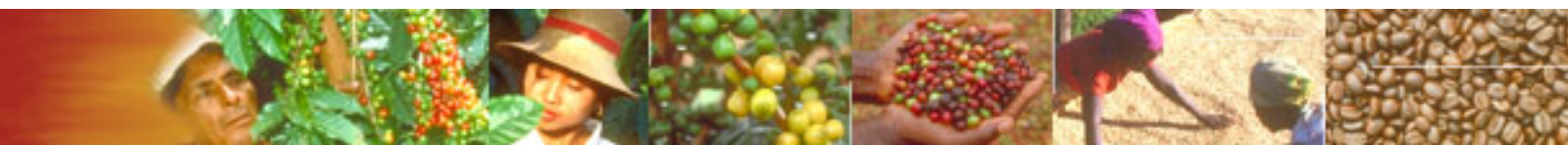
The 4C Association offers a complementary approach to existing standards and sustainability initiatives: 4C aims at making a difference with **every** cup of coffee.

Basis of the 4C system is a code of conduct which provides guidance for improvements. It introduces a baseline standard for sustainability in coffee production, processing and trading worldwide. The Code of Conduct should be understood as means for the producers to analyze their situation and identify areas of improvement. It is addressing all three dimensions of sustainability: social conditions, the environment and the economic wellbeing of people involved. Through 4C's baseline approach, it is applicable to the enormous amounts of coffee traded in the conventional markets.

Besides guidance in a process of applying good agricultural and management practices, 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.

The 4C Code of Conduct for producers is complemented by "Rules of Participation" for coffee trade and industry. With this "Business Code" final buyers like roasters and soluble coffee manufacturers as well as retail with private label coffees commit to buy increasing amounts of 4C coffee over time, to cover the costs of the verification process and to assist farmers in the application of the code.

In all its dimensions 4C builds on a rather low entrance level and continuous improvements accompanied by support mechanisms. Step by step producers might approach higher standards or certification schemes.





Reasons for joining

Increasing efficiency

Through the 4C support services, the Association facilitates the access to good agricultural and management practices which result in reduced costs and higher efficiency.

Improvement of product quality

Through access to trainings, the production and processing methods can be improved significantly. This leads to improved product quality without elevated costs. As a consequence, farmers may increase their income with improved marketing conditions for their products.

Optimized use of pesticides

Through educational measures and trainings, chemical additives can be used more effectively, less costly and environmentally responsible. Workers' health is protected and coffee plants as well as soils are preserved for future generations.

Increasing demand for 4C coffee

Through a set of "Rules of Participation", 4C trade and industry members give their commitment to support producers. These Rules include the purchase of increasing amounts of 4C coffee over time, a contribution to the support services and covering the verification costs.

Facilitation of access to financial resources

Through its network and reliable structures, 4C aims to be a reference to local banks and will thus facilitate access to credit, insurance and improved financial conditions.

Improved self-organization

With its structural impact through establishing 4C Units, smallholders are encouraged to get organized in groups.

This process increases their negotiation position, facilitates market access and reduces the dependency of other actors along the supply chain.

Improved product marketing

Through communication activities 4C aims at introducing a new understanding of quality: a quality which besides intrinsic product quality considers the social and ecological conditions of production and processing.

Increasing demand for responsibly produced coffee

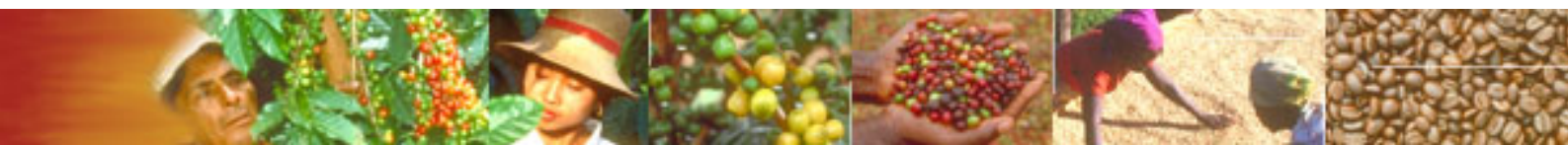
Through 4C membership, producers meet the growing demand of consumers to learn about the ways how their coffee has been produced. Social, environmental and economic conditions in producing countries are getting more important for the buying decision of consumers. It is of highest importance that producers do meet these interests of consumers to enhance and increase their market.

An Association close to its members

With the 4C Local Forums, the Association is setting up 4C structures in the different coffee producing regions. Therefore a direct contact to and close cooperation with the 4C Association is possible, enabling producers in joining 4C, filling in the self-assessment and initiate the continuous improvement process.

Multi-stakeholder involvement

All elements of the Association have been developed in a multi-stakeholder process, involving





Common Code for the Coffee Community

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.

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. It is conducted on the level of the 4C Unit combined with random field checks.

Being a member - having a say.

All members form the General Assembly, which elects the 4C Council as the decision making entity. All bodies mirror the tri-partite structure of 4C with producers, trade and industry and civil society groups.

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.

Becoming a member...

To become a member small scale producers pay a symbolic once only entrance fee. To enter the commercial system, coffee producers exclude the worst practices in the coffee production (e.g. through banning the use of pesticides which are forbidden by international conventions) and reach a baseline level of sustainability in all dimensions. At the same time they commit themselves to continuously improving

their practices. They analyse their practices with an assisted self-assessment procedure and start the improvement process facilitated by the 4C support systems. In order to obtain the license to sell 4C coffee, the producers form or join a so called “4C Unit” – a group of producers which is capable of compiling one container of coffee. The local 4C structures or the 4C Secretariat support the producers to identify or set-up a 4C Unit.

Through harmonizing the principles of local, national, regional or international 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.



Together we can make a difference! Join us today.

Contact:

Melanie Rutten

Carsten Schmitz-Hoffmann

info@sustainable-coffee.net

www.sustainable-coffee.net

