



4C: An Association dedicated to increase sustainability in the global coffee sector

What is it?

Within the Common Code for the Coffee Community (4C), producers, trade & industry and civil society from around the world work together for more sustainability in the entire coffee sector. This global community has joined forces to continuously improve the social, environmental and economic conditions for the people making their living with coffee. Main pillars of 4C are a code of conduct, support mechanisms and a verification system. More than 65 representatives from the 17 most important coffee producing countries, coffee companies and civil society groups have participated in the development process.

Who cooperates within 4C and how is it financed?

Members of the independent 4C Association are representatives from coffee producers, trade & industry as well as civil society and associated members like governments, research institutes etc. Currently, the 4C Association has 64 members representing almost 50 per cent of the potential coffee supply and 65 per cent of the demand. The 4C Association is financed by membership fees of especially trade and industry members as well as public contributions (BMZ, Seco, and Fica).

What is 4C governance structure?

All decisions within 4C are taken under the principles of consensus building, transparency and participation. 4C's governance structure is composed of the General Assembly, the Council and the Executive Board which guides the activities of the 4C Secretariat. A Technical Committee is responsible for elaborating modifications for the 4C Code of Conduct and the support services. In case of conflicts, a Mediation Board will transparently search for amicable settlement of any dispute.

How does it work?

The good agricultural and management practices are available for application to all interested producers and their organizations to improve their performance. The Code of Conduct supports the identification of those areas that need to be addressed most urgently. According to a traffic light system, the criteria of the Code are classified in red, yellow and green. With the concept of continuous improvement, farmers are encouraged to move from red to green over a certain period of time. A constant self monitoring further supports the farmers in becoming more efficient. Third-party verification proves the growers' compliance with the Code.

What are the benefits for the growers?

In the highly competitive coffee market, 4C provides good agricultural practices, services and capacity building support to become more efficient and produce a good product in due respect to society and environment. Benefits for producers are reduced costs, improved market access and marketing conditions, better access to credits, enhanced market transparency, participation in the decision making of the Association and better margins for their products in the global coffee market. Transparency along the chain improves the transfer of value to the producers. Trade and industry members in 4C committed themselves to support the application of 4C with e.g. contributions to capacity building activities, trainings and skill development programs. Verification is paid by the Association and therefore it has no cost for the producers. Apart from the Code of Conduct as guidance towards sustainability, the 4C Association offers support services through trainings and workshops to the producers.



Common Code for the Coffee Community

And, how 4C benefits roasters?

The coffee trade and industry aims at achieving a sustainable business and assuming social and environmental responsibility. Companies want to show that they take care in all their brands, not only highlighting special products from their range. 4C is designed to work with the broad mass of the coffee market, providing the mechanisms to secure long-term supply for the market demanding high quantities and qualities of coffee. 4C offers a differentiation in the supply chain, contributing to the overall sustainable development of the sector. The structure of the 4C Association enables an equal dialogue between the members of the different stakeholder groups and their participation in the governance.

...and the consumers?

The 4C concept is a baseline approach that will not be communicated with an on-pack logo. However, consumers can be assured that the coffee companies which are members of 4C have committed to increase their levels of coffee produced under sustainable conditions or from those who are working towards sustainability. 4C members believe that consumers will appreciate the new quality concept of the 4C: the quality of the product and the quality of the production process with respect to nature and the society.

Further information: www.sustainable-coffee.net