

STEP 1.

WHAT EACH
DOCUMENT MEANS

FARMER CONTRACT



This shows that our purchase price is always a minimum of \$1.50 a lb. We raised our price independent of the established Fair Trade price based on feedback from growers at our 2005 Annual General Meeting in Xela, Guatemala. The contract also indicates that the coffee must first pass our sampling and quality analyses. This is important to us as roasters, because it ensures our quality. But it’s a two-way street. At the core of our Fair Trade system is long-term partnerships between farmer and roaster. We do not walk away from our cooperative partners. We roast the beans. They grow the cherries and process them into beans. By applying our expertise on the market side to the farmer’s capacities on the growing/processing side, we work with them to create coffees that are higher quality and more desirable. This helps them gain other customers. In fact, all the cooperatives we began buying from have eventually built followings among other importers. There are instances, when it has taken over a year for a cooperative to meet our standards. Once they do, we remain committed to them.



PRE-FINANCING CONTRACT



A key tool for farmers in the U.S. is capitalization. Loans are widely available to farmers in America and Europe. This is not the case for small farmers in remote coffee-growing regions. A key element of our Fair Trade system is pre-financing, which we offer via loans up to the amount of 60% of our ultimate purchase price from Eco Logic, our financing partner. This means, we loan a portion of the purchase price of the coffee in advance of taking delivery, enabling farmers to get through the growing season.

As an absolute rule, we always offer pre-financing to our farming partners. This is critical because most cooperatives are uncomfortable about seeking pre-financing. Although pre-financing is a standard tenet of Fair Trade practices and partnerships in general, most importers do not overtly offer it.

Due to the structure of pre-financing, it is not a part of our document path. You can see a sample contract by clicking the thumbnail photo. And you’ll see a cooperative’s pre-finance status when you use Coffee Path to trace a lot # from a farming cooperative



PRE-SHIPMENT CUPPING EVALUATION



This is how we evaluate coffees for quality. It used to be that cuppings were only done by importers -- a practice that facilitates an uneven balance of power between farmers and importers. Since XXXX, our members have been working with farmers to train them to cup their own coffee and therefore raise their quality to meet the desires of the market. The practice of farmers cupping their own coffee is now increasingly common.



FARMER INVOICE



Shows the name of the farmer cooperative, number of bags purchased and total U.S. dollar amount to be paid.

This is a more radical document than it seems. Before Fair Trade, it was unheard of for small family farmers to have invoices, because they could not export directly. Over 70% of the world’s coffee comes from small family farmers of X hectares or less. It’s not possible for a farm of this size to fill a container for export. The Fair Trade system encourages farmers to form cooperatives that enable them to export their coffee themselves, substantially increasing their revenue. In many coffee-growing countries, the government offers little if any services in the remote regions where coffee is grown. Fair Trade cooperatives frequently do what the government does not. For example, Cacocafen in Nicaragua has built village schools and even roads, both of which are open to their entire communities, not just the coffee farmers.



FARMER BILL OF LADING



Documents the original shipper of the coffee, who it is being shipped to, weight of the coffee and U.S. destination port, which in our case is our warehouse in New Orleans.

To give you a sense of the importance of long-term partnerships, on this site under each cooperative’s information, we have indicated the total pounds we have purchased over the duration of our partnership.



POST-SHIPPED CUPPING EVALUATION



We evaluate coffee in our U.S. cupping laboratory after shipping to ensure the quality we are receiving matches the quality we anticipated. (This form is not a part of our traceable document bundle. See sample by clicking thumbnail photo.)



ORGANIC CERTIFICATE



Documents the Organic Certification of the farmer cooperative. We encourage all of our farming partners to get their organic certification. We do this because organic farming is better for the environment as well as the health of the farmers and their families. It’s also highly beneficial to their business as it adds XX cents per pound to their revenue. As a result, nearly all of our coffee is organic-certified as well as Fair Trade.

The most critical way we support Organic certification is to purchase coffee from cooperatives during the transition process -- a time when they must adhere to the practices of organic farming without being able to demand the price premium associated with organic certification (frequently termed “transitional organic”).



ROASTER INVOICE



This is Cooperative Coffees invoice to the individual member for its portion of the shipment. Just as farming cooperatives enable farmers to form communities of common interest to directly export, we use our cooperative to empower us to directly import. As communities that prioritize common interests over mere profits, cooperatives represent alternatives to corporations. We try to support this concept in every way possible.



ROASTER BILL OF LADING



Documents delivery of the coffee to our warehouse. It closes the loop.

STEP 2. ENTER THE LOT # YOU WANT TO TRACE.