"Not Just a Cup...

...But a Just Cup"

by Paul Katzeff

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Thanksgiving Coffee Company recognizes that there are many factors above and beyond organic that go into the making of a "Just Cup." Certified organic coffee is one important factor, but it is not all inclusive. To recognize a "just cup" one must go beyond organic.

New relationships recently uncovered by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Project, such as the coffee/songbird connection, or revelations that the contamination of rivers and streams from coffee pulp has created the #1 environmental problem in South and Central America, have lead us to re-evaluate what exactly is, a "just cup." Obviously, we can no longer use phrases such as "social justice," "fair trade," and "environmentally responsible" to explain a "just cup." We must now look beyond those concepts to the activities that define a "just cup."

We need to list and define activities a grower may become involved in, which indicate that he is becoming part of the a "just cup" solution to the environmental problems coffee growers have traditionally not addressed.

A close look at the current picture allows us to see that, although few are involved in organic agriculture, many are involved in other significant solutions which mitigate the environmental impact of coffee processing. We must support these non-organic farmers as they move us, in their way, toward a cleaner planet. The marketplace must develop a system that recognizes and rewards those who are on the path toward a "just cup" solution. That system must be market driven, and the rewards must be monetary.

Every great adventure or leap forward necessarily begins with a first step. Ultimately, that first step will lead to the distant destination. In the interim, which may take decades, many solutions will become part of the intricate web of activity leading to a successful arrival at the destination. In our case, that destination is a clean and healthy coffee industry.

The concept of "The Just Cup" began in 1985 with the introduction of "Coffee for Peace" (Café por la Paz). Coffee for Peace was Nicaraguan coffee of the highest quality. The victorious Revolutionaries wanted the coffee that was being sold into the United States market to be "as sweet as their revolution." I brought that coffee into the United States via Canada, challenging the U.S. embargo. The coffee was packaged with the Nicaragua National Farmworkers and Ranchers union logo on the front and the
farms are contributing to solving the problem. Both growers are in the non-certified organic farmer-growing process and optimum coffee varieties

Such are the issues—complex and expensive to solve. But should the

a

businesses for cooking. Local

to receive its water or convert its moisture water into fresh energy to

optimum. If these are grown in the managed shade of another monoculture

I have also learned that "Certified Organic" also regards as environmental

As I have learned that "first class" regards as environmental assurance,

it comes to problems from growing coffee.

shops with greater commitment generally at the bottom of the pile when

concerned with environmental health than in managing stress and pain

which opposes change in the way wealth is distributed. Such forces are less

requires one to understand that there are major market forces at work.

The process that I and Thanksgiving Coffee have gone through during

steps to neutrality to meet with coffee growers and small

ago. And long journeys begin with a first step and of course many adjourn.

This was Thanksgiving Coffee coming around the first turn a decade

dictate a line level.

for over $30,000. I should like to help improve.

their coffee for a better, more just society. The contributions amount

to about $70,000. I should like to ask our wholesalers to join in the effort.

coffee company in North America. To demonstrate Thanksgiving's

commitment, our coffee for Peace was the first such product mentioning of a

such economic development projects were not approved or in 1985.

Product that directly linked producers with consumers across cultures.

Sanandinia story on the back label. This was to be "bridged" product. A
harvest we desire. In time the coffee industry can become an industry of responsible world citizens.

To recognize these growers on the continuum, to support all of them who are moving forward in the race toward sustainability, we must change our method of buying green coffee. Our price differential must reward the growers who are in the race to save the planet, and our packaging must inform the consumers of what they are buying. This new system must reflect the continuum of progress we wish to recognize. If done correctly the marketplace will vote the price/value relationships it most prefers. I contend that an informed consumer will make some sort of a conscious choice. Studies tell us that 47% of American consumers indicated that when quality, service, and price are competitive, they will buy from a socially responsible corporate citizen.

On the supply side we have to determine how valuable it is to be growing Typica in virgin rainforest shade versus growing certified organic coffee hybrids in managed shade on a major plantation. To do this we must accept both as good but we must, as industry leaders, roasters, and consumers, make our value choice when we buy green coffee to roast if we are roasters, and at the shelves, based on cost, flavor, and personal social and environmental priorities if we are consumers.

Such a system of “certification, verification, and seal creation” is generally left to the social and academic engineers of the type found in foundations, environmental and social N.G.O.s, such as the National Resource Defense Fund or the Fair Trade Associations of Europe. This is good because they are clearly trustworthy when it comes to being believed by a cynical and suspect consumer.

However, I believe Thanksgiving Coffee Company can set “just cup” standards for its own green coffee purchasing without conferring with the traditional N.G.O.s, or waiting for some “third party” standards to hit the national scene with a big bang.

I have noticed that such events enter with a bang, and leave with a whimper. There is a need to pre-link the supply with existing demand if selective buying power is to be utilized to change a marketplace. If the consumer is educated, looks for the “seal of approval,” and cannot find it associated with
This is the ground rules in short form. It is much better now, our "green coffee buying criteria" for a "green coffee" now look at fourteen factors which we call environmental value. We vote with their pocketbooks when they select their coffee by its social and environmental value.

We must now return to the main premise that we must define activists. We side the race track we are on. Only known coffee can recover a thing. We face, grade, attitude, grown, and flavor must not be traded. They will out. We will be coffee the way we know nothing about our country of origin and that coffee is the same coffee we know personally and can stand behind. We sell our coffee based on what we know personally and can stand behind. We must coffee may be from every or picked by almost people. We must our active "will continue to grow as the goal. Some of those organic coffee."

Thansgiving Coffee Company with 30% of its sales being "certified organic." Industry must support roasters in transitions as we support growers in developing. We must support roasters in transitions as we support growers in developing. We must support roasters in transitions as we support growers in developing. We must support roasters in transitions as we support growers in developing.

Who will support the roasters, and how will they and sellers of "green and roasted product." Are the buyer and the sellers, and they are the only group that deals in both. Difference between is the roasters who are at the face. They must be a roaster. It must be a roaster. It must be the retailer. It must be the consumer. Is, and it must be there before the consumer comes to any coffee. That consumer's power is lost. “The coffee” must be where the coffee is.
after 25 years in the coffee industry, we return to our earliest motto, "in search of the perfect cup," refining it to include the just cup principles established by Thanksgiving Coffee Company in 1996.

These are the first publicly stated coffee buying principles set to standards of a healthier planet, not to standards of price and flavor alone.

The "Just Cup" seal will be placed on coffees that meet at least three of the fourteen standards and/or ten points on the value scale.

The "Just Cup" seal will carry a numerical value to indicate to the consumer where the coffee resides on the value scale between ten (lowest "Just Cup") to thirty-five (highest rating).

An educational program will be found "on site" where these coffees are on the shelves. This will help the consumer think about these issues in a numerical way and get them familiar with a "Just Cup."

From this first step I visualize a change in the way coffee is grown in the world. We must be careful to recognize, however, the time consuming physical steps that each country, growing region, and farmer must take to make the change a real move toward a sustainable coffee producing industry.
Green coffee beans, who share our social, economic, and environmental values.

- The coffee is purchased from sustainable importers or
certified

- Shade grown under managed shade of indigenous

- Bio-dynamically grown or organically grown but not

- Small farm grown/cooperatively grown

- Cooperative member produced

- Grown in traditional poly-culture shade

- "Fair Trade" purchased directly from Fair Trade

- Shade grown under natural forest canopy

- Indigenous people

- Land ownership promotes strong cultural survival of

- Trees are Certified Organic

- Trees are planted on farms

Criteria

Numerical Value Chart

Purchasing for a Healthier Planet