The Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA) Field Testing Results:
A Project Initiated by the Sustainable Coffee Partnership

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Purpose of COSA

• What COSA IS...
  A science-based and participatory process for measuring performance against widely recognized sustainability criteria and indicators
• What COSA IS NOT...
  A process which attempts to draw conclusions on the overall sustainability of specific initiatives or farm interventions

COSA is a tool for enabling decision makers (producers, policy makers, traders etc.) to apply their own value system to a set of globally vetted set of sustainability indicators

Field Testing Objectives

• What the Purpose of the Field Testing Process WAS...
  To provide an indication of the feasibility of the COSA process as well as the appropriateness of the draft indicator set
  To identify opportunities for improving data consistency and efficiency
• What the Purpose of the Field Testing Process WAS NOT...
  To measure the sustainability of certified farms or specific certification systems
  To gather statistically significant results across certification systems

The results of the testing process MUST be considered with the understanding that the sample size was insufficient to provide “statistically significant” results

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COSA Activities to Date

• Formation of Executive Committee (CIRAD, CIMS, CATIE, SECO and IISD)
• Facilitation of high level advisory panel, scientific research panel
• Formulation of a draft methodology and field guide
• Testing of the methodology across more than 50 farms in 5 countries

Methodological Observations

• Farm Selection:
  In many countries, limited numbers of certified farms make it difficult to generate statistically significant results
• Data Gathering:
  Use of different measurement units across countries and even within countries requires pre-visit research and calibration
  Many farms do not have reliable economic data/records rendering the economic portion highly time consuming
• Questionnaire Format:
  Needs to be reduced in length and simplified
Economics: Productivity

- A majority (62%) of certified farms reported reduced yields due to certification.

Economics: Net Revenue

- A majority (60%) of certified farms reported an improved overall economic situation due to certification (superior net incomes for certified farms as compared with conventional farms).

Economics: Market Access

- A very slight majority (54%) of certified farms reporting improved access to market information due to certification.

Economics: Perception

- 69% of certified farmers report certification as having had positive economic impact.

Environment: Management

- Certified farms had generally superior environmental management systems than non-certified farms.

Environment: Soil Coverage

- But showed little improvements in actual soil and biodiversity conditions.
Social: Occupational Health and Safety

- Four times as many certified farms have occupational health and safety policies as conventional farms (42% vs 10%).

Social: Labour Rights

- Certified farms scored 25% better across the aggregate of labour standard indicators. On the specific element of contracts, twice as many certified farms had written contracts than conventional farms.

Multi-criteria Analysis

Producer Satisfaction

- 90% of certified farms noted they were either "likely" or "very likely" to continue in the certification program.

Moving Forward: Ongoing and Future Activities

- Full implementation over three years in Tanzania and Colombia
- Negotiations underway for application in several other African, Latin American and Asian countries
- Expanding partnerships and integration with capacity building strategies (Sustainable Commodity Assistance Network—SCAN) is an essential component of COSA’s forward looking strategy

Thank You!
Country conditions are a major determinant in sustainability performance. This graph shows variation within a single system are significant across countries.