

The International Coffee Organization (ICO)

The International Coffee Organization ([ICO \[www\]](http://www.icao.int)) was founded in 1963 under the auspices of the United Nations. Its Members include both coffee exporting and importing countries, who aim to tackle the challenges facing the world coffee sector through international cooperation.

It makes a practical contribution to the world coffee economy and to improving standards of living in developing countries by:

- Enabling government representatives to exchange views and coordinate coffee policies and priorities at regular high-level meetings;
- Improving coffee quality through the Coffee Quality-Improvement Programme (CQP);
- Initiating coffee development projects to improve quality and marketing, and combat diseases;
- Promoting coffee consumption through innovative market development activities;
- Working closely with the private sector through a Private Sector Consultative Board (PSCB) which tackles issues such as food safety;
- Encouraging a sustainable coffee economy and environmental standards through studies and expert panels;
- Providing objective and comprehensive information and research on the world coffee market;
- Ensuring transparency in the coffee market through provision of statistics;
- Producing market reports, econometric models, in-depth economic studies and country coffee profiles.

ICO - coffee quality standards:

In February 2002, ICO implemented the Coffee Quality-Improvement Programme, under Council Resolution 407. The CQP under Resolution 407 consists of minimum standards for exportable coffee, providing that from 1 October 2002, exporting Members shall not export coffee that has the following characteristics:

- For arabica, in excess of 86 defects per 300g sample (New York green coffee classification/Brazilian method, or equivalent); and, for robusta, in excess of 150 defects per 300 grams (Vietnam, Indonesia, or equivalent); and
- For both arabica and robusta, moisture content below 8 percent or in excess of 12.5 percent, measured using the ISO 6673 method.

The CQP is designed to improve the balance between supply and demand of coffee by stimulating demand through the provision of a better overall standard of quality to the market while reducing supply by eliminating significant quantities of sub-standard coffee. However, in May 2004, the CQP was amended under Council Resolution 420, making compliance with the provisions under Resolution 407 entirely voluntary, and not mandatory, from June 1st 2004.



In the longer term a mandatory CQP could have been seen as an important tool in stimulating growth in demand for coffee, since there is growing evidence that deteriorating quality in blends is correlated with stagnant or declining output, with price a less significant factor. The ICO is an important vehicle for information on improving coffee handling practices, and widely disseminates available guidance to its member countries.

ICO - an international forum for discussion on establishment of maximum levels for OTA in coffee:

The discussions within the EU on the establishment of maximum levels for OTA in coffee were closely followed by the ICO. The twice yearly meetings provided an opportunity for affected parties to discuss the issue and to establish a common position.

The ICO played an important role in the formulation of the CFC-funded project, "Improvement of coffee quality through prevention of mould growth", which primarily aimed at helping countries reduce the risk of OTA contamination in coffee.

The coffee producing countries within ICO issued a Declaration in September 2003 urging the EU not to adopt OTA limits for coffee. The Declaration of ICO producing Members (ICO document ED 1896/03) can be found [here](#) [www].

