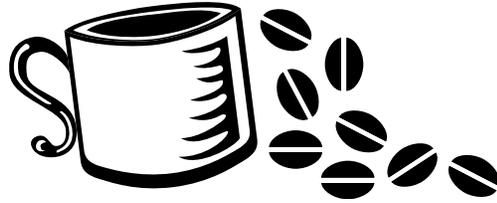


The Price of Your Daily Fix

Regular coffee drinkers know it's a magic concoction. That seductive aroma. A quickening heartbeat. The feeling of being energetic and alert. When you just want that first cup of coffee, it may be hard to muster interest in where your java or espresso actually comes from. Yet the origin of your coffee has surprising significance for the future of life on this planet.



Like cocoa and bananas, coffee is a tropical export that is produced almost exclusively in the developing world, but consumed mainly in wealthier nations. Beans brewed for connoisseurs in Geneva, Los Angeles, and Tokyo are grown in a thin band of rainforests that straddles the Equator. Until a few decades ago, most of the world's coffee was planted in the understory of these forests, with farmers looking after the trees as a natural outgrowth of managing their coffee. But today, more and more of the beans come from what was *once* biologically rich rainforest: clear-cut tracts of land, without shade, that give off the dry, burning scent of ammonia fertilizer.

Fortunately, more and more java drinkers are demanding that their favorite baristas serve coffee grown in a manner that protects, not destroys, the rainforest. The best choice is coffee that is shade-grown (maintains rain forest), organic (forbids chemical use), and fair-traded (assures a fair price to the farmer). Though the market for this "ethical" coffee is small, it's growing daily.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- * Farmers harvested nearly 7.4 million tons of coffee beans in 2002—an all-time high and almost double the harvest in 1960.
- * One out of every five cups of coffee worldwide is consumed in the United States.
- * More than 40 percent of the coffee area in Colombia, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean has been converted to sun coffee, and an additional one-quarter is in conversion—a pattern emerging everywhere the beans are grown.
- * Scientists have found that in full-sun coffee plantations, the number of bird species is reduced by half and the number of individual birds is down as much as two-thirds. Diversity of insects, plants, and other wild creatures is lower as well.
- * Shade-grown coffee requires fewer pesticides and fertilizers than sun coffee; the forest canopy provides habitat for the birds and insects that devour coffee-plant pests, and many native plants add nutrients to the soil.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF AND OTHERS:

For one week, make an effort to drink only coffee that is shade-grown, organic, or fair-traded. For an added challenge, choose only options that carry all three labels. If you like what you taste, consider making a wholesale switch.

SUCCESS STORIES

❖ Global sales of fair trade coffee grew by 12 percent in 2001, compared with overall growth in coffee consumption of just 1.5 percent. But the fair trade label still only accounts for a small share of the market.

❖ The Max Havelaar brand of fair trade coffee is available in 90 percent of supermarkets in the Netherlands and holds over 3 percent of the domestic coffee market—just fifteen years after the first pack arrived in Rotterdam harbor!

❖ Several of the largest U.S. coffee retailers, including Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts, have started offering coffee that is shade-grown, organic, and fair-traded.

❖ Coffee growers in the hills outside El Salvador's capital city, San Salvador, are being encouraged to reintroduce trees to their farms to help alleviate the city's water shortage. The trees' roots and vegetation retain water, reducing flooding and landslides and helping to recharge local aquifers.



SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- ✓ Look for coffee that's organic, fairly traded, and/or shade grown the next time you go shopping.
- ✓ When meeting friends for coffee, suggest a place that serves organic, fairly traded, and/or shade grown products.
- ✓ Take a moment to educate friends and family about how coffee is grown, and suggest alternative choices.
- ✓ Ask your local coffee shop or supermarket to carry coffee that is shade-grown, organic, and fair-traded. If the store already offers this option, ask the manager to boost its share of these items.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ☛ **Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center** (nationalzoo.si.edu/conservationandscience/migratorybirds/coffee/default.cfm) conducts research on the connection between coffee production and bird migration and certifies coffee that is "bird-friendly."
- ☛ **International Fair Trade Association (IFAT)** (www.ifat.org) provides information about fair-trade co-operatives and associations worldwide and offers a catalog of sources of fair-trade products, including coffee.
- ☛ **Consumer's Choice Council** (www.consumerscouncil.org) is an association of environmental, consumer, and human rights organizations dedicated to protecting the environment and promoting human rights through ecolabeling.