



## **Sustainable Coffee Challenge – FAQ**

### **What is the Sustainable Coffee Challenge?**

The Sustainable Coffee Challenge is a pre-competitive collaboration of partners working across the coffee sector, united in developing a shared framework for helping governments, businesses and other actors understand how they can contribute to making coffee the first sustainable agricultural product. It is focused on stimulating demand across the value chain, from the policy level through to the final consumer.

### **There are a lot of organizations working on sustainability for coffee, why is the Challenge necessary?**

The Sustainable Coffee Challenge's sector-wide focus on demand is a new lens, aimed at demonstrating the many pathways to sustainability and understanding how they work together. It is dedicated to mapping commitments, actions and impacts in order to help develop shared learnings and stimulate more ambitious commitments and investments over time.

The Challenge is unique because it focuses on building demand for sustainability through markets as well as commitments made by non-market actors such as governments, NGOs, donor agencies and others. Our approach to developing a common framework is inclusive and seeks to recognize various pathways to sustainability based on where an organization is on the value chain. As an open source, pre-competitive coalition, we partner with all players in the sector and offer our insights and framework as resources for others to use.

### **What do you mean by “building demand for sustainability”?**

Demand has traditionally been viewed as something that has to come from market actors – consumers, retailers, roasters, traders and financiers. While these actors can and should stimulate demand for sustainability through market-based mechanisms, governments, NGOs and other actors can also send strong signals that they care about the sustainability of the sector and want to support the transition of coffee to becoming a sustainable product. For instance, a producer government can demonstrate its commitment through policies that reward sustainable production, sending strong demand signals to the coffee growers in the country. These signals are complementary to those sent via traditional market channels and serve to amplify them.



## **SUSTAINABLE COFFEE CHALLENGE**

### **Who can join the challenge?**

All business and organizations working in the coffee sector are welcome to join the Challenge. It is dedicated to transparency and to finding system-wide solutions, recognizing that there are many different paths to sustainability depending on where one sits in the value chain. Challenge participants include producers, retailers, traders, roasters, importers, industry associations, governments, donor agencies and other NGOs.

### **What is the timeframe for reaching sustainability?**

The next fifteen years is an important window as climate change impacts intensify and demand for coffee continues to grow as China and India develop a taste for coffee. Currently, nearly every major coffee-producing region of the world is under stress. Warming temperatures, drought and changing weather patterns are affecting coffee production. Other factors also compound this stress: market volatility has significantly lowered prices, aging coffee trees are declining in productivity and the next generation of coffee farmers is seeking economic alternatives for their livelihoods.

### **What should a shared definition of sustainability include? Why don't we have one already?**

The Challenge's shared definition of sustainability is based on three "North Star" elements that drive all actions: farmer prosperity and well-being; conservation of forests, soil and water; and a sustained supply of coffee. Participants in the Challenge focus their efforts based on where they can have the most impact, within a framework that allows the Challenge to assess how collectively we are tracking against these elements.

Defining sustainability as a threshold to reach has been very effective for some parts of the value chain, but broadening the definition can help all actors in the value chain understand the roles they can play – especially in supporting producers on the journey toward more sustainable coffee production over time.

### **Our company already has (achieved) clear commitments on sustainable coffee sourcing, why should we join?**

The Challenge will work to catalog, track and share experience of sustainability programs in an effort to inspire others to action and amplify the results of individual efforts. Joining the Challenge



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will allow your commitments to be incorporated within this framework and can help to guide additional investment and adjust actions based on shared learnings.

### **What are costs/time investment associated with participation in the Challenge?**

The Sustainable Coffee Challenge is a coalition, and all participants are welcomed to contribute by:

- Committing to publicly stating and reporting their commitments
- Joining a working group to help shape the Challenge
- Participating in commitment networks with others in the Challenge to share experience and spark additional action

### **Will the Sustainable Coffee Challenge replace existing standards (certification/verification)?**

The Challenge is not seeking to replace existing standards, which are valuable tools in helping certain actors in the coffee sector meet sustainability goals. Rather, the challenge works to better understand the non-certification commitments that are being made by the sector and how these contribute to the transformation of the coffee sector.

### **What are examples/types of commitments currently in the sector?**

The Challenge has already identified over 10 different categories of commitments. They range significantly from transitioning to sustainable sourcing of coffee, to investing in renovation of coffee farms with new varieties, to providing training on better management practices.

### **What kinds of commitments can non-market actors in the sector make (e.g. trade associations, NGOs, government)?**

There are many options open to non-market actors. For example, trade associations can set commitments in terms of facilitating communications networks among members to inform, stimulate, and trigger new commitments among membership. An NGO may commit to training producers in better practices that track against the north star elements. Governments can commit



to transitioning their entire sector to a sustainable origin and ensure a supportive policy environment.

### **How will the Sustainable Coffee Challenge lead to additional and more ambitious commitments?**

By centralizing data surrounding participant commitments and monitoring progress against a common framework, the Challenge will be able to share lessons learned, demonstrate where additional investment will have the greatest impact and encourage participants to focus new commitments on actions that are having measurable results against sustainability goals.

### **How will you know when coffee has become the first sustainable product?**

Based on the common North Star outcomes we have set forth, the sector will be better able to track results and know if the Challenge's collective commitments, actions and investments are resulting in prosperity and well-being of farmers, forest soil and water conservation and a sustained supply of coffee. While there are still trade-offs among these 3 elements, we know that we are not yet there. When they are all tracking in a positive direction we know we are on course. When producers are able to prosper and meet demand for coffee while conserving forests, freshwater and other natural resources, we will know that we have arrived.

### **How do you envision that the Challenge will capture the diversity of investments made in the sector?**

The portal will combine a "bottom up" approach that catalogues and tracks the numerous commitments, investments and actions being taken by actors from across the sectors towards a common set of North Star outcomes, we establish a framework that allows for a variety of pathways and approaches. Any investment or commitment that can demonstrate progress against these outcomes is contributing to sustainability within the sector.



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### **How will the Challenge contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals?**

The Challenge will align the North Star elements with the SDGs to ensure the commitments and investments being implemented also demonstrate progress towards the SDGs. By broadening the definition of sustainability, it is easier for countries to understand how sustainability commitments contribute to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, a commitment that support improved productivity and increased incomes for producers also contribute to the no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education and gender equality SDGs.

### **Will the Sustainable Coffee Challenge guide participants' commitments?**

Commitments made by participants will always be guided by the entity making the commitment. Where a participant is looking for guidance, assistance, feedback and advice on the commitments they are considering, the Challenge can help bring together groups considering and/or implementing similar commitments. As a community, the Challenge, is committed to inspiring others to action, but also provide space for actors to try new things.

### **Is there a vetting process for Commitments? Are they subject to formal approval or acceptance?**

There is no formal approval needed for a commitment. The Challenge is developing principles for participants to consider when making a commitment, but it recognizes that each participant is at a different stage in their journey toward sustainable coffee. Fundamentally, the Challenge seeks to encourage action and investments that incentivize sustainable production. Through dialogue within the network, participants can encourage one another to be more ambitious in their thinking.

### **How can I join The Challenge?**

For more information please visit <http://www.conservation.org/coffeechallenge>

or email us at [SCC@conservation.org](mailto:SCC@conservation.org)