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than 10 hectares of land in 80 coffee-producing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The vast majority of them lack access to clean water, basic education, decent housing and all too often adequate food on the table.

Add to the mix that most coffee-producing countries have economic policies in place that favor and incentivize large-scale plantation production and traders – thus, leaving small-scale farmers to struggle for market share on a rigged playing field, left “to compete” without access to adequate credit, inputs or technology.

And THAT inequality is precisely what fair trade set out to address.

Today with the launch of “Fair-Trade-for-All” – placing plantation and small-scale farming operations in the same basket - we have lost a fundamental differentiation in fair trade, and small-scale farmers find themselves right back at the starting gate for equitable trading conditions.

At Cooperative Coffees, we don't believe in trickle-down economics. If channeling resources through the most consolidated centers of power were functional, we would not be in this world-wide economic mess to begin with. We believe that change happens when you empower the disadvantaged.

Cooperative Coffees is a cooperative green coffee importer owned by 24 roaster members and specialized in high quality, fair trade and organic coffees. We expect to purchase 3.5 million pounds of green coffee in 2012, or an estimated \$11 million in contracts paid directly to small-farmer cooperatives. In the coffee industry that makes us a “small player” – which motivates us all the more to make every gesture count. We strive for maximum, positive impact on the lives of small-scale farmers – whom we consider the backbone of this industry – as well as creating positive impact at every subsequent step along the way.

For more information about our position on fair trade, visit: www.coopcoffees.com/committees/fair-trade-task-force/navigating-fair-trade/coop-coffees-position-on-fair-trade



Photo Credit: Coop Coffees

Maya Vinic now sells all their export grade green coffee into fair trade and organic premium markets. They also have developed a substantial national market for roasted and ground coffee and will inaugurate their first coffee shop in San Cristobal de Las Casas early 2012.



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Small Producers' Organizations at the Forefront of Fair Trade

The Current Situation for Organized Small Producers

Most small producers live in communities with low levels of development, without adequate public services, and without sources of income to live a dignified life. The future prospects for Small Producers' Organizations (SPOs) in the marketplace, and even in so-called “fair” or “sustainable” markets, are increasingly bleak. This reality is due to the increasingly unfair and unequal competition by major multinational corporations in the marketplace.

Despite years of organizing, many SPOs are not yet able to sell their products at sustainable prices through their own channels or with long-term commitments from companies to purchase their products. Compounding these challenges, SPOs have a low or insufficient level of ownership and/or influence in the policies, standards and operations of sustainable certification systems.

Nevertheless, producers' networks and their ability for self-management, outreach and influence have been increasing over the last two decades. Many small producers' organizations and their respective networks have made considerable progress, building capacity for local sustainable development through key projects and initiatives.

Latin American and Caribbean Network of Small Fair Trade Producers' (CLAC) and the Small Producers Seal

SPOs cofounded the modern fair trade system at the end of the 1980s. SPOs and producer networks from Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia together have grown the market of fair trade to over \$5 billion dollars annually.

The CLAC – the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Small Fair Trade

Producers –was created as a multi-product network of the region's Organized Small Producers in 2004 during the Fifth Regional Assembly of the Latin American Network of Small Coffee Producers. Currently, CLAC brings together approximately 300 cooperatives that produce coffee, cacao, honey, bananas, orange juice, pineapple, mango, sugar, oil, seeds, nuts and other products in 21 Latin American countries.

Since the creation of the producer networks that preceded CLAC, emphasis has been placed on the importance and need of small producer's organizations to maintain their identity within fair trade and sustainable production movements, both in the international marketplace, as well as the emerging local fair trade markets. In March 2006, in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Chiapas, Mexico), the CLAC launched its Small Producers' Symbol (SPS) at a global fair trade conference. In 2009 the Symbol's administrative office was established as the Foundation of Organized Small Producers (*Fundación de Pequeños Productores Organizados, A.C.* (FUNDEPPO), a non-profit based in Mexico City.

The Small Producers Symbol aims to represent the values of organized small producers and act as a seal that identifies products from small producers' organizations. With the seal's end goal to support the sustainable community development of small producers and provide a dignified life for their families



and communities. The SPS is an independent and affordable certification system based in countries of origin, and on the values of sustainable production, democratic organization, fair trade and self-management. It is a unique initiative created and owned by small producers from the South to identify ourselves in the local and international market. It responds to the problems and a reality experienced by small producers and promotes the integral quality of their products.

Small producers face many challenges, including uncertain land tenure, access to credit and markets, and a global food system that prioritizes corporate agribusiness. This seal is an important part of the struggle by small producers' organizations for a fairer and more sustainable world, now increasingly controlled by large-scale businesses whose values are based on domination and exploitation. This symbol allows SPOs to communicate our values of sustainability, dignity, justice and solidarity with consumers.

The Small Producers' Symbol is based on the principles and values that gave rise to fair trade. The standards of this label establish sustainable prices and rules for fair deals. Our symbol is part of the movement working for sustainable production, solidarity economy and fair trade. It seeks to strengthen local economies and to create a different market and world based on values and principles of justice and solidarity. It fulfills the great alliance to safeguard the sustainable future of small producers, our communities, culture and projects.

FUNDEPPO and the Future of the Small Producers' Seal

In 2010 the first comprehensive version of the

SPS certification system was finalized. By the end 2010, the SPS system entered its operational phase and certified 10 cooperatives, granting them use of the Small Producers' Symbol. In 2011 the Small Producers' Symbol system moved into full operation and is expanding its coverage to

Africa and Asia. To assure broad access to certification services, FUNDEPPO is working with different organic certification entities, such as Certimex and Biolatina to provide services throughout the continent. Additional agreements with other organic certifiers are currently being negotiated.

The need for the SPS is more pressing than ever. Fair trade certifiers and standard bearers

have historically ignored the perspective of small producers, especially with regard to the inclusion of plantation labor within the fair trade system. With new initiatives, like Fair Trade USA's "Fair Trade for All," which aim to expand plantation certification to coffee and other commodities, small farmers need a seal that represents the founding values of fair trade. This SPS helps small producers distinguish their fair trade products in the marketplace, while providing a clear indicator for consumers to purchase products that reflect their values.

Although FUNDEPPO was founded by the CLAC, its daily governance structures operate independently of CLAC, primarily through its Board of Directors and its Standards Committee. FUNDEPPO's board and committees not only have representative participation of SPOs and their networks, but also delegates of European and North American Alternative Trade Organization. FUNDEPPO foresees other sectors, like consumer advocates and other civil society organizations participating within the Foundation's governance in the future.

FUNDEPPO, in close cooperation with CLAC, its national networks of members, and its product networks, has developed a complete system of standards and certification that complies with the ISO 65 international standards for certification. FUNDEPPO's certification procedures for producers and traders are designed to be quick and inexpensive. SPOs and companies with solid internal control systems will have little problem complying, as long as they stick to the standards.

The number of SPOs, traders and other actors who are certified or in process to become so, has quickly risen to a total of 67, including many from producer countries as well as "consumer" countries, like the United States, Canada and Europe. Recently the first products with the SPS on the European market were introduced by the cooperative fair trade company Ethiquable. With the addition of more certification organizations,

FUNDEPPO anticipates continued growth in certified SPS and traders.



Small Producer Symbol: The future for Fair Trade Producers, Traders and Consumers

The SPS offers an accessible certification system that collaborates with small producer organizations as authentic, democratic, self-managed organizations. It offers the advantage of establishing criteria that correspond to producers true needs for sustainable production and dignified living, as well as facilitating production and marketing for local markets. For fair trade companies, the SPS provides an opportunity to distinguish themselves from other companies and other seals on the market by underscoring all of the Symbol's added values: solidarity, sustainability and social, economic and ecological responsibility.

Finally, for consumers the SPS offers an option to promote responsible consumption by strengthening democratic self-management by small producers and thus contributing to economic, social and environmental equality locally and globally. Consumers are assured that the product they are purchasing develops a direct solidarity relationship with the small producers who are behind these high-quality products. Consumers are able to directly assist small producers in making their production and their lives more sustainable and fair, while supporting the producers' organizations capacity building and local economy.

What do the Small Producers ask you?

FUNDEPPO wants people and companies involved in fair and sustainable trade to get to know what the Small Producer' Symbol is about, support it and get involved in this initiative as much as possible as a way to differentiate and promote the products and values of SPOs within and outside the fair and sustainable trade market. Let's build this great alliance between people with similar values on both sides of the supply chain for once and for all. Asking for the SPS at your favorite shop is one of the best ways to create the demand and success of this effort in the market.

For more information on the Small Producers Seal, please visit their website (<http://tusimbolo.org/>).

