

For more information, contact:

Jason Anderson, Conservation International (202) 912-1464, j.anderson@conservation.org
Francine Stephens, Rainforest Alliance (212) 677-1900, fstephens@ra.org
Robert A. Rice, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (202) 673-4908 ext. 3, rarice@igc.org
Christopher London, Consumer's Choice Council, (202) 785-1950, celondon@attglobal.net



Leading Conservation Groups Release Guidelines for Growing Earth-Friendly Coffee

"Conservation Principles for Coffee Production" Are First Comprehensive Environmental Benchmarks for Coffee

Washington, DC – May 30, 2001 – Three of the nation's leading environmental groups today released Representatives of the World Bank, coffee producing nations, and leading environmental organizations today reached consensus on a comprehensive set of guidelines for producing environmentally-friendly coffee and pledged to cooperate in building markets for sales of sustainable coffee in the United States and internationally. "Conservation Principles for Coffee Production" was unveiled jointly today by **Conservation International**, the **Rainforest Alliance**, and the **Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center**.

The document, "Conservation Principles for Coffee Production," developed by the conservation groups in consultation with coffee stakeholders around the world, outlines the fundamental characteristics that coffee farms and processing facilities must meet to safeguard ecological health in coffee-growing regions.

Also participating in today's announcement were the Songbird Foundation, Seattle Audubon, and the National Wildlife Federation. Providing an advisory role in the development of the Principles were Amcafe, Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association, Colombian Coffee Federation, Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Cafe de Oaxaca (CEPCO), Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Dunkin' Donuts Inc., East African Fine Coffees Association, Fair Trade Labeling Organizations (FLO), Falls Brook Centre, Global Environment Facility, Indian Institute of Plantation Management, International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), Royal Coffee, Specialty Coffee Association of America, Starbucks Coffee Company, US Agency for International Development, and the World Bank.

In recent years, changes in the way coffee is grown have led to clearing of rainforests, losses of bird and wildlife habitat, and declines in biodiversity, and increased dependency on chemicals and pesticides. Alarmed, and conservation groups have increasingly focused on encouraging coffee growers to adopt or improve upon environmentally- friendly techniques.

"Everyone concerned with sustainable coffee, growers, importers, roasters, retailers, environmentalists and consumers, now have a common foundation for evaluating the environmental impact of their coffee," said Christopher London, Coffee Program Director at the Consumer's Choice Council, which coordinated the development of the Principles., who helped coordinate the development of the Principles. "We developed these principles to help strengthen the sustainable coffee movement, and to promote greater clarity on conservation issues. and We hope this will lead to more opportunities for to collaborateion in promoting conservation in the world coffee industry."

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The Conservation Principles focus on seven areas of concern in coffee production: Ecosystem and Wildlife Conservation; Soil Conservation; Water Conservation and Protection; Energy Conservation; Waste Management; Pest and Disease Management; and Sustainable Livelihoods for Farmers. In each area, the Principles outline conditions and practices that apply to farms and processing facilities in most coffee-growing regions of the world and provide a foundation for conservation-based certification programs. They are also intended as a point of reference for the development of industry sourcing guidelines and codes of conduct, changes in government or financial sector policy to encourage sustainable agriculture, and modernization of technical assistance programs.

“Shade coffee provides a refuge for biodiversity. In fact, the bird diversity in shade coffee plantations rivals that found in natural forests in the same region,” said Robert A. Rice of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. “The beauty of these Principles is that they give growers, conservationists and planners wherever coffee is grown a roadmap for protecting our shared biological heritage. Traditional shade coffee farms provide significant habitat value for birds and other species, as well as local economic benefits that can help prevent further destruction of intact natural forests.”

“Both coffee companies and farmers share an interest in ensuring the long term health of the ecosystems that support coffee production,” said Mathew Quinlan, Director of Conservation International’s Conservation Coffee program. “These principles provide a common framework for both companies and producers working to integrate biodiversity conservation into their business operations.”

“This consensus allows us to say with confidence - enjoy certified sustainable coffee and help conserve the rainforest, protect wildlife, and sustain farming communities,” said Sabrina Vigilante of the Rainforest Alliance.

“We welcome the initiatives taken by the conservation community to offer guidance on how conservation principles for coffee production can be implemented,” said Kristalina Georgieva, Director of the World Bank’s Environmental Department. “Our experience shows that there are both economic and biodiversity benefits from promoting ‘biodiversity-friendly coffee’.”

Traditional varieties of coffee grow best in shady, forested surroundings, and maintenance of shade grown coffee plantations can provide high levels of on-farm biodiversity while helping to restore corridors between undisturbed tropical forests. Coffee grown under a canopy of diverse species of trees provides critical winter habitat for many migratory birds. But over the past few decades, farmers have been cutting forests to grow new, sun-tolerant varieties in treeless farms. The result has been the loss of thousands of acres of bird and wildlife habitat in Mexico and Central and South American coffee growing regions. Expansion of the coffee frontier is currently causing widespread tropical deforestation in Vietnam and other portions of Southeast Asia. The conversion of natural habitat is contributing to a glut in worldwide coffee supplies, which, in turn, is resulting in depressed prices and related economic hardships for coffee growers. The recent growth of interest in organic and environmentally-responsible food production, and in ensuring sustainable livelihoods for coffee farmers through “Fair Trade,” has spurred environmentalists and coffee companies to cooperate in building markets for genuinely sustainable coffee. [REPORTERS: To view the complete text of the *Conservation Principles for Coffee Production*, contact Christopher London, Consumer’s Choice Council, (202) 785-1950, celondon@attglobal.net, or visit <http://www.consumerscouncil.org>]

The Consumer’s Choice Council coordinated the development of the Conservation Principles for Coffee Production. Patrick Mallet of Falls Brook Centre crafted the document in collaboration with Conservation International, Rainforest Alliance, and the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, with funding from the Summit Foundation.

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