

Helping Coffee Farmers in Tanzania While Protecting Endangered Chimpanzees

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, November 30, 2007 - The Kigoma region in Northern Tanzania boasts some of the most fertile soil in Africa, and its altitude makes it perfect for growing high-quality, specialty coffee. However, the region's farmers have been hampered by their isolation, which makes it difficult to learn about best practices, and have limited access to water, a necessary ingredient in fermenting and de-pulping the coffee beans. Farmers have to walk an average of two kilometers to fetch water in local rivers, and then carry it bucket by bucket. An innovative partnership between Root Capital, Sustainable Harvest, and the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) aims to change that, however.

With generous support from the Lemelson Foundation, the three groups have teamed up for the "Gombe Coffee Promotion Project," which will train coffee farmers in the Kigoma region to process their coffee with low water use eco-pulping technology, resulting in coffee that will meet specialty coffee standards—and can be sold internationally for a premium, providing economic benefits to farmers and an incentive for them to preserve the local environment. Root Capital will provide long-term loans to coffee producers in the Kigoma region (as well as farmers in the [Association of Kilimanjaro Specialty Coffee Growers](#), or KILICAFE) to purchase the more efficient coffee washing stations, resulting in an 80% reduction in water consumption—a huge environmental benefit in areas with water shortages, not to mention a huge savings in labor for farmers.

Currently, because farmers lack direct relationships with roasters, they must pay upfront for shipping and production costs, and then wait for three months or more to receive their payment after their coffee is sold at auction—not to mention paying a 10% auction fee. With such challenging economics, the farmers have little incentive to preserve the local habitat for shade-grown coffee production. The Kigoma region currently has the second highest yearly deforestation rate in Tanzania, as some farmers in the region are beginning to clear-cut trees and convert their land to grow other cash crops such as corn, beans, tomatoes, and cassava (root). This deforestation causes erosion and threatens the habitat of the endangered eastern chimpanzee subspecies, of which fewer than 2000 remain in Tanzania.

Specialty coffee represents a clear solution to these problems, as it is one of the few cash crops that can grow in harmony under a canopy of trees. The Gombe Coffee Promotion Project will economically benefit approximately 900 farmers during the first importing year, and will benefit 900 additional growers each of the following years, directly impacting 2,700 people. In a country where the average income is \$150/year, the coffee growers involved in the project will earn an average of \$330/year, or 220% above the national average income. This will inject an additional \$2.1 million into the community over the next four years.



Each organization plays a unique role. Root Capital is loaning \$300,000 to associations of small coffee producers to purchase the new equipment. Sustainable Harvest is helping the farmers secure long-term buying relationships with U.S. roasters, including Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Starbucks, Peet's Coffee & Tea, and Allegro Coffee, which is owned by Whole Foods. Finally, the Jane Goodall Institute is providing its expertise in chimpanzee habitat conservation, and will plant approximately 90,000 trees in coffee-growing villages through and beyond the course of this project.

In the future, this project will continue to contribute to the biodiversity of the region by providing a portion of the money generated through coffee sales (ranging from \$0.25 to \$1 per pound) for JGI's Greater Gombe Ecosystem Program, and Root Capital will expand the use of funds to finance loans for more efficient coffee washing stations in areas beyond the Kigoma region, including Rwanda and other parts of Tanzania.