

# The European market potential for certified coffee

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The European market is the global leader for sustainable coffee. Coffee industry players have consistently tried to meet market demands by adopting more sustainable practices, which has led to an increase in the sourcing of certified coffees. The most common certification schemes for coffee are Rainforest Alliance/UTZ, Fairtrade, Organic and 4C. In general, sustainability issues are important to both producers and buyers; hence they will remain high on the international agenda. The future of certification is difficult to predict; although sales of certified coffees have been growing, supply is larger than current market demand.

## Contents of this page

1. [Product description](#)
2. [What makes Europe an interesting market for certified coffee?](#)
3. [Which European countries offer the most opportunities for certified coffee?](#)
4. [Which trends offer opportunities on the European certified coffee market?](#)

## 1. Product description

The focus in this study is on green coffee beans, classified as HS code 090111 (coffee, not roasted, not decaffeinated). The available data do not distinguish between bulk and high-quality and specialty coffees. The two most important coffee species on the market are:

- *Coffea Arabica* (Arabica): Referred to as a highland coffee because it grows best at altitudes between 600 and 2,000 metres, Arabica is the most dominant species on the coffee market, representing about 75% of global coffee production. Each coffee tree yields an average of two to four kilos of cherries. Arabica beans are fairly flat and elongated. Arabica coffee beans have a smoother, more aromatic, and more flavourful taste compared to Robusta. Arabica beans have a caffeine content of approximately 1.5%.
- *Coffea Canephora* (Robusta): Robusta coffee can be considered a lowland coffee, as it grows best at altitudes below 600 metres. Robusta accounts for around 20% of global coffee production. Its beans have a caffeine content of approximately 2.7%. Robusta is less susceptible to pests and diseases than Arabica. Its beans are smaller and rounder than Arabica beans. When roasted, Robusta beans generally have a stronger and harsher taste than Arabica, which is often described as bitter. Robusta beans are often used in coffee blends and in instant coffee production.

### Certified coffee

Certified coffee refers to coffee that has met the standards of a certification scheme and has been certified by an accredited certification body. The certification scheme can be related to environmental, social and/or economic aspects. The certification shows whether the various stakeholders in a supply chain meet the environmental, social and economic standards required. Note that certification schemes are not related to the quality of the coffee.

You can find certified coffee both on the mainstream and specialty market. Certification on the mainstream market is increasingly used as an entry requirement, due to stricter sustainability protocols of roasters and

retailers in Europe. This makes it increasingly difficult for non-certified suppliers to access the European market.

In high-quality and specialty coffees, certification is often not an entry requirement. This is because these supply chains already contain many sustainability practices that go beyond the standards of certification schemes. An exception is organic certification, which is particularly increasing in high-quality and specialty segments.

Companies have a variety of reasons for deciding to obtain certification for their supply chains, including end-consumer demand, ensuring transparency and traceability, improving brand reputation, and adding credibility to their sustainability claims.

## Independent sustainability certification schemes

Each certification scheme in the coffee sector has its specific focus and requirements. It is possible to certify your coffee according to multiple standards. The main certification schemes for coffee are:

- **Rainforest Alliance/UTZ:** Rainforest Alliance and UTZ merged in 2018. Since 2020, they offer [mutual recognition options](#) for coffee. This means that companies at the end of the supply chain will be able to source UTZ and/or Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee and then use either the Rainforest Alliance or the UTZ label on their product. We refer to these certifications as Rainforest Alliance.

Coffee produced according to this standard uses production methods that protect forests, promote climate-smart farming practices, respect human rights and improve sustainable livelihood opportunities. Rainforest Alliance works with both small and large farms. This standard is often used as a sustainability label in the mainstream coffee market.

- **Fairtrade:** Fairtrade is a scheme which requires adherence to a set of environmental and social standards. There is a standard for small-scale producer organisations as well as one for organisations which employ hired labour (on an estate). Fairtrade International (FLO) is the only standard-setting and certification organisation for its Fairtrade certification. Products that carry the Fairtrade label indicate that producers are paid a Fairtrade Minimum Price. The current minimum prices and premiums for coffee, whether organic certified or conventional, can be found in the [Fairtrade Minimum Price and Fairtrade Premium Table](#).
- **Organic:** Organic certification aims to sustain the health of people, soils and ecosystems. Certification requires coffee to have been grown without the use of synthetic nutrients, in addition to requiring the use of methods and practices for plant protection and soil conservation. In the European Union, organic certification is laid down in the [legislation regarding products from organic production](#). Compliance with the legislation, and certification by an accredited certification body, are mandatory for a product to be marketed as organic in the European market.
- **4C** (the Common Code for the Coffee Community): 4C-certified coffee has been produced in accordance with the 4C Code of Conduct. The focus of the 4C Code of Conduct is sustainable production and post-harvest processing of the green coffee bean. The 4C certification aims to gradually raise the social, economic, and environmental conditions of coffee production and processing worldwide.

In addition, there are the following certification schemes that may be relevant for you as a coffee producer or exporter:

- **Demeter:** Demeter is a private organic certification organisation, focused on biodynamic agriculture.
- **Símbolo de Pequeños Productores** (Small Producers' Symbol, SPP): SPP is a fair trade certification for organised small producers/cooperatives. The SPP's minimum prices are generally higher than those for Fairtrade.
- **SMBC Bird Friendly:** This certification standard guarantees that coffee is grown at farms that provide forest-like habitat for birds. Farms will have a canopy of trees that provide shelter, food and homes for migratory and local birds.
- **Fair for Life** (FFL): FFL is a certification programme for fair trade and responsible supply chains. FFL looks at human rights, fair working conditions and ecosystems, and promotes biodiversity and sustainable

agricultural practices. Note that FLL does not adhere to the strict minimum price that Fairtrade uses in its standard, but typically requires paying 10% over market price.

- **Fair Choice:** This is a certification programme by certification agency Control Union. Fair Choice is based on the development of human, social, environmental and economic principles.
- **WFTO:** The WFTO is a global verification scheme of over 1,000 social enterprises and 1,500 shops that are peer-reviewed to verify they practice the [10 Principles of Fair Trade](#) across their business and supply chains. Once verified, all members have free use of the WFTO Guaranteed Fair Trade product label.

## Company sustainability standards

Specific companies also have their own certification schemes. These schemes will be proposed by these companies to you as coffee producer / exporter in order to qualify as a supplier. The most important ones are:

- **C.A.F.E. Practices** by Starbucks: the Coffee and Farmer Equity Practices standard is a green coffee sourcing guideline with third-party evaluation. It ensures that Starbucks sources sustainably grown and processed coffee. The standard claims to measure farms against quality, economic, social and environmental criteria, all designed to promote transparent, profitable and sustainable coffee growing practices while also protecting the wellbeing of coffee farmers, their communities and the planet.
- **AAA Program** by Nespresso: AAA stands for the triple focus on high quality, productivity and social and environmental sustainability, aiming to encourage rural economic development and improve the livelihoods and well-being of coffee farmers while producing high-quality coffee. To enter the program, a farmer has to produce a specific aroma profile and meet the quality and sustainability requirements.

## 2. What makes Europe an interesting market for certified coffee?

Europe is the largest global market for certified coffee, which has seen a growth in demand in the past years. Nevertheless, the European coffee sector is also increasingly looking for other ways to deal with sustainability concerns, as it has become clear that certification is in itself not the sole solution to pressing sustainability issues. What this means for the future of certified coffee is unclear, but the demand for certified coffees in the near future is expected to continue to grow.

## Sustainable and ethical trade increasingly important on European coffee market

Sustainability is increasingly important on the European coffee market, both for consumers and industry players. Certification is often required by importers, roasters and retailers, as it is seen as an important proof of commitment to sustainability. Certification has become essential for medium and large coffee companies, making it increasingly difficult for non-certified suppliers to access the European market. Especially certification standards like Rainforest Alliance/UTZ and 4C have become commonplace on the mainstream coffee market.

Fairtrade and organic-certified coffees were once small niche markets but have increasingly entered mainstream segments of the European market. These standards are especially found in the middle range segment of the market. Most large European retailers will have a wide availability of Fairtrade, organic and/or Rainforest Alliance-certified coffees in their shops.

The importance of sustainable and ethical trade in Europe has also created specific opportunities for certain certified specialty coffees. Although certification is less common in this segment, organic certification has especially found a sweet spot. This is partly explained by the fact that organic products are considered healthier, safer and of better quality than conventional food products by consumers.

Note that several importers and small roasters working with specialty coffee may consider certifications counterproductive. This is because the specialty market already has many characteristics of sustainable coffee value chains that go beyond certification. For instance, the specialty market is strongly linked to practices such as direct trade, close contact between farmers and buyers, traceability systems and price premiums based on coffee bean quality. In general, specialised importers and small-scale roasters monitor good agricultural

practices and social responsibility through the direct relationships they maintain with producers. In the view of these importers and roasters, certifications may also impose unnecessary costs on farmers.

## **Private sustainability initiatives in the coffee sector drive up demand for certified coffees**

There are several sustainability concerns that are shared by stakeholders in the coffee sector. These concerns relate to climate change and biodiversity issues, for instance. Prolonged droughts, rising temperatures, biodiversity loss and heavy rains are expected [to substantially reduce the areas suitable for coffee cultivation by 2050](#). Plant disease outbreaks have also been directly linked to climate change, for example, the [outbreak of coffee rust](#) and the [coffee borer beetle pest](#) in Central America. These issues might make it more difficult for exporters to fulfil contracts according to the agreed terms, as availability of coffee is under pressure. Issues around gender inequality, low prices, price volatility and living incomes are serious social sustainability concerns. Child labour also remains an important social challenge in coffee production.

These sustainability concerns stimulate industry players to take action. As a result, the main multinational coffee companies have developed their own sustainability commitment programmes. Some work with self-developed standards, while others decided to collaborate with existing third-party certification schemes.

For instance, despite having its own private [C.A.F.E. Practices](#) standard, [Starbucks is one of the largest buyers of Fairtrade-certified coffee worldwide](#). Also, within the [Nespresso AAA Sustainable Quality Program](#) farmers can opt to certify their AAA performance of their farms via the Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade International standards. Jacobs Douwe Egberts initiated the [Supplier Code of Conduct](#) to identify and address priority issues in the coffee supply chain.

Retailers cover their sustainability concerns and requirements with their own codes of conduct as well, such as those by [Coop](#) (Switzerland) [REWE](#) (Germany), [Ahold Delhaize](#) (Belgium/Netherlands) and [Carrefour](#) (France). Many European retailers actively promote certified coffee and increasingly source certified coffee for their own private-label brands. Coop (Switzerland), for example, requires all [coffee products to be either certified with Fairtrade standard Max Havelaar or 4C](#). Lidl (Germany) [committed to having their own-brand coffee certified to Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance/UTZ standards and/or certified as organic](#).

These illustrations show that certification standards are often part of the sustainability strategy of traders, coffee roasters and retailers, ensuring a high demand for certified coffees in Europe. Note that buyers will likely expect you to comply with their codes of conduct on corporate responsibility, in addition to certification schemes.

## **Sustainability initiatives on a national and at European level**

As the commitments and programmes mentioned in the section above show, companies and consumers recognise the need for a more sustainable coffee sector. The focus on and importance of sustainability for companies active in the coffee sector will only increase and intensify, broadening the focus to issues such as biodiversity. However, there is a [growing agreement between industry players that buying certified coffee alone is not enough](#) to address the sustainability challenges in coffee. This means that industry players are also looking into other ways to transition to a more sustainable sector. What this means for the future growth of certification standards is hard to predict.

Besides private sustainability initiatives, governments are also taking action. For instance, government procurement policies in Western Europe have added to the demand for certified coffee. These government policies focus on sustainability criteria for the purchase of products. The Dutch government, for instance, has elaborated specific [sustainable procurement guidelines](#) for services and products it purchases. Depending on the buyer and their enforcement actions, producers will need to comply (or commit to comply) with the required standards.

Apart from these nation-wide initiatives, there are also developments on a European level. The EU is implementing its so called [European Green Deal](#), which has the aim to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. One of the cornerstones of the Green Deal is the 'From Farm to Fork' strategy, which aims to create a healthier and more sustainable food system. As part of this facet, the EU is for instance working on [EU law that requires companies to address human rights and environmental standards within their value chains](#), including coffee. The European Coffee Federation (ECF) [reported that it supports an EU-wide mandatory due diligence approach for companies](#) to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for actual or potential adverse impacts in their own coffee supply chains. The EU is also working on a [European due diligence solution to stop EU-driven deforestation](#), which includes coffee.

## Certified coffee market: caution required!

Although industry stakeholders are increasingly required to comply with sustainability standards, it is important to note that the market uptake of certified coffees is gradually stagnating, while the production and availability of certified coffee continues to grow. The [2020 Coffee Barometer](#) stated that, although absolute volumes of certified coffee purchases may be larger, the percentages of the total certified volumes bought by the largest coffee roasters indicated a decline in recent years.

In addition, although the absolute market for certified coffees continues to grow, there is more certified coffee in the market than actually sold as certified. According to the Coffee Barometer, about **55%** of total global coffee production was certified in 2019, of which only 25% was purchased as certified by the industry worldwide. This means that many producers are not able to sell (all) their certified coffee at a premium price, which often puts them at a financial risk.

It is in this context that Fairtrade, in 2020, added a [new entry requirement for organisations growing or trading coffee](#). It is now required that producers wishing to certify their cooperative must show that there is a Fairtrade-certified buyer willing to buy their produce.

In addition, a [study from the Center for Global Development](#) on the relationship between certification and issues of profitability, productivity and sustainability indicates that the impact of certification on producers does not always offer clear-cut positive results. One of the reasons for these results is that there are often no baseline data available. Some of the main issues regarding the impact of certification are:

- Outcomes of coffee certification vary according to place and conditions.
- One-size-fits-all approaches often do not work.
- There are other ways to address sustainability in coffee production. Climate change in particular needs a more targeted approach.

### Tips:

Activate the "Translation" function of your browser to make the studies available in your native language.

Read more about the general developments in certification on the coffee market in our [coffee trade statistics and outlook study](#).

Read the International Trade Centre's report on the [State of Sustainable Markets](#) for more information about statistics and emerging trends regarding sustainability in the coffee sector.

Refer [to the website of the European Commission](#) to learn more about Green and Sustainable Public Procurement in the European Union.

Consider showing the sustainable and ethical aspects of your coffee production with certification standards. However, be aware that there is currently more certified coffee on the market than is actually sold. This means it could be difficult to bring your certified coffee to a market. Therefore, before engaging in any certification schemes, always verify whether there is sufficient demand in your

target market or with the buyers you already know.

See the [Coffee Barometer 2020](#) for more information about the developments of certifications in the European coffee market.

### 3. Which European countries offer the most opportunities for certified coffee?

In general, the largest markets for certified coffee are found in Northern and Western Europe. But retailers with shops located all over Europe drive up demand through the whole region. Countries with high consumer demand for sustainable products, including coffee, offer interesting opportunities for certified coffees as well. Among the most interesting markets for certified coffee are Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden. Remember that there is currently more certified coffee produced than sold. Therefore, always ensure that certification is economically viable for you and that it guarantees long-term relationships with buyers.

#### The market for Rainforest Alliance/UTZ-certified coffee

The integration of UTZ and Rainforest Alliance under a single organisation has resulted in very large market coverage in Europe. Although both standards merged in 2018, [mutual recognition for coffee was only formalised in July 2020](#). As such, certification data for each scheme are given separately.

Rainforest Alliance/UTZ-certified coffee is mainly sold in high volumes to mainstream markets in Europe. Between 2015 and 2019, UTZ-certified global coffee sales increased by **14%**, mainly as a result of increasing demand by European retailers and specialty brands in Europe and North America. Italy and Finland showed the highest increase of UTZ-certified coffee supply chain actors in recent years.

UTZ-certified coffee products are widely available in the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the Nordic markets. In these countries, [many retailers](#), such as Ahold, Aldi, Ikea, Jumbo, Kaufland and Lidl, as well as coffee roasters and brands, such as Jacobs Douwe Egberts, Lavazza, Paulig and Tchibo, offer their own private label products certified with the UTZ-standard.

Between 2018 and 2019, Rainforest Alliance-certified Arabica sales increased by 20%, while Robusta sales increased by 12%. These increases are mainly a result of increasing demand from Latin America and Europe. The largest markets for Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee products in Europe can be found in the [United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and France](#). A well-known and popular coffee brand in Europe that is certified with the Rainforest Alliance-label is [Nespresso](#). Large European retailers also work with Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee, such as the German [Kaufland, Lidl](#) and [REWE](#), the British [ASDA](#), and large roasters like [Lavazza](#).

#### The market for Fairtrade-certified coffee

The United Kingdom (UK) is the largest Fairtrade market, with overall Fairtrade retail sales of over **€1.8 billion** in 2018. The UK is also the [leading market for Fairtrade-certified coffee](#). [Sainsbury's, Waitrose](#) and [Marks & Spencer](#) are examples of British retailers that converted their entire private label coffee lines to 100% Fairtrade. [Greggs](#), the largest bakery chain in the United Kingdom, drove up growth of Fairtrade coffee sales in the out-of-home segment in the UK.

Germany is also a major Fairtrade market in Europe. About **5%** of total German coffee sales were Fairtrade-certified in 2019. The total number of Fairtrade coffee products sold through retail channels and by the out-of-home segment in Germany reached about 350 products in 2019.

Switzerland is also a relatively large market for fair trade products, with retail sales reaching **€817 million** in 2018. Overall fair trade sales in Switzerland grew by 13% between 2017 and 2018. The Fairtrade share of coffee products in Switzerland reached an estimated **11%** of the total market, amounting to the use of 7,600 tonnes of Fairtrade-certified green coffee in 2019. Switzerland also registered Europe's highest per capita consumption of fair trade products, with over **€95** per person spent in 2018.

The **fastest-growing markets for Fairtrade coffee are Ireland, Finland and Denmark**, which grew at average annual rates of 36%, 35% and 25% respectively between 2016 and 2017. In Ireland, for instance, **the growth of Fairtrade coffee sales is driven** by the fact that the country's leading coffee and tea company **Bewley's** has committed to only selling Fairtrade-sourced coffee beans since 2017. Also, large coffee chains **Insomnia** and **Starbucks** are important contributors to the growing Fairtrade sales in the country.

## **The market for organic-certified coffee**

### **General organic market figures**

The European organic market is the second-largest single organic market, only after the United States of America. European organic retail sales reached **€45 billion** in 2019. Between 2015 and 2019, European organic retail sales registered an average annual increase of **11%**. The **COVID-19 crisis has further driven up demand for organic food and beverages**, as organics are considered healthier and safer than conventional products.

The **growing interest in healthy living in Europe** is one of the drivers of the increasing demand for organic products. The common perception is that organically produced products reduce consumers' exposure to synthetic chemicals and pesticides. More socially empathetic consumers (also) buy organic products to reduce farmers' exposure to toxins.

Within Europe, the largest national market for organic products is Germany. In 2019, German organic retail sales reached **€12 billion**, accounting for almost 27% of the entire European market. The second-largest European organic market is France, with organic retail sales amounting to €11.3 billion in 2019, followed by Italy with €3.6 billion. With a growth rate of **13%** over 2019, France is one of the fastest-growing organic markets in Europe. Other fast-growing markets include Belgium with a growth rate of 11% and Spain with 12%.

### **Organic coffee market**

Total green coffee imports by the European Union (EU) in 2019 amounted to 4.3 million tonnes. Organic coffee imports by the EU that year reached 130,000 tonnes, **3.0% of total green coffee imports**. Between 2018 and 2019, organic coffee imports increased by 12%.

These import volumes show that the organic segment is still a niche market in Europe. Nevertheless, the expected growth of the European organic coffee market is estimated at more than **10%** annually over 2020-2030.

In Germany, organic coffee is widely available and consumed. In 2019, sales of organic coffee increased by **14%** in volume, at a significantly higher rate than mainstream coffee. The organic market share in coffee sales reached about 4.3% in 2019, and the **demand is expected to grow further**. Given that Germany is Europe's largest organic market and largest coffee importer, coffee exporters will find some of the best opportunities for organic coffee in Germany. However, exporters will also encounter a competitive market, as Germany is known as the prime destination for producers of organic-certified coffee. Examples of German traders handling organic coffees include **Bernhard Rothfos**, **InterAmerican Coffees**, **List + Beisler** and **Rehm & Co**.

France, as the second-largest market for organic food and beverages in Europe, also provides interesting opportunities for organic coffee exporters. Regarding roasted coffee, sales volumes reached **185,000 tonnes** in 2018, of which about **3%** was organic. There is a **large growth potential for organic coffee in France**, as tea and infusions hold much larger organic shares, with 12% and 33% respectively.

Belgium also ranks among one the most important organic coffee markets in Europe. Of all coffee products on sale, an estimated **52%** contained an organic label in 2019. Other interesting markets for organic coffee include Denmark and Sweden. In these countries, [coffee ranks among the top organic products in retail](#). Denmark is the country with the highest organic market share in the world. A little over **12%** of all food products sold in Denmark were certified as organic in 2019, compared with 7.6% in 2014. Sweden reached an organic retail sales share of **9.0%**.

## The market for 4C-certified coffee

There is generally less data available about 4C-certified coffee demand and markets. In 2020, **702,000 tonnes** of 4C-certified green coffee beans were purchased worldwide, marking an increase of 18% since 2019. 4C-certified coffee reaches all mainstream markets throughout Europe.

### Tips:

Find importers that specialise in organic products on the [website of Organic-bio](#).

Learn more about organic market and production developments in the report [The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics & Emerging Trends 2021](#).

Check the national Fairtrade websites of your target country to keep up-to-date on developments in this market, for instance the national organisation of [France](#), [Germany](#) or [Switzerland](#).

## 4. Which trends offer opportunities on the European certified coffee market?

Sustainability has become mainstream on the European coffee market. This means it is increasingly important for coffee exporters to communicate their sustainable practices. If possible, communicate your efforts to lower your carbon footprint and share stories about your agroforestry projects, if you are involved in one. Carbon neutrality and agroforestry are increasingly included in the sustainability policies of large European industry players. In addition, there is a growing market for double-certified coffees with the Fairtrade and organic labels.

### Growing market for Fairtrade and organic-certified coffees in Europe

European consumers are increasingly looking for ethical products, both from a social and ecological point of view. This is particularly the case for coffee. The combination of Fairtrade and organic certification in coffee is gaining popularity in consumer markets across Europe. Between 2015 and 2019, the global sales volume of green coffee that was certified by both standards marked a year-to-year growth of 5.5%, amounting to **131,000 tonnes** in 2019. The popularity of this double certification is expected to continue to grow.

In Germany an estimated **23,000 tonnes** of Fairtrade coffee was sold in 2019, of which approximately 77% was also certified as organic. To compare, in 2014, sales of Fairtrade-certified coffee reached almost **17,000 tonnes**, of which about 66% was organic-certified. Popular German brands with a line of Fairtrade and organic coffees include [GEPA](#), Kaffa from [Original Food](#) and [Rapunzel](#).

European retailers also increasingly offer private label coffees which are both organic and Fairtrade-certified. Examples include ALDI's [Barissimo line](#) and [Waitrose's No.1 line coffees](#). Swiss retailers also increasingly offer private label products which are both organic and Fairtrade-certified. Leading Swiss retailer [Coop](#) has about 25 private label brands, of which [Naturaplan](#) is the most relevant for organic coffees. Coop's [Naturaplan coffee capsules](#) are an example of a Swiss private label product holding both organic and Fairtrade certification.



## The mainstreaming of sustainability in Europe

Besides certification efforts, coffee industry players in Europe are increasingly engaged in other sustainability activities. The number of sustainability initiatives and events in the global coffee sector is increasing. A few examples of multi-stakeholder, sector-wide collaborative sustainability initiatives in which European stakeholders participate include:

- The [Global Coffee Platform](#), which is a multi-stakeholder sustainability platform.
- Conservation International has started the [Sustainable Coffee Challenge](#), which aims to transform coffee production towards fully sustainable practices. It has mobilised governments, private companies and research institutions to make sustainability commitments. In early 2021, more than [164 partners from 38 countries](#) joined the challenge, including a range of European retailers, roasters, importers and brands.
- [SAFE Platform](#), which is a multi-stakeholder knowledge platform that seeks to transform coffee and cocoa landscapes in Latin America.

There is also an increased number of sustainability initiatives on a national level. For instance, in the Netherlands, several public and private actors launched the [Futureproof Coffee Collective](#) in 2019. The initiative aims to calculate (and pay) 'the true price' of coffee, which includes the social and environmental costs of coffee production. Over twenty small and medium-sized coffee companies are part of this initiative, such as [Kinti Coffee](#), [Fairtrade Original](#) and [Mocca d'Or](#).

In Germany, for instance, seven retailers (Aldi Nord, Aldi Sud, Lidl, dm, REWE, Kaufland and Tegut), have set themselves [the goal to work towards providing a living income and living wage for farmers in their supply chains](#), which includes the coffee supply chain. As a first step, the group focuses on the supply chains of their own private labels.

## Carbon neutrality and agroforestry important sustainability topics

As explained in the sections above, producers, consumers and industry players are concerned about sustainability issues in the coffee sector. There is an increased attention to climate change, biodiversity loss and providing living incomes for producers and their families.

Many of these issues are not specifically addressed by legislation but are covered in codes of conducts or sustainability policies from importers and/or retailers. Commitments to carbon neutrality and agroforestry practices have increasingly been added to these codes and policies.

Agroforestry in coffee farms means growing coffee under the shadow of other trees. In that way, agroforestry systems help create healthy ecosystems and strengthen resilience to climate change. At the same time, it generates a sustainable income through multiple cash crops and contributes to lowering carbon footprint. For instance, Nespresso, in collaboration with the [PUR Projet](#), implemented agroforestry projects with the aim to become 100% carbon neutral. [The Coffee Quest](#), a Dutch specialty importer, is also implementing agroforestry systems at sites from where they source coffees.

When it comes to carbon neutrality, a specific [Climate Neutral Certification](#) has been created for the European market. This label is earned by companies that compensate and reduce all of their greenhouse gas emissions, aiming to get to zero emissions in 2050. Several [coffee brands have obtained the label](#), such as the Dutch coffee products from the private label brand [G'woon](#). G'woon is the brand of the purchasing organisation [Superunie](#) representing 13 independent retail organisations in the Netherlands.

To stand out from your competition, it has become more important for you as a coffee exporter to highlight your contributions to, for instance, carbon neutrality and biodiversity protection. It is important to communicate your initiatives clearly through tools like pictures, videos, infographics and testimonials. Make sure that the outcomes and impact of these initiatives are also documented and measured in a structured and transparent manner.

In Costa Rica, carbon neutrality has been picked up since the early days. Read [this article to learn how a coffee](#)

collective in Costa Rica became carbon neutral.

## Tips:

Thinking about certifying your coffee? Before engaging in a certification programme, make sure to check that the label has sufficient demand in your target market and whether it will be cost-beneficial for your product, always in consultation with your potential buyer.

Besides promoting your certification, also promote other sustainable and ethical aspects of your production process. Note that, in addition to certification, transparency of the supply chain has become increasingly important. This means you should be able to prove and communicate a clear, direct link between producer and consumer.

See [our study on doing business with European coffee buyers](#) for more tips on marketing and promoting your coffee.

Learn more about individual sustainable sourcing schemes by consulting their individual websites and/or CBI's [buyer requirements for coffee](#).

Realise that certification does not necessarily say anything about the quality of your coffee. If you are interested in exporting high-quality coffee to the European market, learn more about cupping scores at the website of the [Specialty Coffee Association](#) (SCA).

See [our study on trends for coffee](#) to learn more about current trends on the European market.

Consult the website of the [Global Coffee Platform](#) to learn more about global sustainability efforts.

Consult the [Standards Impact website](#) set up by the [ISEAL Alliance](#), offering insight into the most recent studies of the impact on and evaluation of certification.

Find potential business partners in Europe by checking the lists of [Fairtrade-certified operators](#), [European Rainforest Alliance-certified coffee brands](#), [UTZ-certified coffee supply chain actors](#) and [European organic coffee importers](#).

ProFound – Advisers In Development carried out this study on behalf of CBI.

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