

08/27/2007: Press Release from Equal Exchange

Groundbreaking Trade Agreement for Ethiopian Coffee Farmers Launches in the UK

([CSRwire](#)) August 27, 2007 - A unique trading agreement that will benefit some of the world's poorest farmers launches in the UK on 5 September 2007.

Newly established trademarks on speciality Ethiopian coffees, which have previously sparked controversy in the USA, mean that from September only officially licensed distributors will be able to sell certain coffees in the UK.

Fairtrade food pioneers Equal Exchange will be the first company to become licensed distributors when their Fairtrade and Organic Yirgacheffe Ground Coffee is included under the Ethiopian Coffee and Trademarking Initiative. The company will sign the licensing agreement at a ceremony at the Ethiopian Embassy on 5 September 2007.

The Trademarking Initiative, that was originally contested by Starbucks and has been a focus of an international campaign by Oxfam, is a collaboration between Ethiopia's government, coffee exporters and farmers organisations. It aims to develop the country's coffee industry and keep more of the value of its internationally-renown coffees with farmers and their communities.

Trademarks have been registered in 28 countries on several of Ethiopia's speciality coffee brands, including Sidamo, Harar and Yirgacheffe. Licensing deals with importers and distributors in the USA, EU, Japan and other countries will create a more equal trading platform, so that prices received by Ethiopian farmers can be more closely linked to retail prices for premium coffees - currently as much as 46 times the 'farmgate' price.

Equal Exchange was the first company to distribute Fairtrade certified Yirgacheffe coffee in the UK in 2001, and has helped to develop the market for premium Ethiopian coffee. While the new licensing agreement will not alter their existing trading relationship with Ethiopian farmers, based on stringent Fairtrade and organic standards, Andy Good, the Managing Director of Equal Exchange, is hugely supportive of the Trademark Initiative:

"After 30 years working with farmers in poor communities around the world to help them get a better deal, we're only too aware of how significant these trademarks are.

It's a big breakthrough for a developing country to use international trade rules, which in so many cases work against poor producers, to benefit small-scale farmers. The trademark agreements allow the Ethiopian coffee industry to take control of its very valuable products through the intellectual property system. It sets an important precedent in new ways of looking at trade."

Ethiopia is known as the birthplace of coffee and 15 million Ethiopians depend on the coffee industry for their livelihood. Currently the majority of the farmers who grow the beans so highly prized by coffee aficionados in the West only receive a tiny fraction of the retail price. Many

farmers have been forced to abandon growing some of the world's finest coffee due to the poor prices they receive, replacing their traditional crop with alternatives that provide a higher short-term turnover. The plight of these farmers has been highlighted recently in the feature film Black Gold, being shown across the UK.

The Ethiopian Trademarking Initiative aims to improve farmers' income, and boost the value of the country's coffee industry - Oxfam has estimated that trademarks would add £47m a year to the Ethiopian economy. The Initiative also hopes to provide longer-term security for farmers through the more direct trading relationship, allowing farmers to invest in production and improve coffee quality. With Ethiopian Millennium taking place on 12 September, the Trademarks offer a better future for farmers for the new Millennium.

Equal Exchange's Fairtrade and Organic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe Roast and Ground coffee is available from Wholefoods Market, Planet Organic and independent healthfood stores across the UK. The beans come from the Oromia Farmers Co-operative, an organisation of over 22,000 small-scale coffee farmers across Ethiopia. Oromia is the country's biggest Fair Trade coffee producer and only cultivates environmentally friendly, shade grown coffee.

Alongside premium coffees like Yirgacheffe, Equal Exchange's range of 100% natural, Fairtrade and organic certified speciality products includes single garden teas, irresistibly healthy nuts and nut spreads, award-winning brazil nut oil, antioxidant-rich Rooibos tea, unpasteurised woodland honey, sugar and cocoa. For more information about Equal Exchange products visit www.equalexchange.co.uk

For more information, samples, photographs or interviews please contact Rachel Woods: 07738 258 018 / rachelwoods95@googlemail.com

Notes to editors

- Equal Exchange Trading is a Fair Trade company distributing premium organic and Fair Trade products. Supplying and campaigning for Fair Trade since 1979, it distributes its own branded Fairtrade products as well as other selected brands such as Cafedirect (which it co-founded with Twin Trading in 1991) and Divine Chocolate.
<http://www.equalexchange.co.uk>
- For more information about the Ethiopian Coffee Trademarking and Licensing Initiative visit www.ethiopiancoffeenetwork.com or contact Gail Warden in the Ethiopian Embassy press office on gail@ethioembassy.org.uk or 020 7838 3880.
- Getachew Mengistie, the head of Ethiopia's Intellectual Property Office, will be in London in September for the Brand Finance conference - 'Understanding the Value of Nation Brands'. On Weds 5th September a reception will be held in Getachew's honour at the Ethiopian embassy where he will meet members of the coffee trade to discuss the new trade marks - Yirgacheffe, Sidamo and Harrar - and licence agreements to sell them.