



Ethiopia gains new partners from the specialty coffee industry; Trademarking and Licensing Initiative goes from strength to strength

ADDIS ABABA, Washington DC, May 15, 2007 -- In the middle of a convention center full of booths selling coffee beans, coffee machines, and coffee cups, the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office (EIPO) licensing team was offering much, much more. The EIPO Trademarking and Licensing team came to converse and engage SCAA leaders in a new type of long-term partnership to support Ethiopia's coffee farmers by inviting them to join the new network of licensed distributors.

For Ethiopia, SCAA events began with the second meeting of the Ethiopian fine coffee stakeholders and the network of licensed distributors. Following up on the first historic meeting of this kind, held in February this year in Addis Ababa, a spirited discussion among representatives of Ethiopian fine coffee exporters, farmer coops, cuppers and international companies who are current or potential licensees covered a wide range of issues. During this forum, a number of issues of mutual interest including packaging and labeling, sublicensing, coffee quality improvement and promotions were discussed and valuable ideas were exchanged. Agreement was reached to develop a guideline dealing with these issues with the input of network member companies. The participants also discussed ways to expand the network of licensed distributors and ways for Ethiopian stakeholders and network members to not only meet again, but also to communicate frequently.

“The second joint meeting once again demonstrated the value and importance of such a platform where stakeholders on both sides of the supply chain can have a dialogue about mutual issues and develop mechanisms that will help achieve shared goals and interests,” Commented Getachew Mengistie, EIPO Director General.

This momentum and the spirit of collaboration also spread to the SCAA exhibit; the EIPO licensing team came prepared and took ample opportunity to reach out to the 10,000 specialty coffee professionals present in Long Beach. Ethiopian exporters and cooperatives also represented at the event were all hands on deck – directing companies to the EIPO booth, answering questions, and sharing contacts. Senior coffee cupper Desse Nure, member of the Ethiopian Fine Coffee Stakeholders Committee and responsible for coffee quality control in Ethiopia, was active in explaining the importance of this Initiative in sustaining Ethiopia's finest coffees.

Interest has been building in recent months, and enquiries came from the four corners of the world. Coffee producers from Latin America and Africa and specialty coffee companies from Australia to USA were drawn to booth 1245 to hear more about Ethiopia's novel business proposition. Close to

100 specialty coffee companies came forward seeking dialogue on joining Ethiopia's new network of licensed distributors. One of them, Sweetwater Organic Coffee based in Florida, USA, signed on the dotted line during the gathering. Ethiopia expects to welcome many more companies into the network in very near future.

“The last few days have been a great success, surpassing our expectations. The support expressed by members of the specialty coffee industry for our initiative at the SCAA was overwhelming. We are leaving Long Beach stronger, with the ever increasing enthusiasm and productive input of members of the network of licensed distributors. The newly established relationships will further strengthen and empower us as we move forward in North America and start a dialogue with European coffee companies at the Specialty Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE) conference later this month,” commented Getachew Mengistie, EIPO Director General.

Mengistie added: “The world knows that Ethiopia is the source of excellent fine coffees. But now the world will also know that Ethiopians stand together, united in our mission to preserve our coffees and further increase their value and quality. We are determined to become ever more valuable business partners to our customers around the world. We have no doubt that we will attain our goal working together with our international partners.”

The annual gathering was also an opportunity for Ethiopia to learn more about best practices of other producing countries. At the SCAA's invitation, Ethiopia presented its experiences and plans to the SCAA's International Relations Committee, along with representatives of Kona Coffee and the Columbian Coffee Federation. The Ethiopian team was able to learn more about their respective programs and share applicable experience.

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Notes:

1. The Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office (EIPO) is spearheading the Ethiopian Coffee Trademarking and Licensing Initiative
2. The Initiative has financial support from the UK's Department for International Development, and advice and training from Washington DC based NGO Light Years IP, but no funding directly from coffee companies.
3. The EIPO and law firm Arnold and Porter have secured Trademarks in 28+ countries to date. In the US a Trademark for Yirgacheffe has been secured and the two others are still being sought despite opposition.
4. More information on the Initiative and who is supporting it is available on the dedicated website www.ethiopiancoffeenetwork.com

5. For more insights into Ethiopian coffee farmers' lives and the way the coffee market works see also www.blackgoldmovie.com

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