



Specialty roaster brings 'direct trade' coffee to private brands nationwide

Coffee Bean Int'l to pay premium over Fair Trade prices to Peruvian farmers

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Coffee Bean International, Inc. said Wednesday it is taking the direct trade coffee model to scale for their national, private label customers.

The Portland, Ore.-based coffee roaster said its new Project Direct program will source premium coffee beans from Peru, paying \$0.40-\$1.00 per pound above Fair Trade prices to farmers, and working with growers to improve farming practices to enhance coffee quality.

One distinction between fair trade and direct trade is that direct trade roasters pay a premium price above the fair trade price for specialty coffee.

While fair trade certification assures farmers will receive a minimum price, any margin above the minimum cannot be guaranteed by fair trade organizations because they do not negotiate these margins, roasters do.

Until now, direct trade coffee programs have not scaled to meet the needs of the masses served by a growing legion of private label retailers.

The company's more than 2,000 customers include many independent specialty coffee houses and larger chains.

Already, Target Corporation, the nation's second largest discount retailer, and grocery chain The Fresh Market, operating nearly 100 stores in the eastern U.S., have added Project Direct coffee to their private brand offerings.

The first Project Direct coffee is from the San Ignacio region of Peru.

Working with over 20 independent coffee farmers - 90 percent of whom are growing organically - Coffee Bean is setting coffee growing standards that will lead to the continued improvement of the coffee crop.

Coffee Bean is working to establish direct trade relationships with growers in Nicaragua and Tanzania this year.

“The Project Direct program is a commitment by our company to improve the quality of life for farmers and to pursue the mutually beneficial goal of adding transparency and improving coffee quality,” said Patrick Criteser, CEO of Coffee Bean. “This program elevates our company’s long-standing partnerships with farmers to a higher level of commitment, and assures our clients have access to the highest quality, sustainably sourced coffees available in the market.”

VIDEO: Watch a video about the new Project Direct program