

Fair Trade Proof

At Cooperative Coffees we like to put our money, or our paperwork as it were in this case, where our mouth is. Let's take the example of TRANSPARENCY. As cited in the 10 standards of Fair Trade from IFAT: "Fair Trade involves transparent management and commercial relations to deal fairly and respectfully with trading partners," Fair Trade networks from IFAT and FLO to the Fair Trade Federation places transparency on the list of essential Fair trade standards and criteria. With our "Fair Trade Proof" Cooperative Coffees turns the recommendations into reality. Total Transparency makes fairness possible because it makes hiding the truth impossible.

www.fairtradeproof.org

By being fully transparent on both sides of the supply chain, both trust and equality can enter the equation in the formation of a true partnership. Cooperative Coffees wanted to go above and beyond in demonstrating our level of commitment to Fair Trade, and thus to transparency. We are proud to present Fair Trade Proof, an online transparency tool that allows the user to view every piece of paperwork involved in bringing coffee from farmer to roaster. Without proof, anyone can say anything. This site is part of our effort to provide total transparency in the coffee importation process.

The website allows the user to do several different things. First, they can explore what all the documentation means. Never heard of a Bill of Lading, and its significance in importing goods? We lay each step out for you so that you can understand where it fits in with the rest of the story.

Once you have a firm grasp of what all the documentation represents, you can start to trace your particular cup of coffee. You can do this in one of two ways. First, if you stopped by say, Larry's Beans, to get you morning cup of Joe, then you would go from our start page and choose Larry's Beans from our list of roaster members. From there, you will get a choice of all of the lots of coffee Larry has purchased through Cooperative Coffees. By looking at your bag of coffee, you can see what source that coffee came from. By simply choosing the right lot, you will see all of the paperwork appear for that specific container of coffee. Alternatively, you can also trace your coffee by farm co-op. If you know your coffee came from Chajul in Guatemala, simply choose it from the drop-down list, and you will see all the lots that they have exported to us, as well as a profile of the coop. All of the paperwork for that lot is available to you as well. In terms of documentation, first there is the farmer contract that verifies that our minimum price is \$2. /lb for Fair Trade Organic coffee.

Then, there is the pre-financing contract. Pre-financing is an essential part of Fair Trade as it allows the cooperatives to pay their member-farmers for their coffee before all of it has been brought in, processed, and exported. We offer our contracts as a guarantee collateral for pre-financing through our network of social lender partners. After the pre-financing contract is taken care of, there is the pre-shipment quality evaluation, which allows us to confirm the quality of an entire coffee lot before it leaves port.

There is also the farmer invoice, which shows the name of the farmer cooperative, and the number of bags to be paid. This document is more radical than it seems: before Fair Trade, it was unheard of for

small, family farmers to have invoices, because they could not export directly. The Fair Trade system encourages farmers to form cooperatives that enable them to export their coffee themselves, substantially increasing their revenue, and thus their autonomy and empowerment.

The farmer bill of lading is the next document on the list. It shows the original shipper of the coffee, who it is being shipped to, weight of the coffee and U.S. destination port, which, in our case, is in New Jersey. The landed cupping evaluation allows us to compare the quality of the pre-shipment and landed coffee to make sure we are receiving the same quality.

The organic transaction documents the Organic Certification of the farmer cooperative. We encourage all of our farming partners to get their organic certification because not only is organic farming better for the environment, it is less harmful to the health of the farmers and their families than conventional farming with pesticides. It's also highly beneficial to their business as it adds 20 cents per pound or more to their revenue. As a result, nearly all of our coffee is organic-certified as well as Fair Trade.

The roaster invoice is Cooperative Coffees' invoice to the individual member for its portion. Just as farming cooperatives enable farmers to form communities of common export, we use our cooperative to empower us to directly import.

Finally, the roaster delivery documents the delivery of the coffee to our warehouse, thereby closing the loop.

We believe that being a self-proclaimed and widely-recognized Fair Trade company means that we need to honestly and openly fulfill every aspect of Fair Trade, which, as you can see, is much more than just a higher price. First and foremost, Fair Trade is a long-term, equitable partnership between farmers and roasters. Our trade model includes pre-financing, sharing information, and working together for higher quality coffee and fairer business conduct. Total transparency allows all actors to operate at the same level, without concealing anything, which is an essential part of what Fair Trade should and can be.

Please take look around Fair Trade Proof ([link http://www.fairtradeproof.org/](http://www.fairtradeproof.org/)) and tell us what you think. As consumers, retailers, roasters, importers, or producers, we need to start demanding higher levels of transparency from the world around us and decide to be better informed. With truth (and proof of the truth), comes the power to make things better. This online tool strives to provide a step in that direction.