

Listen To Your Mam; the Environment Is At Stake

Your mind is still foggy, your eyes need rubbing and your movements are leaden. It's early Monday morning and you need your coffee: stat. At this point, the last thing you're thinking about is the plight of coffee bean farmers and the consequences your cup of Joe is having on the rainforest.

Luckily, Café Mam is thinking about these things for you. The Eugene-based coffee company has a business plan based on environmental and worker-related issues and still manages to get you out of bed and to the office every morning. The beans used in Café Mam coffee come from the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, where the growing is mostly done by the indigenous Mam, Tzeltal and Mochó people (people of Mayan descent). These growers have organized into a cooperative, but their traditional belief that taking care of the soil means taking care of their world is still intact.

While Starbucks has implemented a code of conduct for the plantations that produce its coffee, this is not standard practice for other large-scale U.S. coffee companies. Starbucks has, according to their UK website, "established partnerships with international non-profit organisations that share our sustainability concerns." This translates into raising and donating money for poverty-stricken people in the regions where its coffee is produced. Café Mam is 100 percent fair trade certified, whereas only part of Starbucks' sales are fair trade certified.

Café Mam goes one step further. At the center of Café Mam's code of conduct is a commitment to the Chiapas growers to provide a living wage. The price per

pound of coffee produced in this region has been calculated to support each grower's family. The growers are responsible for producing a quality product, and if they keep doing this their hard work is fairly compensated.

The Mam, Tzeltal and Mochó do their part to ensure better coffee in your cup each morning. Beneficial insects are used to undermine *la broca*, a beetle that can cause major damage to a coffee bean crop. The growers of Chiapas also use terracing, composting and special pruning techniques to benefit the growing environment. By terracing, the growers are stemming the damaging effects of erosion.

The beans from the Chiapas region are grown at a high altitude and under shade, which has two benefits. By growing at a high altitude, the beans hold their flavor, and by growing in the shade, other native plants can benefit from the sun's rays and thereby the forest canopy is sustained.

Café Mam also works with Eugene's Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) to help end the use of certain pesticides that are outlawed in the States but are still used in Third World countries. Some are used to produce the coffee we drink every day—if we're not drinking Café Mam.

The toxins from these pesticides affect the coffee, the growers and the water keeping these regions alive. Two percent of Café Mam sales is donated to pesticide reform groups—donations now totaling more than \$100,000.

Next Monday morning when you're taking that first sip of French or Italian roast, think about where it came from and if your coffee is doing its part.

— Tim O'Rourke



Café Mam Certified Organic Whole Bean Italian Roast (12 oz. can)

Available at Capella Market, www.cafemam.com, \$10.29. Nine roasts, including Italian Roast (pictured).



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