

Protea Hospitality Group switches to triple-certified coffee

The Protea Hospitality Group will be switching to triple-certified coffee this month, serving Fairtrade Certified Espresso Coffee, Lavazza Tierra Rain Forest Alliance Espresso Coffee and Relationship Filter Coffee in its respective African Pride Hotels and Protea Hotels in South Africa.



Image courtesy of Darren Robertson / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

"The move to building sustainable national and international coffee communities as a coffee strategy by investing in staff development through trained baristas and using the different certified coffees is a natural progression after the company's decision last year to switch from supplying plastic-bottled water to filtered water in reusable glass containers in its conferencing venues," said company CEO Arthur Gillis.

"Fairtrade is an initiative that dovetails very well with the objectives of Protea Hotels and African Pride Hotels."

"It not only supports high-quality African beans that deliver a phenomenal in-cup taste experience, but also supports the ideals that everyone deserves a fair wage and the ability to support their families and communities," said Gillis.

Coffee is one of the fastest growing Fairtrade products in South Africa and the market is worth an estimated R30 million, or 120 tons of coffee annually.

Better trading, working and living conditions

[Fairtrade](#) actively tackles poverty and empowers small-scale farmers and workers by ensuring better trading, working and living conditions. It also provides an additional income for community development projects and supports sustainable production and protection of the environment.

"Fairtrade certifies a wide variety of agricultural commodities, yet coffee is our flagship product with more than 580,000 small-scale coffee farmers certified across 28 countries; 60% of them live in Africa, 30% in Latin America and 10% in Asia," said Arianna Baldo, business manager of Fairtrade Label South Africa.

These small-scale producers receive USD0.20 in Fairtrade Development Premium for every pound (approximately 0.45kg) of coffee they sell on Fairtrade terms. A quarter of this money must be spent in improving the quality of the coffee crop, and 75% can be spent in business development and community investments, such as education, housing and health.

Social investment in the global coffee industry

Gillis explained that Relationship Filter Coffee is a form of social investment in the global coffee industry through

relates to assisting farmers and their communities in various projects to help improve the quality of the coffee during production, as well as allowing investment in local coffee communities.

"We've also been working with the Ciro Coffee Academy in recent months to ensure that the baristas who work in our hotels receive top training, so they appreciate that the creation of the perfect cup of coffee is far more than just a pour.

"We consider our baristas to be far more than coffee makers; they are skilled professionals who will ensure that our Fairtrade coffee is the best cup our guests have ever tasted."

The 100% Arabica Fairtrade Coffee in the special Protea Hotels blend originates in Ethiopia, Malawi and Tanzania and supports almost 90 000 small-scale coffee growers, processors and exporters.

The Lavazza Rainforest Tierra Coffee - also a 100% Arabica - that will also be served carries the Rainforest Alliance Certification, which guarantees that products meet comprehensive standards for sustainability by being environmentally sound, economically viable and socially equitable.

Sustainability projects of this blend benefit small coffee farmers in Columbia, Honduras and Peru with improved living and working conditions.

Gillis said that the latest move to offering sustainable, ethical and uplifting products is one in a long line of planned projects that started with spending millions of rands on retrofitting environmentally unsound water and heating systems in hotels and providing filtered conferencing water.

"We believe we'll be in a position in the not-too-distant future to make more of these announcements that benefit those who need it most and are environmentally sound. Watch this space."

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