

## US institute introduces new system to identify Ethiopian coffee

By Binyam Tamene

ADDIS ABEBA-The Coffee Quality Institute(CQI), a US-based non-profit organization is to implement a new system- the Q Coffee System- to better identify and differentiate Ethiopia's quality coffees from among those produced elsewhere in the world and therefore different.

The system is aimed at developing the skills of coffee professionals, specifically coffee cuppers, and generally building the capacity of Ethiopian coffee industry in tended to enable the country to export greater volume of its coffee production at higher-value specialty markets, CQI Chief Technical Director, David Roche,said here on Friday.

He said the rationale behind the quality identification system was the growing desire on the part of consumers over the last ten years to know and link between the country of production to quality of its coffee.



"While the specialty coffee sector has grown phenomenally over the past twenty-five years and consumers have demonstrated a willingness to pay more for quality, that same dynamic has not yet worked its way back to the producer," the director said.



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According to the technical director, twenty-six (26) lots of Ethiopian coffee were graded through the "Q" system last week and those meeting the standards are certified as "Q", meaning they successfully met the quality standards defined by the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) to be considered specialty-grade coffee.

It is an internationally recognized system for grading coffee quality, the product of the Q Coffee System is a quality certification, as designated by the "Q" seal.

CQI said the quality certification designed to create value throughout the supply chain, particularly giving sellers a tool to enhance the credibility of their quality statements, communicate with potential buyers using a common language for quality, and to better promote and differentiate their offerings.

"The infrastructure for the Q Coffee System includes the Q Grader Program, the industry's only professional accreditation program for coffee cuppers, and the Q Grading System whereby a designated In-Country Partner (ICP) oversees coffee evaluations and issues the quality certifications," David Roche said.

Currently there are Twenty-four Licensed Q Graders in Ethiopia, with ECEA serving as the ICP, he said.

According to the director,

Ethiopian Q Coffees are already gaining interest from specialty coffee buyers such as Boyd Coffee Company in the U.S. and Kanamatsu of Japan.

"Based on experiences in Central America, demand for Q Coffees is expected to increase significantly once the program is fully operational," he said presenting about the new system to all members of the coffee growers, stakeholders and the persons engaged in the coffee industry

CQI Chief Technical Director, David Roche, assisted by an expert Coffee Corps Volunteer, Marty Curtis, came to Addis Ababa last week to oversee the official launch of the Q Coffee System in Ethiopia, which includes the evaluation of several coffee lots submitted for the 2008 Ethiopia Limited Coffee Auction to be held in June.

CQI Chief Technical Director, together with his team, are expected to sign an agreement within this week with the Coffee Exporter's Association (ECEA) who will serve as CQI's In-Country Partner (ICP) offering Q Grading Services on CQI's behalf.

The Q Coffee System is being implemented in Ethiopia as part of a training agreement with Fintrac-Ethiopia and the USAID-funded Ethiopia Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (ATEP) with the backing of the Central Liquor Unit (CLU) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD).