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New global coffee research initiative announced Companies pledge \$250,000 in initial funding

LONG BEACH, Calif. U.S.A. (May 20, 2010) --- At a recent Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) symposium in Long Beach, a new long-term initiative to increase the overall quality and availability of specialty coffee worldwide through scientific research was announced. The new effort, called the Global Coffee Quality Research Initiative (GCQRI), was conceived by a consortium of U.S. specialty coffee roasters and agricultural researchers in partnership with the SCAA.

According to participants, the "primary intent of this research is to discover ways to increase available supplies of specialty green coffee while simultaneously discovering how to improve cup qualities," allowing each link within the supply chain "from tree to cup" to benefit from the initiative's efforts. The initiative also is expected to raise farmer returns and stimulate consumer interest in and consumption of specialty coffees.

Several well-known specialty coffee companies have already pledged \$250,000 in "genesis" funding to support initiative development, said coordinators. These include Peet's Coffee & Tea, Intelligentsia Coffee, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Counter Culture Coffee, Coffee Bean International, Tony's Coffees & Teas, Royal Cup Coffee, Union Hand-Roasted Coffee, Sweet Maria's Coffee, and Songer & Associates. Program coordinators anticipate that other companies within the multi-billion dollar global specialty coffee industry will join this initial consortium.

"There has never before been an attempt to look globally into the primary motivating factors for coffee quality," said Ric Rhinehart, executive director of the SCAA. "What is being proposed - a comprehensive 'voyage of discovery' originating and funded from the specialty coffee industry itself - has the potential to revolutionize and improve the specialty coffee business here in the U.S. and globally. It also has the potential to positively impact the lives of tens of millions of smallholder coffee farmers around the world."



The program will build upon an existing global network of coffee research institutions and scientists working with the specialty coffee industry to identify, fund and implement coordinated research on key factors limiting quality and production, initiative developers said. Its focus will be on discovering unknown genetic and environmental factors determining coffee and espresso quality and to enhancing those, as well as finding scientific means to increase availability to specialty coffee roasters throughout the world. Research results will be widely disseminated in all producing and consuming countries and made available to all interested parties.

The initiative will be administered by the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture, part of Texas AgriLife, Texas A&M System. One of the world's leading international agricultural institutions, the Borlaug Institute has decades of experience developing and administering agricultural research programs throughout the world, including the USAID-SPREAD project, which helped revitalize Rwanda's coffee industry and improve income and quality of life for tens of thousands of coffee farmers. SPREAD efforts also were largely responsible for Rwanda's selection in 2008 as the first African country ever to host the Cup of Excellence international specialty coffee competition.

The Institute also has assisted in coffee quality improvement efforts in Guatemala through USDA-funded Food for Progress projects and is working on collaborating with other coffee improvement projects in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Summarizing the importance of the research goals of the GCQRI, Dr. Tim Schilling, director for enterprise development and partnerships for the Borlaug Institute, said that it is "unprecedented that a \$25 billion dollar global industry like specialty coffee has no front-end research and development to grow and protect the supply of their product."

"In fact, in doing a preliminary assessment of all research conducted on factors affecting coffee cup quality, we have found less than 75 projects in the last 100 years," Schilling said. "There's actually been more global research into making better kiwifruit than into making better coffee!"

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The Specialty Coffee Association of America: The SCAA is the world's largest coffee trade association with nearly 3000 members and is dedicated to creating a vibrant specialty coffee community. Recognizing, developing and promoting specialty coffee by setting and maintaining quality standards for the industry; conducting research on coffee, equipment and perfection of craft; and providing education, training, resources and business services for its members. Celebrating 26 years of success, the strength of the organization is reflected in its members who represent more than forty countries and every segment of the Specialty Coffee industry, from coffee growers to coffee roasters and retailers. Visit www.scaa.org.

The Borlaug Institute: The Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture was named for Dr. Norman Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, father of the Green Revolution and distinguished professor at Texas A&M. Building on Dr. Borlaug's work, the mission of the institute is "to employ agricultural science to feed the world's hungry and to support equity, economic growth, quality of life and mutual respect among peoples." The institute currently leads or participates in numerous international agricultural projects, including projects in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America. For more information on the Borlaug Institute, go to <http://borlaug.tamu.edu>.