

What's New

June 2013



In a more transparent and hyper-connected world, very little is private. Consider, as an example, that about 10% of all the photos taken in history were taken in 2011, many with mobile phones capable of sending the photos globally.

Oxfam recently published the results of a survey into the ethical practices of the world's ten largest food companies scoring them on key issues, such as climate, gender, land-use, and water... and none ranked well. As we at COSA strive to help companies understand the effects and impacts of their activities we must note that the survey is not so much about their actions and more about the companies' stated policies. One may lead to the other but there is a difference that needs to better align. In our work with several of those firms we can see and measure the evidence of new directions and tangible investments (see McDonald's below). This can facilitate better choices that align policies and investments for effective outcomes.

On a related note, it is great to see a new level of focused activity from multiple UN agencies directly focused on the sustainability standards in our food systems (see 3 items below). We applaud these more practical engagements with market-oriented mechanisms that further engage us all – from producer to consumer – to catalyze a directional shift in how we achieve and reward sustainable practices.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniele". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

Daniele Giovannucci
President, COSA



FORDFOUNDATION



In This Issue....

A rare consortium of agencies now advising about sustainability standards

FAO SAFA presents that a shared vision of sustainability is lacking

McDonald's invests in support for sustainable agriculture training

UN General Assembly on adopting new tech options for poverty eradication

New researchers join COSA

COSA addressed the plenary gathering of the UN General Assembly's

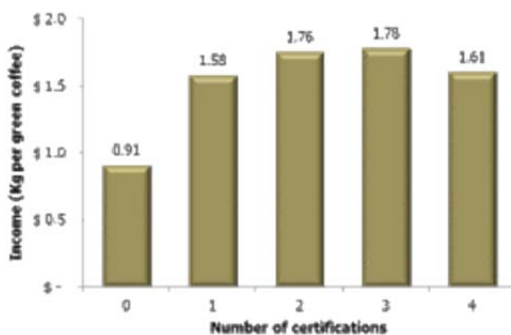
first consultative workshop on Development, Transfer and Dissemination of Clean and Environmentally Sound Technologies in Developing Countries in New York this April. Participants explored the science and technology options for poverty eradication and sustainable development, with a focus on the cases of agriculture and energy.

COSA President Daniele Giovannucci stressed the importance of market mechanisms to help drive green technologies. He observed that adopting new technologies requires confidence in their expected outcomes, which calls for impact assessments that help to understand the effects on producers, on the environment, on communities, and on business. He said partnering with local institutions in the countries of interest is an important criteria for any understanding.



Multiple standards

Multiple Certifications and Relation to Net Income



Source: CRECE COSA 2013

Data on nearly 3000 farmers collected and analyzed by CRECE using COSA methodology and indicators suggests that there are economic benefits to more than one certification, but that those benefits are maximized at two-three certifications, and may decline for farmers with more than three. Tests for robustness show that results are the same in the environmental dimensions.

The United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards

(UNFSS) was successfully launched in Geneva with over 200 representatives present, and COSA was pleased to



participate as a plenary presenter and as member of the Advisory Board. This unique initiative of five UN agencies: FAO, UNEP, ITC, UNIDO and UNCTAD confirmed the prioritization of:

1. Broader collaboration with programs like International Trade Centre's T4SD, IIED, and the State of Sustainability Initiatives (SSI)
2. Decision-making tools and impact assessment that builds on existing programs such as COSA
3. Exploration of harmonization and equivalence

Christina Ingersoll is a welcome addition to the COSA Research Team.



She has coordinated the Initiative for Sustainable Business and Society at MIT and worked for the Agricultural Sustainability Institute University of California at Davis on the Sustainable Sourcing Project. Christina has been a Teaching and Research Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Sustainability Science Program. In addition to her research with the Initiative on Innovation and Access to Technologies for Sustainable Development, she co-authored the International Food Policy Research Institute's "Food security, farming, and climate change to 2050: Scenarios, results, policy options". Her broad experience includes development of a tool for assessing the climate change impacts of agricultural practices (with University of Aberdeen) coffee retailing and a study on the Cocoa Genome Project.

McDonald's USA, McDonald's Canada, and their operators are investing to support sustainable agriculture training for coffee farmers in Guatemala, where a significant percent of the company's coffee is grown. McDonald's is partnering with TechnoServe (TNS) and SCAN (Sustainable Commodities Assistance Network), two international

organizations, to create and implement programs that reach an estimated 13,000 farmers and their families. McDonald's notes that "This training is intended to address all major aspects of sustainability as it relates to ethical, economic and environmental outcomes. It is important to understand the impacts of this training... This is why McDonald's is pleased that the Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA) is partnering on impact evaluation, as we highly regard COSA's leadership in the area of sustainability impact management."



The **Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture** systems (SAFA) Practitioners and Partners' Workshop was held in FAO, Rome in March 2013 and was attended by COSA and 47 experts.



Alexander Mueller, the Assistant Director- General of FAO (Natural Resources Management and Environment) opened the workshop saying that a shared vision of sustainability is lacking and that sustainable development goals must go beyond niche interests to be connected with realities on the ground and throughout the food chain. SAFA is led by Nadia Scialabba and aims to create a common understanding of the constituent elements of agricultural sustainability and how to best understand these. COSA is pleased to be a SAFA partner.

www.thecosa.org