



ENERGY AND RECYCLING: Supply Chain

A supply chain is the process of getting a product (or service) from the supplier to the customer. The supply chain includes all of the component parts that turn raw materials into a finished product.

Supply chains can be simple or complex depending on the different stages (links) involved. For a supply chain to work the relationship between each link must be based on fairness so that good business relationships are formed.

Coffee

The supply chain process involved in coffee is fairly complex and can vary from country to country but typically the chain will include the following:

Coffee growers: These individuals will tend to and grow coffee trees, picking the green beans from the tree once they are ripe (coffee beans do not turn brown until they have been roasted). Growers may also do some of the processing work.

Processors/farmers: These are usually individual farmers or farmers who have joined together to form a co-operative (a jointly owned enterprise in which each farmer has a stake). These processors sort the coffee beans so that they are free from foreign debris and are divided into separate grades ready for sale. Better grades are more expensive to buy.

Dealers: Dealers sell the coffee beans directly to the buyer (coffee manufacturer) at an agreed price, quality and quantity.

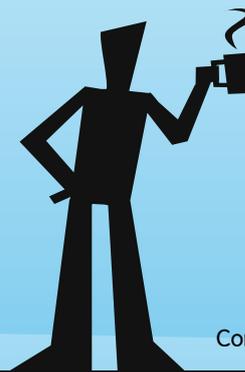
Exporters: These people or companies buy the coffee beans from the sellers (i.e. the farmers, co-operatives or government) and sell it to dealers.

Government: In some countries the government will control the coffee exports by buying the green beans from the processors and selling them on.

Manufacturers: These are the coffee manufacturers who take the green coffee beans and turn them into the roasted coffee you purchase in shops. Each manufacturer has a different roasting process to bring out different flavours in the beans. These companies are also responsible for the packaging, marketing and branding of the product, which are all designed to appeal to shoppers.

Distributor (wholesalers or retailers): These are the supermarkets, independent stores and catering outlets that sell the coffee products to consumers.

Consumers/shoppers: The end purchasers of the coffee from the retailers. As consumers it is our responsibility to think carefully about our purchases and also to think about how we use and dispose of them.



Cont'd



ENERGY AND RECYCLING: Supply Chain cont'd

As you can see, the supply chain for coffee is very long and between each link in the chain there will be different relationships relating to things like handling the beans, storage, shipping and, of course, payment.

As a consumer it is important to think about where your purchases come from, how they were made and how you will use and dispose of them. This thought process is known as 'conscious shopping'. If we all, as consumers, start to become more aware of the supply chain involved when we buy products we can encourage those in the chain to work together to ensure that the process itself does not adversely affect the environment and that each person in the chain is treated fairly.



Did you know?

The coffee belt is located between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, 23.5 degrees above and below the equator.