

The **Cultural,**
Spiritual, and **Economic**
Significance of

Coffee





INTRODUCTION

Coffee is one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world, transcending cultural and geographical boundaries to become a symbol of connection, creativity, and productivity. Its global significance extends beyond being a mere drink; it is a cultural phenomenon, an economic powerhouse, and a source of inspiration for many.

Likewise, coffee holds a deep and meaningful connection within the Dawoodi Bohra community. Syedi Hasan Badruddin^{QR}, was amongst the hudood in Yemen during the era of Syedna Dawood bin Qutubshah^{RA}. Syedna Dawood^{RA}, in his praise stated:

“انه الرئيس ابن الرئيس ابن الرئيس ابن الرئيس”

"He is the leader, son of the leader, son of the leader, son of the leader."

Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin^{TUS} further elaborates this sentence and states:

“اي المولى الاجل سيدي حسن بدرالدين بن المولى ادريس بن الداعي الاجل
الفاطمي سيدنا علي شمس الدين بن الداعي الاجل الفاطمي سيدنا الحسين حسام
الدين بن الداعي الاجل الفاطمي عماد دين الله ادريس*”

*"He is al Maula al Ajal- Syedi Hasan Badruddin, son of Maulaya Idris, son of al-Dail al-Ajal
al-Fatemi Syedna Ali Shamsuddin, son of al-Dail al-Ajal al-Fatemi Syedna Husain Husamuddin,
son of al-Dail al-Ajal al-Fatemi Syedna Idris Imaduddin^{RA}"*

This statement highlights the esteemed lineage and the noble position of Syedi Hasan Badruddin^{QR}, underscoring his deep spiritual and intellectual roots, as well as his profound stature within the Dawoodi Bohra community.

Syedi Hasan Badruddin^{QR} composed three poems on coffee, expounding its importance and the effects it has on its consumer. Through these verses, he elevated coffee not only as a physical stimulant but also as a symbolic substance with deep spiritual and reflective significance. The poems encapsulate the impact of coffee on the mind and soul, stressing its potential to revive the spirit and enhance one's intellectual faculties. His writings are an integral part of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the community, reminding us of the broader, more holistic effects that coffee can have, beyond just its energizing qualities. He describes the enchanting beauty of a coffee farm in the first verse:

“وروضة تم عليها الارج * بطيب النشر على كل فج”

"A garden upon which fragrance spreads, its pleasant aroma reaching every distant path."



This imagery captures the captivating essence of the coffee plantation, where the rich scent of coffee blossoms fills the air and extends far beyond, symbolizing its profound allure and far-reaching impact.

Furthermore, Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin ^{TUS} guided to Mumineen in Yemen by and encouraged them to cultivate coffee instead of qaat. Qaat, a Haram plant with detrimental social and economic effects, had become a significant issue in this region. Syedna ^{TUS} directed the community to replace qaat cultivation with coffee, a crop of both economic and cultural value. This directive highlights how coffee is intertwined with the community's legacy, symbolizing growth, productivity, and positive transformation.

Thus, it is essential for a Mumin to learn about coffee, not only to understand its potential as a symbol of ethical cultivation, economic growth, and positive societal impact but also to appreciate its cultural and historical significance within the community.



BENEFITS OF COFFEE

Coffee offers several health benefits that positively impact physical and mental well-being.

Physical Benefits

- ✓ **Rich in Antioxidants:** Coffee is a significant source of antioxidants like chlorogenic acid, which helps combat oxidative stress and reduce inflammation in the body¹.
- ✓ **Improved Digestion:** Syedi Hasan's^{QR} states:

"هذه شربة تسمى بقهوة * تمنح الشاربين للهضم قوة"

"This is a drink called qahwa, it grants the drinkers strength for digestion."

Coffee stimulates the production of gastric acid, aiding digestion. Its moderate consumption can help regulate bowel movements and maintain gut health².

- ✓ **Improved Metabolism:** Caffeine, a natural stimulant in coffee, can temporarily boost metabolic rates and enhance fat oxidation, making it a popular choice for weight management³.
- ✓ **Reduced Risk of Chronic Diseases:** Regular coffee consumption has been associated with a lower risk of chronic conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and liver disorders, including cirrhosis and liver cancer⁴.

Mental Benefits

- ✓ **Enhanced Cognitive Function:** Syedi Hasan^{QR} states:

"وان سرى نشره من قدر طابجه • انساك نشر فنت المسك في صرره"

"And if its aroma spreads from the pot of its brewer, it makes you forget the scent of musk stored in its sachet."

The scent of coffee can positively impact mood, as the sense of smell is closely linked to emotions. Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system, improving focus, memory, and alertness. It temporarily blocks adenosine, a neurotransmitter that induces fatigue, making individuals feel more awake and productive⁵.

¹ Melo, I. S., Santos, J. S., & Silva, C. L. M. (2020). The role of coffee and caffeine on human health. *Current Nutrition & Food Science*, 16(3), 332-342.

² Brown, J. R., Guarner, F., & Reeder, P. (2020). The effects of coffee on digestion and bowel health. *Nutrition Reviews*, 78(5), 316-324.

³ Acheson, K. J., Gremaud, G., Meirim, I., Montigon, F., Krebs, Y., Fay, L. B., ... & Tappy, L. (2004). Metabolic effects of caffeine in humans: lipid oxidation or futile cycling? *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 79(1), 40-46.

⁴ Je, Y., & Giovannucci, E. (2014). Coffee consumption and total mortality: a meta-analysis of twenty prospective cohort studies. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 111(7), 1162-1173.

⁵ Smith, A. P. (2002). Effects of caffeine on human behavior. *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, 40(9), 1243-1255.



✓ **Increased Alertness:**

"وايقظت من سنة نائماً • فاتحد الذهن به وامتزج"

"And it awakes a sleeper from dizziness- uniting the mind with focus and clarity"

Coffee promotes wakefulness and sustained attention, particularly during extended work periods or sleep-deprived conditions⁶.

✓ **Mood Elevation:** Syedi Hasan^{QR} states:

"قم هاقتها يا صاح وردية *تصدر عنا الهم بعد الورود"

"Rise and bring it (qahwa), O companion, it drives away worries after it is consumed"

✓ Studies indicate that moderate coffee consumption can reduce the risk of depression and enhance mood due to its interaction with neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin⁷.

Protection Against Neurodegenerative Diseases: Long-term coffee consumption has been linked to a lower risk of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, possibly due to its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties⁸.

ORIGIN OF COFFEE

The origins of coffee trace back to Ethiopia, widely regarded as its birthplace. Legend holds that a goat herder named Kaldi discovered coffee when he observed his goats becoming unusually energetic after eating the red cherries of a particular tree. This discovery marked the beginning of coffee's journey from a local plant to a global phenomenon⁹.

From Ethiopia, coffee spread to the Arabian Peninsula, where it became deeply ingrained in the culture of Yemen. By the 15th century, coffee was being cultivated and traded extensively in Yemen, with the port of Mocha emerging as a significant hub for its distribution. The beverage gained prominence for its stimulating effects and became an integral part of religious and social gatherings¹⁰.

By the 16th century, coffee had spread to the Ottoman Empire and Europe, where it was initially met with suspicion but quickly gained acceptance. Coffee houses, known as "penny universities," became centers of intellectual exchange, fostering discussions on art, science, and politics. The demand for coffee drove its cultivation to colonies in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, solidifying its status as a globally cherished commodity¹¹.

⁶ Ker, K., Edwards, P., Felix, L., Blackhall, K., & Roberts, I. (2010). Caffeine for the promotion of wakefulness and alertness. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (3).

⁷ Lucas, M., Mirzaei, F., Pan, A., Okereke, O. I., Willett, W. C., & O'Reilly, E. J. (2011). Coffee, caffeine, and risk of depression among women. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 171(17), 1571-1578.

⁸ Eskelinen, M. H., & Kivipelto, M. (2010). Caffeine as a protective factor in dementia and Alzheimer's disease. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 20(S1), S167-S174.

⁹ Pendergrast, M. (2010). *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*. Basic Books.

¹⁰ Roberts, S. (2004). *The History of Coffee*. Blackwell Publishing.

¹¹ Clarke, R. J., & Macrae, R. (1987). *Coffee: Volume 1: Chemistry*. Springer.



The historical journey of coffee underscores its transformation from a regional crop in Ethiopia to a symbol of cultural and social exchange across the world, laying the foundation for its global significance today.

TYPES OF COFFEE BEANS

Coffee is cultivated worldwide, and its flavor, aroma, and quality are largely determined by the type of coffee bean. There are four primary types of coffee beans: Arabica, Robusta, Liberica, and Excelsa, each with distinct characteristics that cater to diverse consumer preferences.

1

Arabica (*Coffea arabica*): Accounting for approximately 60–70% of global coffee production, Arabica is prized for its smooth, mild flavor profile and higher acidity. It thrives at higher altitudes with cooler climates, making it sensitive to environmental changes¹².

2

Robusta (*Coffea canephora*): Known for its strong, bitter flavor and higher caffeine content, Robusta is more resilient to pests and diseases. It is typically grown in lower altitudes and warmer climates, contributing to its robust growth and economic significance¹³.

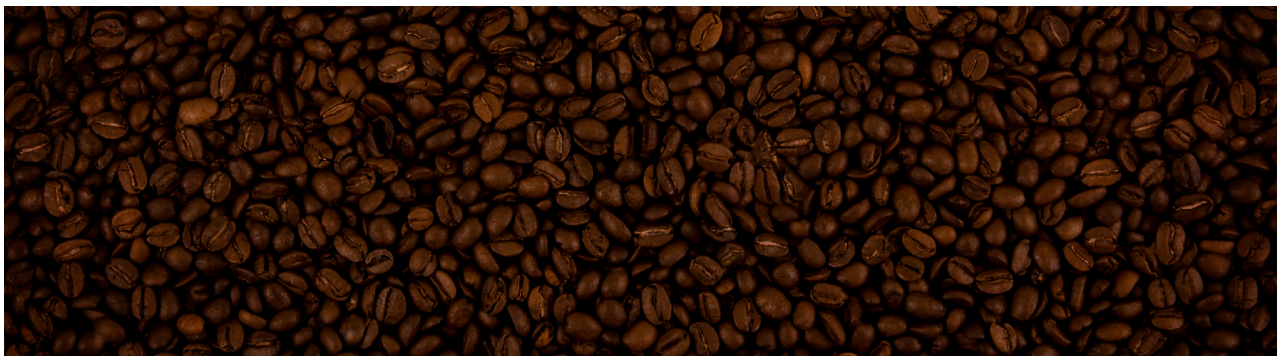
3

Liberica (*Coffea liberica*): Indigenous to West Africa, Liberica beans are less commonly produced but are valued for their distinct fruity and floral aroma. Their irregular shape and unique flavor contribute to niche markets in certain regions¹⁴.

4

Excelsa (*Coffea excelsa*): Often considered a variety of Liberica, Excelsa is grown in Southeast Asia and known for its tart, fruity flavor, making it a favorite in blended coffee products. Its unique characteristics add depth and complexity to coffee blends¹⁵.

The diversity in coffee bean types underscores the importance of understanding their unique properties, enabling both consumers and producers to make informed choices about cultivation, trade, and consumption.



¹² Bertrand, B., Boulanger, J. P., Escobar, F., et al. (2011). Climatic factors controlling the coffee yield: A systematic review. *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology*, 151(2), 225-237.

¹³ Charrier, A., & Eskes, A. B. (2004). Coffee plant and genetics. In Wintgens, J. N. (Ed.), *Coffee: Growing, Processing, Sustainable Production*. Wiley-VCH.

¹⁴ DaMatta, F. M., Ronchi, C. P., Maestri, M., & Barros, R. S. (2007). Ecophysiology of coffee growth and production. *Brazilian Journal of Plant Physiology*, 19(4), 485-510.

¹⁵ Wintgens, J. N. (2004). *Coffee: Growing, Processing, Sustainable Production*. Wiley-VCH.



GROWTH AND HARVEST

Coffee cultivation is concentrated in tropical regions, often referred to as the "Coffee Belt," which spans the latitudes between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. The growth and harvest of coffee depend on factors such as altitude, climate, and soil composition, all of which contribute significantly to the flavor and quality of the beans.

Where It Grows

Coffee plants thrive in tropical climates with moderate rainfall, well-drained soil, and specific altitude ranges. Arabica coffee prefers higher altitudes (600–2,000 meters above sea level) with cooler temperatures, while Robusta grows well in lower altitudes with warmer, humid conditions. Key coffee-producing regions include Ethiopia, Colombia, Brazil, Vietnam, and Indonesia, each offering unique environmental factors that influence bean characteristics¹⁶.

Type of Trees

Coffee plants are evergreen shrubs or small trees with a typical lifespan of 20–30 years in cultivation. They require three to four years after planting to produce their first significant harvest. The fruit, known as a cherry, undergoes several developmental stages, from flowering to ripening, with each stage influencing the bean's final quality. Arabica trees are more delicate, requiring careful maintenance, whereas Robusta trees are hardier and more resistant to diseases and pests¹⁷.

When It's Grown

The harvest season varies across regions due to differing climatic conditions. For example, in Ethiopia, the coffee harvest occurs between October and December, while in Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, the primary harvest period is from May to September. Each region's specific harvesting timeline reflects the growing cycle of the coffee cherries, ensuring they are picked at peak ripeness for optimal flavor and quality¹⁸.

¹⁶ DaMatta, F. M., Ronchi, C. P., Maestri, M., & Barros, R. S. (2007). Ecophysiology of coffee growth and production. *Brazilian Journal of Plant Physiology*, 19(4), 485-510.

¹⁷ Wintgens, J. N. (2004). *Coffee: Growing, Processing, Sustainable Production*. Wiley-VCH.

¹⁸ Bertrand, B., Boulanger, J. P., Escobar, F., et al. (2011). Climatic factors controlling the coffee yield: A systematic review. *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology*, 151(2), 225-237.



THE COFFEE PROCESS

The journey from the coffee farm to the cup involves several stages, each of which significantly influences the final taste and quality of the beverage. These stages include drying, roasting, and grinding, each offering different methods that impact the overall flavor profile of the coffee.

Drying Methods

Traditional Drying: The drying process is crucial in determining the flavor profile of coffee. In traditional methods, coffee cherries are left to dry naturally under the sun, a technique that preserves many of the fruity and earthy flavors inherent in the bean. This process is typically slower, allowing for more complex flavor development, but it can be more susceptible to environmental factors, such as humidity, which can affect the consistency of the drying process. The natural drying method is often used for Arabica beans, which require more delicate handling to preserve their nuanced flavors¹⁹.

Washed Process: In the washed or wet method, the coffee cherries are pulped to remove the outer fruit before the beans are dried. This process results in a cleaner taste with more pronounced acidity and clarity. The washed method is common in regions with abundant rainfall, where the cherries can be quickly processed to avoid fermentation. However, it requires significant water resources and can have environmental impacts in water-scarce areas. The clarity and brightness of washed coffees are favored in high-quality Arabica beans, particularly those grown in countries like Ethiopia and Colombia²⁰.

Honey Method: The honey method is a semi-washed technique where some of the mucilage (the sticky substance surrounding the coffee bean) is left on during the drying process. This method balances the natural sweetness of the fruit with the clarity of a washed coffee, creating a unique flavor profile with increased body and complexity. The honey method has gained popularity in Latin American coffee-growing regions, especially Costa Rica and Honduras, where it helps achieve a balance of sweetness and acidity²¹.



¹⁹ Pendergrast, M. (2010). *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*. Basic Books.

²⁰ Clarke, R. J., & Macrae, R. (1987). *Coffee: Volume 1: Chemistry*. Springer.

²¹ Haug, W. (2008). *Coffee: The Story of a Controversial Beverage*. Harvard University Press.



Roasting

Types of Roasts: Roasting is one of the most important stages in coffee processing, as it is during this stage that the beans' flavors develop fully. Coffee roasts are classified based on the temperature and time during the roasting process:

Light Roasts: These beans are roasted for a shorter time, usually at a lower temperature. Light roasts preserve the original flavors of the coffee, with a focus on the beans' origin, fruitiness, and acidity. These are often preferred for specialty coffees, particularly from regions like Ethiopia and Kenya.

Medium Roasts: Medium roasts are balanced, offering a combination of the bean's origin characteristics and the roast flavor. They tend to have moderate acidity and a fuller body. Many popular coffee brands use medium roast profiles, which cater to a broader audience.

Dark Roasts: Dark roasts are roasted for a longer time, leading to a fuller-bodied coffee with deep caramelization and often a smoky or chocolatey flavor. This roast is common in espresso-based drinks, as the intense flavors blend well with milk and sugar.

Roasting Techniques: The two primary methods for roasting coffee are slow and quick roasting. Slow roasting involves roasting the beans at a lower temperature for a longer period, allowing for more even development of flavors, particularly those associated with sweetness and acidity. Quick roasting, on the other hand, uses higher temperatures for a shorter duration, which can result in a stronger, bolder flavor but may sometimes lead to a less balanced cup²².



²² Wintgens, J. N. (2004). *Coffee: Growing, Processing, Sustainable Production*. Wiley-VCH.



Grinding

Types of Grinds: The grind size of coffee directly affects the extraction process during brewing. A fine grind is suitable for espresso, allowing for a quick extraction of flavors, while a coarse grind is ideal for brewing methods such as French press or cold brew, which require longer extraction times. Medium grinds are used for drip coffee makers, balancing extraction time and flavor.

Grinding Methods: There are two primary grinding methods: manual grinders and electric grinders. Manual grinders, often hand-cranked, offer greater control over the consistency of the grind but can be labor-intensive. Electric grinders are faster and more efficient, though they may sometimes result in uneven particle size, which can impact the taste.

Burr Grinders: Burr grinders are considered the best for consistent and uniform grinds, as they crush the beans between two burrs (plates) rather than chopping them. This method helps preserve the flavors and ensures even extraction during brewing.

Blade Grinders: Blade grinders use rotating blades to chop the beans. While more affordable, they tend to create uneven grind sizes, which can result in inconsistent extraction and suboptimal flavor.



BREWING METHODS

Brewing coffee is both an art and a science, requiring careful attention to methods and variables to achieve the desired flavor profile. Different brewing techniques, tools, and variables significantly impact the aroma, body, and taste of the final cup.

Manual Brewing Techniques

Filters (e.g., pour-over): Pour-over brewing involves manually pouring hot water over coffee grounds placed in a filter, allowing it to extract through gravity. Common tools include the Hario V60 and Kalita Wave. This method is prized for its ability to highlight the coffee's nuanced flavors, acidity, and clarity. The slow and controlled pouring technique ensures uniform extraction, and the use of high-quality paper or metal filters removes unwanted sediments and oils²³.

French Press: The French press, also known as a press pot or plunger pot, uses a steeping method where coarse coffee grounds are steeped in hot water and separated by pressing a mesh plunger. This method produces a full-bodied cup with rich flavors as the oils and micro-fine particles remain in the brew²⁴. Steeping times generally range from 3-5 minutes for optimal extraction.

Chemex, Aeropress, and Moka Pot:

- **Chemex:** A pour-over system using a specially designed hourglass-shaped glass vessel with a thick paper filter. The Chemex method produces a clean and delicate brew, emphasizing light and floral notes in coffee.
- **Aeropress:** Combines pressure and immersion techniques to extract coffee. Known for its versatility, it allows users to adjust variables like brew time and grind size to achieve different flavor profiles.
- **Moka Pot:** A stovetop coffee maker that brews espresso-like coffee by passing pressurized steam through coffee grounds. This method is a staple in Italian households and produces a strong, rich, and concentrated brew²⁵.

Brewing Variables

Water Temperature and Brewing Time: Water temperature is a critical factor in brewing coffee. The ideal temperature range is 195–205°F (90–96°C). Temperatures below this range result in under-extraction, while higher temperatures can cause over-extraction, leading to bitter flavors. Brewing time varies by method, ranging from 2-4 minutes for pour-over to 4-5 minutes for French press .

²³ Illy, F., & Viani, R. (2005). Espresso Coffee: The Science of Quality. Elsevier.

²⁴ Rao, S. (2014). The Professional Barista's Handbook: An Expert's Guide to Preparing Espresso, Coffee, and Tea. Coffee Publishing.

²⁵ Illy, F., & Viani, R. (2005). Espresso Coffee: The Science of Quality. Elsevier.

²⁶ Hendon, C. H., Colonna-Dashwood, L., & Colonna-Dashwood, M. (2014). Water quality and coffee brewing. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, 62(20), 4947-4950.



The Science of Extraction: Extraction is the process of dissolving coffee compounds into water. Key variables include pour rate and grind size. A faster pour rate or coarser grind leads to under-extraction, resulting in sour or weak coffee, while a slower pour or finer grind can lead to over-extraction, yielding bitter coffee. Balancing these variables ensures proper extraction and a balanced cup²⁷.



CONSUMPTION

The consumption of coffee is an integral aspect of its appreciation, encompassing specialized tasting techniques, unique pairings, and the global popularity of instant coffee. Understanding these elements provides insight into the sensory and cultural dimensions of coffee.

Tasting Techniques

Washing the Tongue for Better Flavor Detection: Preparing the palate before tasting coffee involves cleansing the tongue to remove residual flavors. This ensures a more precise evaluation of the coffee's taste profile, enhancing the ability to detect subtle notes. Techniques include sipping water or eating a neutral snack (e.g., crackers) before tasting²⁸.

Placement on the Tongue to Identify Flavor Notes: The human tongue has specific areas more sensitive to certain flavors—sweetness is perceived at the tip, sourness along the sides, bitterness at the back, and saltiness along the front edges. Professional tasters (cuppers) often slurp coffee to aerate it, ensuring it spreads across the entire palate for a comprehensive flavor evaluation²⁹.

²⁷ Rao, S. (2014). *The Professional Barista's Handbook: An Expert's Guide to Preparing Espresso, Coffee, and Tea*. Coffee Publishing.

²⁸ Rao, S. (2014). *The Professional Barista's Handbook: An Expert's Guide to Preparing Espresso, Coffee, and Tea*. Coffee Publishing.

²⁹ Illy, F., & Viani, R. (2005). *Espresso Coffee: The Science of Quality*. Elsevier.



Instant Coffee

Instant coffee is a soluble coffee product made by brewing coffee at an industrial scale and then freeze-drying or spray-drying the liquid to form powder or granules. This process retains the flavor and aroma while providing a quick and convenient beverage option. Instant coffee is widely consumed worldwide due to its affordability, shelf stability, and ease of preparation. It is particularly popular in regions like Asia and Europe, where cultural practices favor its versatility³⁰.

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

The coffee industry is a dynamic global sector shaped by leading companies and standardized practices that ensure quality, sustainability, and innovation.

Many leading coffee brands have transformed coffee from a regional beverage to a universal cultural staple. By fostering sustainability programs, supporting farmers, and investing in research, they have enhanced the economic viability of coffee production while addressing environmental challenges. Their marketing strategies have also shaped consumer perceptions, creating a premium market for specialty coffee.

International Coffee Standards

Grading Systems for Coffee Beans: Coffee grading systems evaluate beans based on size, color, moisture content, and defect count. Specialty coffee, for example, must score 80 points or higher on a 100-point scale as per Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) standards. Arabica beans are typically graded more rigorously than robusta due to their complexity and flavor nuances³¹.

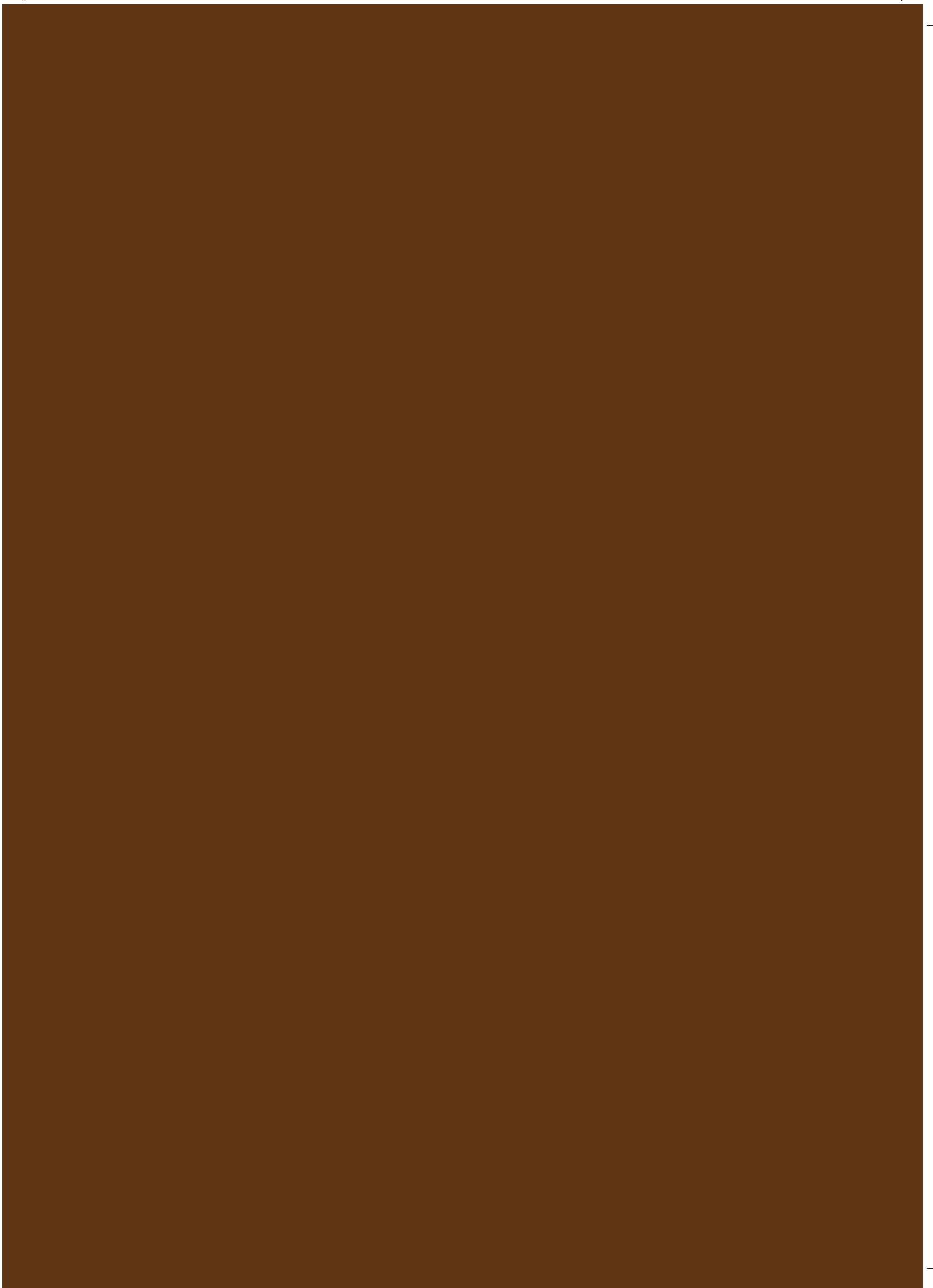
Best Practices and Certifications: Certifications such as Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, and Organic ensure ethical and sustainable practices in coffee farming and trade. These certifications promote environmental stewardship, fair wages, and reduced use of harmful chemicals. Adhering to international standards enhances transparency and trust in the supply chain, benefiting producers and consumers alike³².

³⁰ Clarke, R. J., & Macrae, R. (1987). *Coffee: Volume 1 Chemistry*. Springer.

³¹ Specialty Coffee Association. (2023). *Standards & Protocols*.

³² Fair Trade International. (2022). *Annual Impact Report*.





Coffee