

## ETHIOPIA

One of the main aims of the project is to provide Ethiopian farmers with access to advanced processing equipment



# Ethiopian farmers to benefit from Dutch organic project

A new project that aims to enhance the production of organic coffee in some of the remotest regions of Ethiopia by providing producers with access to organic expertise and technology has got under way

**L**ed by Trabocca BV, a Dutch company based in Amsterdam that specialises in sourcing and selling organic products from countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Senegal, Indonesia and the Dominican Republic, the project is part-funded by the Dutch government, and is now in full swing, in preparation for the 2005/2006 crop year, having to underway earlier this summer.

Trabocca is a subsidiary of The Organic Corporation (TOC), a holding company that specialises in sourcing specific agricultural commodities, including fresh fruit and vegetables and operates in the organic market under well-known trading names such as Trading Organic Agriculture and OTC-Holland.

TOC's long experience in organic markets worldwide will play an important part in the new project that Trabocca is leading in Ethiopia, particularly as Trabocca itself is dedicated to sourcing specialty grade African coffee

fees from countries like Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia and Malawi.

Currently, however, its focus is on Ethiopia, particularly organic and Fair Trade specialty coffees. Menno Simons, a director at Trabocca, having been responsible for introducing the first organic coffee certifiers into Ethiopia 5-6 years ago. Since then he has been personally involved in the selection of specific areas and cooperatives where the finest quality coffees are produced.

Over the last 5-6 years, Trabocca has therefore developed a close working relationship with Ethiopian coffee farmers and their organisations and has introduced their coffees to clients around the world, and plans to use the new project to help coffee farmers in Ethiopia in regions such as Harar, Sidama, Yirgacheffe and another, particularly remote region of the country to the west of Addis near the Sudanese border, gain access to the skills and



equipment they need.

As Mr Simons explained to *C&I*, the project will last for two years, with a spin-off period until 2010, and will be implemented through a joint venture that is currently being established with a partner in Ethiopia.

Mr Simons describes the project as "unique," and said it been made possible by the financial support of the Dutch government and a substantial investment by Trabocca. "It is a mission and a dream come true," said Mr Simons. "The overall aim is to increase volumes and upgrade the quality," he explained, noting that the project is broken down into four separate initiatives, all of which contribute to the same goal.

The first initiative has seen the acquisition of new, environmentally-friendly pulping machines, dry-hullers, graders, drying tables and equipment for cupping labs (supplied by Penagos in Colombia, Pinhalense in Brazil, and Probat in Germany). A number of new warehouses will also have to be built, probably in the Harar and Sidama regions. The equipment will be rented out to local co-operatives and smallholders at a minimal cost, and will be donated to them for their continued use later on in the project.

Secondly, Trabocca will hire acknowledged experts such as agronomists (harvesting, organic fertilizing, pruning, nurseries, water and forest management), coffee processing trainers (picking, pulping, drying, storage, nurseries), and



cupping trainers (to work on site), in order that they can pass on their expertise to local growers.

The third part of the project will see Trabocca explore further, as yet unidentified sources, and experiment with new packing materials, and the fourth strand of the project will provide training in management, export, banking and documentation.

More details about the project can be obtained from Menno Simons at [menno@trabocca.com](mailto:menno@trabocca.com), and more details about Trabocca and the organic coffee it is sourcing in Ethiopia can be found at [www.trabocca.com](http://www.trabocca.com). **CCI**

*Menno Simons with some of the Ethiopian coffee farmers from which Trabocca plans to source organic coffee*