

## BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE: TRANSLATING COFFEE COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION



*"Bridging policy and practice begins with shared purpose and collective action."*



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## 1 Editorial

Dear Esteemed Members and Partners,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the second issue of the IACO Newsletter, our platform to reflect on our shared journey, amplify voices across our member states, and communicate the dynamic developments shaping Africa's coffee landscape.

Building on the momentum of our inaugural edition, this issue under the theme **“Bridging Policy and Practice,”** focuses on translating our shared vision into tangible results that impact stakeholders in the coffee value chain.

Across the continent, we are witnessing a renewed commitment to strengthening coffee value chains through inclusive policy reform, capacity building, and sustainable innovation. From the progress being made in adapting to evolving global frameworks like the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), Africa's coffee sector is entering a new chapter defined by resilience, creativity, and collaboration.

Yet, this progress does not happen in isolation. It requires strong partnerships, a harmonised regulatory framework, and sustained technical and financial support. As we move forward, IACO remains committed to its role as a catalyst—aligning technical, action and advocacy support in ways that reflect our collective aspirations for a sustainable and competitive African coffee sector.

I invite you to explore the stories, updates, and opportunities shared in this issue. Together, let us continue building a future where African coffee is not only globally competitive but also a powerful driver of local empowerment and inclusive growth.

***“Bridging policy and practice is not just a goal—it is a shared responsibility to deliver real value to stakeholders across the coffee value chain.”***



## 2

## Policy in Action: Strategic Engagements



In April 2025, a high-level IACO delegation led by the Secretary General and Director of Research and Development visited the United States to advance the organisation's strategic partnerships. Key outcomes included formal engagement with the University of California, Davis and participation in the 37<sup>th</sup> Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) Conference in Houston, Texas.

At UC Davis, the delegation explored collaborative opportunities aligned with IACO's priorities on circular economy, education, and global cooperation. Discussions focused on establishing academic exchanges, capacity-building initiatives, and technical research collaboration, including the development of specialized coffee training curricula. There was also interest in the creation of a coffee museum and partnerships to promote African coffee culture.

A particularly notable initiative was the proposal to develop a new coffee brand —“Ambassadors' Coffee”— based on green beans supplied by Uganda, paired with the production of a documentary film exploring the rich history and cultural significance of Ugandan coffee. These ideas were met with enthusiasm and are expected to be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IACO, UC Davis, and other stakeholders.

At SCA 2025, IACO connected with key players in the global coffee industry and engaged with delegations from Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. These efforts reflect IACO's drive to link global insights with continental goals, ensuring African coffee is present, visible, and valued on the world stage.



## Research & Development

### Strengthening African Representation in Global Coffee Science



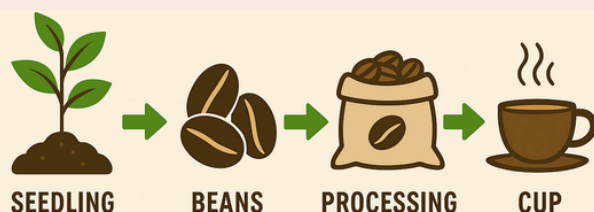
IACO's recent mission to the U.S. opened doors for promising research collaboration with World Coffee Research (WCR), a global leader in coffee agricultural innovation.

WCR is currently trialing new Arabica varieties in Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda and preparing to launch a Robusta program in Ghana and Uganda. As IACO establishes the African Center for Coffee Research, this partnership aligns perfectly with its vision to empower African-led science and innovation.

"There's a strong alignment between IACO's vision for African-led coffee science and WCR's hands-on innovation," said Kraig Kraft, WCR's Director of Global Partnerships.

Seedlings from these programs are expected to be available within two years, offering African farmers improved climate resilience and productivity. Both organizations are working toward formalizing this collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

This partnership will strengthen Africa's position as a leader in coffee research and help build a resilient, sustainable future for coffee producers across the continent



### IAOC Secures Seat on ASIC Executive Board



We are pleased to announce that IACO's Director of Research and Development, Dr Celestin Gatarayiha has been officially appointed to the Executive Board of the Association for Science and Information on Coffee (ASIC).

This appointment follows a recent structural reorganisation of the ASIC Board and affirms IACO's growing role as a continental thought leader in coffee research, innovation, and policy alignment. The nomination was unanimously supported by the Board and comes at a time when global research collaboration is more critical than ever, particularly in the face of sustainability challenges, quality demands, and evolving regulatory frameworks such as the EUDR.

IACO's participation will ensure that Africa's scientific priorities, research institutions, and innovation needs are represented and integrated into ASIC's global agenda. It also opens new opportunities for technical exchange, capacity-building, and collaborative research involving African universities, centres of excellence, and national coffee boards.

This milestone reinforces IACO's commitment to elevating African coffee through science, partnerships, and continental expertise.





## 4

# Economic Affairs

**Toward a unified African Presence:**

**Coordinating Africa's Coffee Visibility at Global Platforms**

At the 37<sup>th</sup> Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) Conference in Houston, Texas, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Rwanda represented the African continent through national booths. Despite their efforts, the delegation noted that the African presence was fragmented, with booths scattered and lacking coordinated visibility.

This observation has prompted IACO to advocate for the creation of a unified African Coffee Pavilion at future international expos. A joint pavilion would enable African coffee-producing countries to showcase their unique origins, profiles, and innovations in a consolidated and compelling manner. It would also strengthen brand identity, facilitate collaboration, enhance engagement with global buyers and industry stakeholders and reinforce the identity of Africa as a powerhouse in the global coffee value chain.

Looking ahead to SCA 2026 in San Diego, IACO plans to engage the SCA Secretariat and Member States to explore this concept further and assess logistics and sponsorship options for implementation. This approach aims to elevate Africa's collective coffee voice and presence on the global stage.





## 5

# Innovation & Sustainability

## From Waste to Wealth



IACO is scaling up its innovation and sustainability agenda by transforming field experiences, research partnerships, and policy engagement into practical action. From circular economy initiatives to traceability systems and trade insights, recent missions and engagements are laying the foundation for a more resilient and inclusive African coffee sector.

### Waste to Wealth – Circular Coffee Opportunities

During IACO's visit to the UC Davis Coffee Center, discussions explored how African institutions can collaborate on circular economy initiatives, turning coffee by-products into value-added goods such as compost, cosmetics, renewable fuel, and specialty ingredients like cascara. Plans are underway to advance this agenda through joint research, technical training, and cooperative-based innovation projects.





### Innovation in Trade & Quality – Takeaways from SCA 2025, Houston

At the Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston, IACO participated in sessions that spotlighted and reinforced its innovation agenda across the coffee value chain:

 **Climate-smart production:** Best practices in agroforestry, drought resilience, and regenerative farming.

 **Circular value chains:** Cascara —the dried coffee husk— was highlighted as a fast-growing specialty product, aligning with IACO's circular economy goals.

 **Quality & Traceability:** Coffee Quality Institute (CQI) led discussions and spotlighted the importance of cupping standards, sensory training, and digital traceability, all vital to quality-driven market access.

 **Trade Infrastructure:** A site visit to the Dupuy coffee warehouse in Houston offered practical insights into warehousing, freight, and cost structures. These learnings will inform future programming under DACBA, and women-led innovation projects supported by IACO.

### Uganda's Tech-Driven Traceability System

At the recent EUDR readiness workshop in Kampala, Uganda showcased a pioneering model for farmer registration. With over 20% of its 1.7 million coffee farmers already geo-tagged and assigned unique IDs, the system empowers smallholders and supports full traceability, a core EUDR requirement. This scalable approach offers a blueprint for other African countries preparing for the regulation's enforcement by the end of 2025.

## 6 Member State Spotlight

### Rwanda's Coffee Sector Transformation:

### A Model for Value Addition, Quality, Innovation, and Continental Vision



Rwanda has emerged as one of Africa's most business-friendly environments, ranking second on the continent in the WB's 2020 Doing Business Report. This reflects the country's ongoing commitment to economic reform and investment promotion.

A key success story is Rwanda's coffee sector, which has evolved from exporting low-grade beans to producing premium specialty coffee. Today, 80% of Rwanda's coffee is specialty grade, with high cupping scores and diverse processing methods. These improvements have boosted Rwanda's competitiveness in global markets, thanks to the leadership of the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB).

National achievements: NAEB was able to:

- Create and trademark a national brand, "Rwanda Coffee, A Second Sunrise", as a badge of origin of Rwanda's coffee, indicating to consumers the country's coffee heritage and quality.
- Introduce a digital traceability system from farm to export to help meet global compliance standards such as EUDR and promote sustainability certifications like Fair-trade and Rainforest Alliance.
- Introduce a **"Geographical Indications"** concept -and its creation and registration to promote the development of Rwanda's coffee sector and the remuneration of smallholder farmers through the recognition of the specificity linked to the origin of their products.
- Launch an annual national coffee competition and auction, known as **Best of Rwanda**, in 2024 as a powerful platform to showcase Rwanda's finest coffees, connecting producers with global buyers.
- Revive -document various steps for registration- an indigenous Rwandan coffee variety **"Mibirizi"**, offering Rwanda's unique terroir and great potential for farmers.
- Promote domestic coffee consumption, which is gaining momentum through tasting sessions, barista training & championship, awareness campaigns, and rising demand in local coffee shops.

These achievements are closely aligned with IACO's vision for a modern, value-driven African coffee sector.

As next steps, NAEB will continue to actively support and strengthen Rwanda's coffee sector to increase climate-resilient production, strengthen value chains and expand export destinations.

***"Through innovation and collaboration, Rwanda is building a coffee sector that reflects our values, engages our people, and meets global standards."***



Claude BIZIMANA, CEO NAEB.



## 7

# Youth & Women in Coffee

**The Coffee-Cocoa Council (CCC) Showcases Ivorian Coffee and Young Entrepreneurs at DJÉGUÉLÉ and FEMUA 17**



Fatoumata TRAORE, CEO, Délice Café

As part of the continental “Drink African Coffee, Build Africa” (DACBA) initiative led by the Inter-African Coffee Organisation (IACO), the Coffee-Cocoa Council (CCC) proudly celebrated Ivorian coffee at two high-profile cultural events: the DJÉGUÉLÉ International Festival in Boundiali and FEMUA 17 in Abidjan.

These events offered vibrant platforms to highlight the role of coffee not just as an agricultural commodity but as a product of cultural pride, youth empowerment, and identity.

In partnership with young Ivorian coffee brands such as Délice Café and O'gbata Café, both trained in barista skills with IACO's support, the CCC organized free tasting experiences for festival-goers. These interactive spaces combined the sensory richness of local coffee with messages of continental solidarity and economic transformation.

Aligned with the respective event themes, digital technology and artificial intelligence at DJÉGUÉLÉ, and civic engagement at FEMUA, the CCC, under the leadership of its General Management, deployed significant logistical and human resources to support young entrepreneurs in the coffee sector and expand public awareness of local brands.

Through these activations, the DACBA vision was brought to life: African coffee celebrated, consumed, and reimagined by a new generation determined to make it an everyday product on the continent.

With this momentum, the CCC reinforces its role as a champion of Ivorian coffee, recognised for its distinctive aromas and cultural value, while also investing in the leadership of youth and women in the sector.

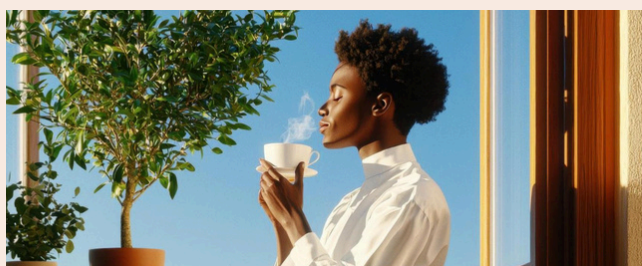


Pierre Kévin & Atse Gilles Evra: The bold faces behind O'gbata Café



# Coffee & Lifestyle: Beyond the Brew

## Coffee, Exercise & Recovery



Long gone are the days when coffee was just a morning pick-me-up. Across Africa and the world, coffee is becoming an unexpected ally in fitness and active lifestyles, from pre-workout boosts to post-exercise recovery.

Caffeine, found naturally in coffee, has been scientifically shown to enhance athletic performance, particularly in endurance activities. It helps delay fatigue, sharpen mental focus, and improve circulation, making it a favourite among runners, cyclists, and gym-goers<sup>1</sup>. Consuming coffee 30–60 minutes before a workout can improve stamina and physical output<sup>2</sup>.

African athletes are catching on. Some long-distance runners in Kenya's high-altitude training camps include a cup of local coffee in their pre-run ritual<sup>3</sup>. In urban Lagos or Nairobi, boutique fitness studios often serve cold brew as a natural energizer before spin or yoga sessions.

Beyond energy, coffee's antioxidants, especially chlorogenic acid may support muscle recovery by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress<sup>4</sup>. Coffee can be part of a healthy fitness routine when consumed in moderation and paired with hydration.

Entrepreneurs across Africa are beginning to respond from coffee-infused protein bars to Ethiopian coffee kombucha, innovations are brewing where wellness and tradition meet.

So, whether you're walking through the neighbourhood, lifting weights, or training for your next marathon, Africa's coffee isn't just a break from movement. It may be part of the movement itself.

<sup>1</sup> Spriet, L.L. (2014). Exercise and sport performance with low doses of caffeine. *Sports Medicine*, 44(S2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-014-0257-8>

<sup>2</sup> Guest, N. S., et al. (2021). International society of sports nutrition position stand: caffeine and exercise performance. *JISSN*, 18(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12970-020-00383-4>

<sup>3</sup> Onywera, V. O., et al. (2006). Demographic characteristics of elite Kenyan endurance runners. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 24(4), 415–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410500189033>

<sup>4</sup> Choi, S., & Je, Y. (2024). Coffee consumption and C-reactive protein levels: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular Diseases*, 34(11), 2425–2439. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.numecd.2024.06.024>



## 9 Events & Announcements

### African Coffee Week 2026 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

In partnership with the African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA), preparations are underway for the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Coffee Week (ACW), scheduled for February 2026 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This continental event will bring together stakeholders to share insights on scientific research, policy developments, and market opportunities in African coffee.

IACO will play a central role by hosting the 7<sup>th</sup> Scientific Coffee Conference, the Policy Dinner, and the High-Level Policy Forum as part of the weeks event. This participation underscores IACO's commitment to advancing the coffee sector through knowledge exchange and strategic dialogue as well as reinforcing the organisation's leadership role in continental coffee development.

## Call to Action

 **Get involved in African Coffee Week 2026 !**

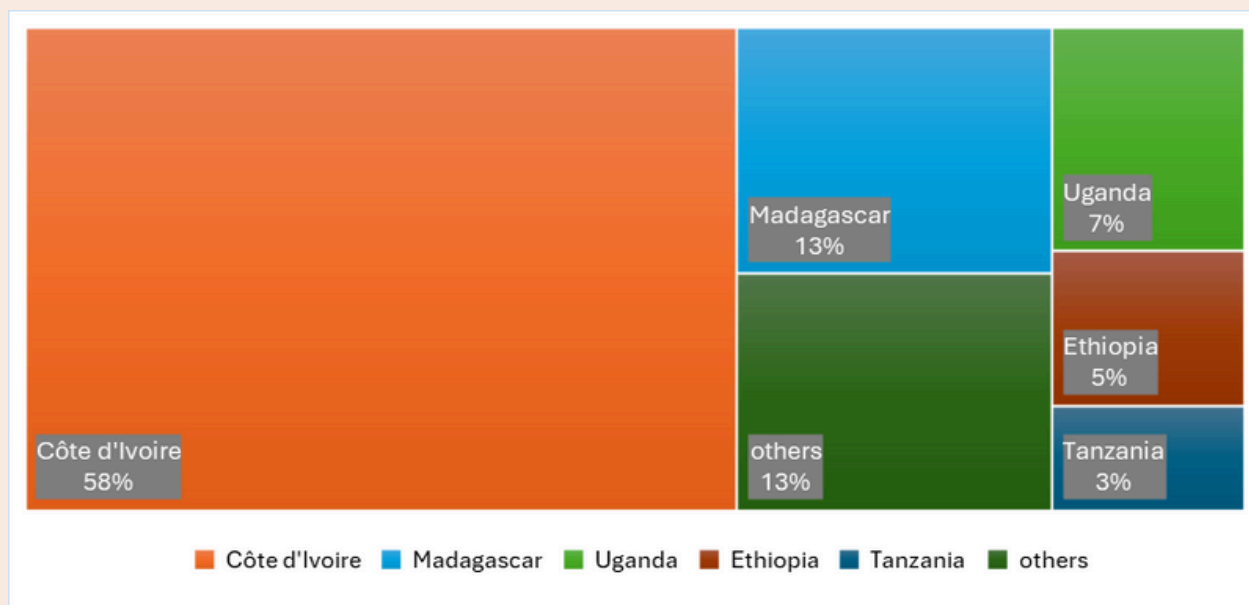
Join IACO and continental leaders in Addis Ababa for Africa's premier coffee event. Stay tuned for registration details, speaker opportunities, and how your country or organisation can contribute to this landmark gathering





## 10 Coffee Data Corner

Figure 1: Top 5 Intra-African Exporters of green Coffee in 2024



Source: ITC (2024)

## 11 Save the Date



- Tentative launch of the ACCR in Moshi, Tanzania (September 2025)
- International Coffee Day (ICD) 2025 to be held in October 2025 in Accra, Ghana,
- 65th IACO Annual Meetings will be held in Bujumbura, Burundi (November 2025) – Preparations underway
- Opening of the AU-IACO Liaison Office in Addis Ababa before December 2025.
- Official opening of the Centre of Excellence (December 2026)



## CONNECT WITH US

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