The Common Code for the Coffee Community (CCCC)

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The Common Code for the Coffee Community is a joint initiative of coffee producers, trade and industry (including Nestlé, Kraft Foods, Sara Lee and others), trade unions and social or environmental NGOs. Its objective is to establish a global code of con-duct aiming at social, environmental and economic sustainability in the production, post-harvest processing and trading of mainstream green coffee. The CCCC was launched in September 2004.

Based on the concept of continuous improvement the code applies a rating within a "traffic-light system". Conditions and improvements in the coffee production system are rated either as unwanted practices (red criterion), intermediate status (yellow criterion) and desirable (green criterion). 'Red' means that the practice in question needs to be discontinued within a period of 3 to 5 years. 'Yellow' means that this practice needs to be improved within the next 10 years. The evaluation 'Green' de-scribes a practice considered as adapted to the sustainable production of main-stream coffee.

The agrochemicals used in different coffee producing countries are listed and classi-fied according to their toxicological characteristics in red, yellow or green. In the CCCC Recommendations for agrochemicals it is pointed out that the majority of farmers are smallholders who are not familiar with the use of agrochemicals and of-ten do not know how to use them correctly and protect themselves. For this reason the categorisation of different agrochemicals is mainly based on their acute toxicity. The herbicides paraquat, 2,4-D, acetochlor, alachlor and diuron are classified as red. These herbicides have to be substituted within a period of 3 to 5 years. The recom-mendations state explicitly that paraquat should be banned as soon as possible.

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