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**The fine art of blending – tasters make sure you get the right flavour  
Leading green coffee traders at COTECA Hamburg**

**COTECA Hamburg, International Trade Show for the Coffee, Tea & Cocoa Business  
at the Hamburg Fair site from 4 to 6 June**

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Coffee is regarded as the second most traded commodity in the world, following petroleum. Last year, the total crop was about 7.2 million tonnes of green coffee. It is a long way from planting to the finished product, and that is where green coffee traders have a vital role to play. COTECA Hamburg, the International Trade Show for the Coffee, Tea & Cocoa Business, to be held at the Hamburg Fair site from 4 to 6 June, is a showcase for some of the world's most important trading companies. This new international trade show is aimed at experts throughout the business in Europe, at the trade, and at coffee shops. It is the first trade show in Europe to cover the complete process chains of all three sectors, from the raw commodity to the finished product.

Trade in green coffee is an area with a great tradition. In Germany there are some 20 trading companies, agents and brokers active in this sector. Most of them are based in Hamburg. The Port of Hamburg is Europe's greatest coffee handling centre, with an annual volume of about one million tonnes. And green coffee traders are responsible not only for importing. "We are the main interface between the plantations and the roasters," explains Alexander Marcks, a trader from Bernhard Benecke Coffee, which is exhibiting at COTECA Hamburg. Green coffee traders provide advance finance, arrange the services for transportation, and they ensure on-time delivery of the green coffee. They also act as intermediaries between the seller or farmer and the purchaser. They know which roasters need which product for their very specific blends.

As an agricultural product, coffee is subject to natural fluctuations. "Coffee, like wine, is influenced by external factors such as the soil, the climatic conditions, and the duration of sunshine," explains Holger Preibisch, Secretary-General of the German Coffee Association, "so it tastes different each year. But consumers expect a branded product to have a consistent flavour. In order to achieve that, classic roast coffees are blends of a number of varieties, coming from different growing areas." It is down to the coffee tasters to ensure that branded coffee always tastes the same. "Blending is a fine art," adds Holger Preibisch, "like the art of the perfume blender".

The requirements for coffee tasting are high. Blending is the last step in a long process chain, and the responsibility is correspondingly great. Tasters need to have a fine palate and a very good nose. Thorsten Hammersen, Managing Director of Efico, a trading company based in Uetersen and also exhibiting in Hamburg, puts it like this – "There are considerable differences between the individual coffees. Apart from the climatic conditions, acidity and the quality of fermentation play a

key role in flavour and quality. So experience is essential. Our traders are familiar with coffees from all the growing regions.”

The Neumann Kaffee Gruppe, the world’s leading green coffee service provider, is one of the exhibitors at COTECA Hamburg. This Hamburg based company employs some 2,100 highly skilled specialists in nearly 50 companies in 28 countries. “The Neumann Kaffee Gruppe provides a whole range of services along the green coffee value chain,” says Hanns-Christian Neumann, Head of Communication. “That ranges from agriculture and farm management to export and import, and also covers logistics, risk management and financing.” The Group also supplies high-quality green coffee from all parts of the world to speciality roasters in Europe and North America, via its InterAmerican Coffee company.

In contrast to the consistent flavour required for classic roast coffee brands, speciality coffees demand continuous creation of new blends. The demand for speciality coffees has been rising for years in Germany. According to estimates, there are more than 300 small roasters altogether in Germany, mainly supplying exclusive blends to coffee shops and restaurants.

List & Beisler is a Hamburg trading company active in the specialist coffee area. Stefan Sprengel, one of its three managing partners, says “We belong to a handful of companies in Germany that have focused exclusively on the finest coffees from all parts of the world.” The price differences are enormous, as Stefan Sprengel explains – “The speciality coffees from Guatemala, where the world’s best coffees grow in the region around the city of Antigua, cost about twice as much as classic coffee for example from Brazil. And there are also real rarities, for example from Jamaica, that cost about 50 times as much.” List & Beisler also informs visitors to the new trade show about its products and services, as does the trading company Hamburg Coffee Company HACOFCO.

COTECA Hamburg, the International Trade Show for the Coffee, Tea & Cocoa Business, is the first trade show in Europe which covers the whole value chain for all three segments – coffee, tea and cocoa. It celebrates its premiere at the Hamburg Fair site from 4 to 6 June, and will be held every two years. The new trade show is backed by an international conference with high-calibre speakers from Germany and abroad, presenting the global challenges, opportunities and trends in the three markets. COTECA Hamburg has the concept support of the German Coffee Association. For further information, please visit the website [www.coteca-hamburg.com](http://www.coteca-hamburg.com)

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