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power and lights during breaks and non-operating hours, Curtis extends a “green approach” to all levels of the company.

At Michaelo Espresso, sustainability is ingrained into the corporate culture. Recycling, energy conservation, paperless operations and even potted plant maintenance are de rigueur for all employees, and Alyssa Garvin says going green at the office has increased the efficiency of Michaelo’s operation as well as created a “great vibe” for workers.

The Seattle-based espresso machine sales and service company serves a national customer base, and celebrated 25 years in business this year. Michaelo also debuted GreenCart 6.2, a sustainable espresso and coffee beverage cart made of long-lasting seam-welded (partly recycled) aluminum. The cart qualifies for several Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certifications. LEED is a Green Building Rating System by the U.S. Green Building Council, designed to serve as the nationally accepted benchmark for evaluating the design, construction, and operation of green businesses. *(For more about this company’s commitment to sustainability, see next month’s issue)*

“There’s a great feeling in helping our customers in the specialty coffee industry share their message of environmental stewardship with retail customers,” says Garvin. “We’d like to hope we are contributing to the overall ‘green’ awareness of our society and feel confident that every little effort counts.”

Another company making a difference in the industry is La Marzocco, the Italian espresso machine manufacturer who, through a partnership with Probat and Mahlkönig formed the Songwa Estates non-profit cooperative in Tanzania. The mission of the non-profit organization is to provide educational experiences to specialty coffee industry stakeholders. The cooperative has also established a fund for projects, the first of which is to pay for orphans from the farm area to attend primary school.

While organic and fair trade practices continue to increase in popularity, the Common Code for the Coffee Community Association (4C) is helping members of the industry who don’t meet such rigorous standards to improve the sustainability of their businesses. 4C’s “Baseline” Standard is built upon the 4C Code of Conduct which covers sustainable social, economic and environmental practices in the coffee sector. The 30 principles of the Baseline are required of all participants in the supply chain, including farmers, plantations, producer organizations, estates, mills, exporters, traders, etc. 4C has also defined ten practices that are considered unacceptable, including “forced eviction without adequate compensation” or “cutting of primary forest”. Once the participants from the green coffee supply chain have committed themselves to eliminating these practices, compliance with the Code of Conduct is structured around the concept of continuous improvement.

Growers in the organization are monitored via random third-party inspections. Once they have reached “4C Sustainability”, farmers can more easily step-up to more demanding standards. Marie Stich, 4C’s communications manager says, “4C is a complementary, non-competing approach to organic and fair trade certification standards.”

Ultimately, companies like CE Organics may benefit from 4C’s efforts. Louise Wilkie, of CE Organics, says sourcing has been a challenge. To find cost effective, organic raw materials that satisfy the company’s quality standards has had its effect on business.

CE Organics’ triple-bottom line approach is environmental, social and economic. Yet one of CE Organics’ competitive advantages has also created some challenges. The certified organic coffee flavoring producer has been staying ahead or in sync with government and regulatory standards; but problems arise because governments and regulatory bodies don’t always adhere to the same standards. “This sometimes puts a wrench in the works when you are trying to fill client orders and the rules aren’t consistent in all areas or regions.”

Good Cow is another product manufacturer staying ahead of the regulatory curve. Their raw milk quality is 5-10 times higher than the standards the Federal government imposes. “We *AUDIT* that our farmers don’t use hormones, we monitor the treatment of our cows- how they are fed, how they are housed,” says Trish Corby. Keeping hormones out of their cows also means keeping hormones out of the water table, a growing concern among environmentalists and health specialists.

“From our Company’s inception in 2000, we have taken on the responsibility of “being greener” than what the “standard milk industry” does,” says Corby. With a product that takes up less space than traditional milk, Good Cow’s concentrated milk uses less fuel for distribution, which means Good Cow sends fewer trucks on the road than other milk companies. Always on the lookout for more sustainable business practices, Corby is currently considering using bio-fuels.

In addition, Good Cow’s packaging is easily recyclable and more efficient, and Corby believes many food service businesses are learning that “going greener” has a value way beyond the efficiencies and overall impacts; doing the right thing earns customer loyalty because of their practices. “It’s called *GOOD BUSINESS SENSE*,” she emphasizes.

Wilkie concurs, noting both her clients’ and her distributors’ awareness of the growing opportunities available in the organic market. She’s watched them moving steadily into this rapidly growing area of business.

Douglas Jacques, VP of Business Operations at Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a cup producer and converter adds, “People often ask us why they should spend more to purchase compostable paper hot cups when foam cups are working for them. We work really hard to convince them that it is the right thing to do for the environment. Partnering with Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired brings the added benefit of providing sustainability for people with visual impairments and the earth. Our program is best stated: “The cup disappears. The impact lives on.””

Elan Organics is one company working to create sustainable relationships between farmers, cooperatives and the buyers. “Our clients realize it is possible to make a difference while making a living and they want to be part of our transparent sustainable chain of doing business,” says Kayd Neill.

To keep everyone in the chain connected, Elan offers photos, stories and information about most of their coffee producers.

Neill says although buying “green” organic coffees may seem like a small commitment to a consumer, it has a big impact. “Coffee is the second largest traded commodity in the world after oil, therefore these consumer choices affect millions of people around the globe and the way that coffee is produced.” For every bag of organic coffee sold, fewer fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides are used. In this way, a simple decision made at the purchase point has the power to create a better living environment for farmers worldwide and improve soil/air quality on our planet.

In Neill’s opinion, it is time for every company to have a sustainable division or department. Everyone should be keeping track of their carbon footprint and trying to reduce it. “We still have time to improve the quality of life for everyone on our planet by going green,” she emphasizes.

Wilkie adds that trade associations also play a major role in this. She believes associations should take a more active leadership role in dealing with environmental issues and address the broader concerns inherent in sustainable development. “It only makes sense to make an environmental commitment visible and match words with deeds,” she says. “We are not just saving the planet, we are saving ourselves.” *CT*

“The environment has changed. Equally important, so has our perception. A growing number of people realize that it is impossible to separate the economic development issues from environmental issues; and many forms of development erode the environmental resources upon which they must be based, and environmental degradation can undermine economic development.”

*Louise Wilkie,
CE Organics*