

Registered

SCTA
Rue de Chantepoulet 11
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

3rd of June 2026

Dear Board Members of the Swiss Coffee Trade Association,

I write to you today not only as your Honorary President, but as someone who has dedicated a lifetime to this Association and to the global coffee sector. My more than fifty-year commitment to this industry has always been rooted in pride — pride in our history, in our leadership, and in the values we have long claimed to uphold. It is precisely because of that pride that I must now speak with complete honesty.

The world around us has changed.

The challenges facing coffee today — deforestation, climate instability, child labor, modern slavery, gender inequality and violence against women, poverty wages, and collapsing farmer livelihoods — can no longer be abstract concerns. They must be seen as urgent, structural threats to the future of our industry.

And yet, despite this reality, our Association continues to operate without even the most basic sustainability requirements for membership of the companies.

This is no longer tenable.

If the Swiss Coffee Trade Association wishes to remain relevant, credible, and aligned with the expectations of consumers, governments, and the next generation of coffee professionals, it must evolve. Voluntary commitments are no longer enough. The time has come for us to adopt **mandatory** sustainability criteria for all member companies — clear, enforceable standards that reflect the minimum ethical baseline for doing business in 2026.

These criteria must include, at a minimum:

- **No deforestation in supply chains**
- **Full traceability to farm level**
- **Zero tolerance for child labor and forced labor and sexual violence, and remediation for cases of abuse**
- **Commitments to living income price for farmers, and living wages for farmworkers**

We need to have a time-bound, robust plan for members to achieve this, with accountability if they fail to do so. We cannot include members who are unable or unwilling to meet basic sustainability requirements. Of course the door can always be open for companies to be readmitted, should they succeed in meeting basic requirements.

These are not radical demands. They are the foundation of a responsible, future-proof coffee sector that takes responsibility for itself. Without this foundation, we risk falling behind global norms, undermining our own credibility,

and — most importantly — failing the people and landscapes that make coffee possible.

I say this with deep sadness: if the Association cannot take these essential steps, I will no longer be able to continue in my role as Honorary President. I cannot lend my name to an institution that refuses to meet the ethical standards the world now expects — and that coffee-growing communities desperately need.

But I do not wish to resign. I want to remain part of this Association. I want to be proud of it. Proud of its legacy. I want to support its evolution. And I believe, sincerely, that we can rise to this moment. We can make the coffee sector a shining beacon in commodities overall; and become an example for other industries. We have the expertise, the influence, and the responsibility to lead. What we need now is the will.

I urge you to act — not for me, but for the future of coffee, and for the integrity of the institution we have built together.

I am eager to discuss any ideas or suggestions you have for a positive way forward. You may recall my proposal via the ICO in 2003 for a "bean levy" on coffee to improve farmer wellbeing. Naturally my notion was only one of the many excellent proposals that can be made, to address a range of key sustainability issues. Companies that source only ethical, sustainable coffee are often at a competitive disadvantage vis a vis irresponsible companies, who pay less and cut corners, even sourcing coffee with serious abuses. When a brand pays farmers a living income price, protects forests through zero-deforestation sourcing, ensures traceability, eliminates child labor, rolls out agroforestry, and invests in safer working conditions, their costs go up — because doing the right thing costs money. Meanwhile, companies that cut corners, underpay farmers, and rely on destructive farming practices can sell coffee cheaply and still turn a profit. This creates a race to the bottom, where responsible companies are penalized for their ethics, and unethical ones are rewarded for harmful shortcuts.

I remain completely open minded about what ideas you might propose.

With respect and resolve,

Walter Zwald

PS: Please take notice, that we will wait for one month before we take the subject to NGOs, medias, general coffee trade, coffee and cocoa association plus concerned authorities.

Copies to:

Deutscher Kaffeeverband Hamburg – attention Holger Preibisch

Coffeewatch – Etelle Higonette

Nestle Headquarter Vevey – Yves Wyss