



Coffeelands Food Security Coalition



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **COFFEE INDUSTRY LEADERS UNITE WITH MERCY CORPS & ALDEA GLOBAL TO HELP NICARAGUAN COFFEE FARMERS COMBAT SEASONAL HUNGER**

*Coalition of five organizations funds work improving food security for vulnerable coffee-growers*

PORTLAND, Ore. – In coffee growing areas of Central America, seasonal hunger is a common problem. While coffee farming provides families with income for several months of the year, the harvest cycle followed by rainy season leaves some families without food or income for five to seven months. These are known as the “thin months.”

In a bold move to fight seasonal hunger in coffee producing countries, five coffee industry leaders – Counter Culture Coffee, Farmer Brothers (NASDAQ: FARM), Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc. (NASDAQ: GMCR), Starbucks Coffee Company (NASDAQ: SBUX) and Sustainable Harvest Coffee Importers – have come together to form the Coffeelands Food Security Coalition. In partnership with the global humanitarian organization Mercy Corps and the Nicaraguan organization Asociación “Aldea Global” Jinotega, these companies will help coffee farming families in Jinotega Department – the source of 60 percent of Nicaragua’s coffee – combat seasonal hunger.

“Working with coffee producing families in Indonesia and Guatemala, we have seen the tremendous day-to-day challenges of the ‘thin months,’” said Kathy Fry, regional program director for Mercy Corps. “We have a long-standing relationship with Aldea Global; they are an important local partner, and well-positioned to address the issue of hunger and poverty in the heart of the coffee value chain. Together, we will strive to ensure these coffee farmers have the knowledge, tools and resources to feed their families year-round.”

The three-year Empowering Food Secure Communities program will work with 150 women and their families to help them improve farming and business techniques, develop additional sources of income through home gardens and diversified crop production as well as engage more effectively with local government to provide assistance to the hungriest families.

Increased crop yields and diversified economic opportunities will support household consumption during the “thin months,” and will allow farmers to earn more income by selling surplus produce in the local market. Farmers will participate in educational sessions on financial literacy, pest management, crop rotation, micro-irrigation, water and soil conservation, as well as proper storage and handling techniques. The Empowering Food Secure Communities program will also strive to achieve gender equality in the traditionally male-dominated culture by

promoting gender education, improving women's access to credit and identifying business opportunities at local markets.

“Studies show that providing educational and economic opportunities for women will lead to improved, sustained living standards,” explained Warren Armstrong, General Manager of Asociación “Aldea Global” Jinotega. “Aldea Global is looking for a transformative approach in the role of women – with the support of her family – to contribute significantly towards their family's economic resiliency during these ‘thin months.’”

The work in Jinotega also has an important disaster risk reduction component. According to the 2011 Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) report, Nicaragua is the fourth most vulnerable country in the world to weather-related disasters like droughts and hurricanes. These disasters can cause massive crop destruction. To adapt to and mitigate this severe weather, Mercy Corps and Aldea Global will teach farmers ways to better prepare for natural disasters. “Climate-smart” gardens will allow women to conserve water for crop irrigation during dry periods, as well as protect crops from pest infestation and bad weather.

As the specialty coffee community discovered the extent to which coffee farmers were struggling to feed their children, it became clear that the problem was too big for one company to tackle alone. According to Shauna Alexander Mohr, coordinator of the Coffeelands Food Security Coalition, “these five companies have forged an unprecedented effort to work together - with one another, with nonprofit partners, and with coffee farmers themselves - to make a difference. New kinds of partnerships are necessary for solutions to emerge in our common fight against seasonal hunger.”

The Empowering Food Secure Communities is the inaugural project of the Coffeelands Food Security Coalition. The alliance is committed to bringing awareness to the issue of seasonal hunger and plans additional projects in other coffee producing countries and communities. For more information, visit: [www.mercycorps.org/Coffeelands](http://www.mercycorps.org/Coffeelands).

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***About Asociación Aldea Global Jinotega***

*Asociación “Aldea Global” Jinotega was formed by 22 small-scale farmers in 1992. Together small-scale farmers, leaders in services and profitable agricultural businesses, are working in harmony with God, the environment, social responsibility and gender equity to be instrumental in the progress of Nicaragua's rural families. Today, Aldea Global has grown to 1,429 active members.*

***About Coffeelands Food Security Coalition***

*The Coffeelands Food Security Coalition is a new, collaborative project of leading companies in the specialty coffee industry that aims to develop, enable and disseminate solutions to seasonal hunger in coffee producing countries.*

***About Mercy Corps***

*Mercy Corps helps people turn the crises they confront into the opportunities they deserve. Driven by local needs, our programs provide communities in the world's toughest places with the tools and support they need to transform their own lives. Our worldwide team in 41 countries is improving the lives of 19 million people. For more information, see [mercy Corps.org](http://mercy Corps.org).*