

Green Your Coffee

By Brad Schmett

You may be surprised to learn that your daily choice of coffee can have a global impact. Here are three simple suggestions to help you make a difference, one cup at a time.

Look for **Fair Trade Certification** <<http://www.transfairusa.org/>> . When you buy coffee that is fair-trade certified, you are guaranteeing that the farmers who grew the beans are paid a fair price, are provided much-needed credit and given technical assistance, such as help in making the transition to organic growing.

Select **organic coffee** <<http://www.ams.usda.gov/NOP/indexNet.htm>> . It is worth the small cost premium to use organic coffee beans, too, which eliminate your exposure, and that of the environment, to hazardous pesticides that are commonly applied to conventional crops.

Look for **shade-grown** <<http://www.shadecoffee.org/>> beans. Coffee was originally a shade-loving plant, and was traditionally cultivated underneath existing trees in a process that protected the native forest. Today, many farmers continue to raise coffee beneath shade trees, and the plants provide sanctuary to important migratory birds, many of which are now threatened. These are many of the same birds that fill American yards with song during the warm months.