

WholeFoods MAGAZINE

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Organic Coffee Sales Soar above Competition

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At the fifth annual coffee-tasting event hosted in New York, NY by the Organic Coffee Collaboration, a market study was released showing that organic coffee sales have taken off in recent years—big time, and in spite of the trend for coffee in general. The market for organic coffee topped \$1.4 billion in North America last year, and grew an average of 21% from 2004 to 2009. The market saw a 4.1% increase last year, impressive for a high-priced item in this recession. Sales of traditional coffee, that ever-present pick-me-up of the masses, have been stagnant over the same time. This while in September, it was reported that coffee bean prices spiked to a 13-year high of \$1.90 per lb.



The report was compiled by Daniele Giovanucci, an agricultural market analyst and respected authority on sustainability, who explains the strength of organic coffee to **WholeFoods**. “Despite difficult economic conditions, the main drivers for growth were customer loyalty to values-based purchasing (the perception that organic is good for them and for the environment and producers) and to a lesser extent, the positive association of certified organic products regarding health or food safety fears,” he says.

Giovanucci, who is the co-founder of the influential Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA), says that coffee has high product visibility, “not only as part of our daily enjoyment, but also because no other cash crop is as important to the economies of developing countries.” He estimates that coffee production involves more than 20 million farm families across the globe, making coffee a bellwether for economic health on both the production and consumption ends. Other statistics from the report included: Organic coffee represents about 5% of total organic sales in the United States; estimates have 2010 organic coffee imports approaching 100 million pounds; and organic coffee is quality coffee, with organic farms winning in five of nine Cup of Excellence taste competitions last year.

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