



SOURCING CASE STUDY: FARMER BROTHERS

Founded in 1912, Farmer Bros. Co. (“Farmer Brothers”) is a leading national roaster, manufacturer, wholesaler and distributor of high-quality coffees, teas, spices and culinary products. Farmer Brothers has a vested interest in the social, environmental and economic changes and developments within the coffee industry. Farmer Brothers has created a strong foundation of sustainability that extends beyond their internal processes to include business partners and vendors within the supply chain.

© Cristina Mittermeier

Sourcing Commitment

Farmer Brothers commits to ethically source 100% of their coffee.

TARGET DATE: 2025

Partners in Sustainable Sourcing

Farmer Brothers partners with organizations such as Expocafe, FNC Antioquia, FNC Norte del Valle, Solidaridad, CRECE, Aldea Global, Lutheran World Relief and COSA.

Business Case

Farmer Brothers believes that the quality, safety, and traceability of the ingredients and components that their partners supply are a key part of their sustainability model. Within the Farmer Brothers Social, Environmental and Economic Development (SEED) Framework, they set out to accomplish their responsibly sourcing goals using social, environmental, and economic pillars. Through SEED, they seek to create a sustainable business that can nurture communities, strengthen their supply chain, create long-term viability, and help manage business risk. With a cross-functional team to oversee their supplier portfolio and procurement practices—including members of their Green Coffee, Procurement, Quality Assurance, Risk Management, and Sustainability departments—Farmer Brothers takes a purposeful approach to responsible sourcing.

Strategy

In addition to Farmer Brothers direct trade volume, a core component of their responsibly sourced portfolio is built on their commitment to purchasing certified and verified coffee. Farmer Brothers offers products under the Fair Trade Certified™, Rainforest Alliance Certified™, USDA organic, and Non-GMO Verified labels. Additionally, they have joined a multitude of collaborative trade and leadership efforts that will bolster the resiliency of their supply chain, including World Coffee Research and the Coalition for Coffee Communities.

Progress

Farmer Brothers reports that their responsibly sourced coffee now constitutes 24 percent of their portfolio, up from 17 percent in 2015.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Farmer Brothers partners with the Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA) to collect baseline data on coffee growers in several communities in Colombia; implementing technical assistance and capacity-building programs based on that data. Then, Farmer Brothers monitors and evaluates the social, environmental, and economic impact of their interventions. With this data-driven action and assessment, Farmer Brothers can see exactly how well their interventions and support programs



are working. Using these methods, they can identify new opportunities to make coffee more sustainable.

Key lessons

- Understand origin limitations and work with partners to find manageable solutions
- Don't expect "one size to fit" every origin approach
- Collect real farm level data from independent parties to verify your approach
- Achieve consensus with coffee growing partners on the right approach to take
- Continually check-in on programs to verify they are achieving the desired results, and adapt methods if needed

Advice to Others

- Set an ambitious target to inspire action
- It takes all teams working together and believing - Sustainability, CSR, Finance, Marketing, Procurement, R&D to create the right environment for positive impact and progress; therefore, the proposition and business case must appeal to all
- Sharing the progress that others have made, does help to encourage businesses and companies to do their part.
- Work with customers to convert conventional supply chains to ethically sourced supply chains
- Invest in coffee origin sustainability to amplify access to ethically sourced coffees
- Engage with the industry to learn and share best practices



“We believe we can advance change within our industry. Working together, we can push the limits of existing standards and realize our collective potential in ways that will make a positive impact on our industry and the world around us.”

–Scott Siers, SVP & GM
