

MAYORGA COFFEE ROASTERS, INC.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYORGA COFFEE ROASTERS' RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFIED COFFEE IS AVAILABLE AT MID-ATLANTIC COSTCO STORES

Coffee Drinkers Can Support Communities and Nature in Latin America by Drinking Certified Coffee

New York, NY – Mayorga Coffee Roasters, a Maryland-based company that works closely with farmers in order to ensure a high-quality, fresh roasted product makes it easy for coffee drinkers to support community improvements in Latin America. Mayorga's Rainforest Alliance Certified coffees are now available at its own retail locations, through its on-line store, and at twenty Costco stores throughout Virginia, Maryland and the surrounding northeast region. Consumers can also sample Mayorga's Rainforest Alliance Certified coffees this summer and fall at its Costco "roadshows."

"We are thrilled that Mayorga Coffee has joined us in our efforts to improve conditions for coffee farmers and workers while helping them protect the priceless tropical nature that surrounds them and the vital natural resources on which their children will depend," said Tensie Whelan, executive director of the Rainforest Alliance.

The Rainforest Alliance, an international nonprofit conservation organization, works in partnership with eight Latin American conservation groups to certify coffee farms, and ensure that they meet a host of rigorous social and environmental standards. The Rainforest Alliance seal verifies that coffee farmers are following sound agricultural practices that protect forests, rivers, soils and wildlife, while being good community neighbors. Rainforest Alliance certification also guarantees that workers have decent wages, living conditions and access to education and health care.

For Martin Mayorga, the founder of Mayorga Coffee Roasters, supporting sustainable coffee farming demonstrates good business and good global citizenship. "I was born in Guatemala and raised in Nicaragua," he explained. "A lot of people in the United States don't realize the work involved in coffee production. Offering Rainforest Alliance Certified coffees gives us a chance to link the consumer to the producer and to show people how much work goes into making a great cup of coffee."

Finca La Bastilla, a certified farm that supplies Mayorga, has made improvements in the past two years that are typical of the transformations promoted by the Rainforest Alliance. Located at the edge of a nature reserve in the mountains of central Nicaragua, La Bastilla's coffee grows in the shade of orchid-draped trees in a misty, high-altitude environment that provides optimal conditions for high-quality beans.

Just a few years ago, La Bastilla's housing was so dilapidated that the owners were hard-pressed to recruit enough workers to pick the farm's coffee, but since entering the Rainforest Alliance certification process, the farm has rebuilt worker housing, started improving such rare amenities as mattresses and blankets, and established an infirmary with a full-time health counselor and regular doctor visits. They are also cooperating with the government to patrol the adjacent nature reserve, plant native trees in deforested areas and protect the streams that run through the farm.

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According to farm administrator Neon Torres, La Bastilla had an over abundance of workers for last year's harvest, most of whom had picked coffee there the year before and were drawn back by the superior wages, living conditions, health care and free meals.

"The changes we made to get certified were very difficult at the beginning. It was hard to convince the workers that they had to do things differently, but now they see that the changes benefit them," said Torres. "We demand quality, and the workers are in agreement with this. We pay more than the other farms in our area and we get better results."

Torres explained that although the changes required by the Rainforest Alliance entailed significant investment, the certification process has made the farm more organized and productive.

Mayorga also offers Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee from farms in El Salvador, Honduras and Brazil that have demonstrated comparable commitments to people and the planet. The owners of the Santa Isabel farm in El Salvador, for example, built a school and church for the nearby community. The Ipanema coffee farm in central Brazil protects vast expanses of *cerrado*, a mix of forest and savannah that is home to a wealth of wildlife and is more threatened than the Amazon rainforest. Farmers who are part of the 350-member Cohorsil coffee cooperative in the mountains of central Honduras are donating a portion of their earnings to support a sports program for local youth and a mobile clinic that delivers basic medical care to more than a dozen rural communities. Such public works are especially important in Honduras and neighboring Nicaragua, which are two of the poorest countries in Latin America.

About the Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance works to protect ecosystems and the people and wildlife that depend on them by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. Companies, cooperatives and landowners that participate in our programs meet rigorous standards that conserve biodiversity and provide sustainable livelihoods.

As the first organization in the world to utilize market forces to conserve tropical forests, launching a sustainable forestry division in 1989 and a sustainable agriculture division in 1991, the Rainforest Alliance pioneered a worldwide certification movement. Nearly 42 million acres are now managed according to the highest standards through the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program. The Rainforest Alliance has recruited over 1,000 companies in this effort and improved the quality of life of some tens of thousands workers and their families. The Rainforest Alliance's sustainable agriculture certification program has certified almost 2,724 farming operations, including plantations and cooperatives, and has benefited over 147,000 farm families in the tropics. For more information, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org/coffee.

About Mayorga Coffee Roasters

Mayorga Coffee Roasters is a family business based in Rockville, Maryland, with eight retail locations in Maryland, Virginia and the D.C. area, and wholesale distribution throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Mayorga Coffee was founded to assist small farmers in developing a "direct to roaster" market so they could create viable and sustainable livelihoods. Customers of Mayorga Coffee enjoy the finest and freshest roasted beans.

For more information about Mayorga Coffee Roasters, their partner farms and the weekend roadshow events, visit their website www.mayorgacoffee.com.

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