



Impact starts at the source

**GLOBAL COFFEE REPORT
SPEAKS TO JUSTIN ARCHER,
HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY AT
SUCAFINA, ABOUT IMPACT
– A NEW RESPONSIBLE
SOURCING PROGRAM IT’S
ROLLING OUT WORLDWIDE.**

Three years ago, when multinational coffee merchant Sucafina looked ahead to determine what sustainability would mean for the business in 2030, it gave birth to a new program that would act as a vehicle for its sustainable goals. The focus? Responsible sourcing.

Sucafina is a farm to roaster coffee company with a family tradition in commodities that dates back to 1905. Now with more than 1200 employees in 32 countries, it is one of the few coffee trading houses in the world focused entirely on coffee. Sucafina’s supply chains span from producer-facing export operations to destination sales offices worldwide.

Its IMPACT program was designed to benefit farmers, traders, and roasters to create a fair, resilient coffee industry as more brands move towards becoming 100 per cent responsibly sourced between 2025 to 2030.

“Primarily, IMPACT is Sucafina’s way of embedding a set of common sustainable practices throughout our global supply chain. At the same time, there is a tremendous growth in the demand for goods that are responsibly sourced and traceable; and IMPACT is going to address those needs,” says Sucafina Head of Sustainability Justin Archer. “Many of our clients are looking to become 100 per cent responsibly sourced by 2025 or 2030. As a trader, we have to react to those signals and help our business partners work towards the fulfilment of their ambitions.”

Through a six-month process, Sucafina researched what really matters to farmer groups, roasters, and non-government organisations it works with. A vision was formed, and that led to the next logical step – embedding a set of responsible practices and clearly communicating them in a homogeneous way to farmers and trade partners.

“Once it became apparent to us that we needed to have this level of ambition and this kind of tool in our business, we were quick to commit the resources and put a team together to work on developing a program that, ultimately, became IMPACT,” Archer explains.

Comparable to certifications like the Rainforest Alliance, IMPACT’s Sustainability Standard was modelled on the Global Coffee Platform’s Sustainability Reference Code. Based on that, Sucafina ensured everything it designs is constructed around industry best practice. To be classified as ‘sustainably sourced,’ all farmers and facilities must comply with 10 Critical Indicators – mostly designed to eliminate human rights abuses – and attain a pass rate of at least 50 per cent on a further 70 improvement indicators, with an agreement to improve the score over time. A third party will audit supply chains every three years during harvest season, and all IMPACT-verified coffee will be fully traceable to the farmer level.

Further than that, Sucafina set five goals around key sustainability challenges that weave a common thread across the industry.

“At the core of IMPACT is compliance, but in addition we have committed to five IMPACT goals, which are: reducing carbon emissions, reducing deforestation, encouraging farmers to adopt regenerative agriculture practices,



Sustainability FEATURE

improving human rights for farm workers, and improving farmer livelihoods across our supply chains,” Archer says.

With supply chains in multiple countries, the company ambitiously plans to address these challenges by going to the heart of the issues in each region and uncovering what needs to change to make progress. While Archer admits this is not a unique ambition, Sucafina’s IMPACT program sets out to build systems to extract tangible data to share with stakeholders, then engage in meaningful conversations around co-investment.

“Sucafina is trying to raise the bar in terms of standards,” Archer says. “If we can come up with measurable, tangible data, which gives stakeholders visibility on the health of their supply chain, then we’ll have a better framework to collaborate on remedial solutions. Our experience is that many roasters want to participate in sustainability but the industry often lacks data points to inform smart project design. When we are able to present factual data about our supply chains, to point out, for instance, what is happening with deforestation, or farmers’ real living incomes, then the engagement with roasters is much higher.”

Collaboration is key for Sucafina in meeting its five sustainability goals. Through discussions with local stakeholders about what needs to be prioritised for each country, the trader wanted to avoid becoming too prescriptive. Archer uses the example of reducing carbon emissions.

“In a place like Uganda, it might be largely based on a program to promote agroforestry – plant more trees on land that’s been denuded of forest as a way to sequester more carbon, and of course, all the benefits that brings,” he explains.

“But the same objective in a place like Vietnam might be about optimising fertiliser usage, because the over-application of fertiliser is actually the main driver of carbon emissions. We want to be very flexible about the paths we take, but we want to arrive at the same destination and measure the same outcomes, which will require some innovation, co-creation, and local adaptability.”

IMPACT was launched in Brazil in June 2022, and those first supply chains are currently being inspected. According to Justin, each of the origins Sucafina works with has

received instructions to begin rolling out the IMPACT program where farmer supply chains have been put in place.

“It takes several months to work on the ground and implement all the practices that are needed, and it will be global Sucafina coverage – so whether it’s in Southeast Asia, East Africa Brazil, or Colombia, we’ll have it rolled out everywhere,” Archer says.

“While we’ve already made some sales of IMPACT-verified coffee in the last couple of months, which is really encouraging, I expect we will see most of the coffee coming online between Q2 and Q3 [in 2023].”

With the compliance part of the IMPACT program up and running, Sucafina is now seeking to effectively define and then publicly share its methodologies for tackling its five ambitious goals.

“I think to properly assess carbon emissions around the world, it needs to be based on good methodology that is simple, repeatable, and easy to roll out in the field everywhere. So that’s a big focus,” Archer says.

“But another focus is credibility and inviting industry partners who are willing to engage with us on sustainability to reach out.”

Archer says that in a way, IMPACT could be viewed as an open source program by working in partnership with other sector players.

“I think an aspect of IMPACT that seems to appeal to the marketplace is the fact that there is a space for co-creating projects around those goals,” Archer says. “The focus for the next six to 12 months is really working hard on the fundamental methodologies, making sure we can roll them out in a similar way with every single sector, to come up with actual data, and then communicate with clients to explain how the program will work in practice.” **GCR**

For more information, visit sucafina.com

