

## Using Blockchain to help Ethiopian coffee farmers

*Moyee is the world's first FairChain coffee brand. Based in Amsterdam, Addis Ababa and now Dublin, the provocative coffee company is on a mission to transform global coffee to a fairer, more transparent industry. Shane Reilly, who brought Moyee to Ireland, talks to ThinkBusiness.*

### What does Moyee Coffee do that's different?

Most of the value-added aspects of Moyee's coffee production take place in Ethiopia, including roasting, and because Moyee pays coffee farmers 20% above the market price, they have access to the country's best coffee. The combination of premium coffee and a progressive social and economic agenda is behind the company's tagline: 'Radically good coffee with radical impact'. A cult coffee brand established in the Netherlands, Killian Stokes and I brought the FairChain movement to Ireland in late 2016.

### Helping the coffee farmer

By roasting our coffee in Ethiopia, we ensure more of the value of coffee stays in the hands of those who contribute most to coffee production. Coffee production is notoriously complex and involves countless middlemen, each taking a piece of the pie along the way. Coffee farmers are always at the short end of the stick. Currently, only 2% of the added value of every cup of coffee ends up in the pockets of coffee producers.

In a similar way to other campaigning brands like Patagonia, we see our social mission as being central to our business. Customers want to know where their products are coming from and they are starting to see through corporate social responsibility box ticking. Our ultimate aim and brand promise is to create a true 50/50 partnership with coffee-producing countries like Ethiopia.

## Why Ethiopia?

Ethiopia is the birthplace of Arabica coffee and grows some of the best coffee in the world. It's also a symbol of many of the problems with the coffee industry.

Despite being Africa's biggest coffee exporter, Ethiopia makes just shy of €800 million per year. At the same time, it has to rely on nearly €3 billion in development aid from the international community. If Ethiopia exported roasted, branded speciality coffee - like Moyee has started to do – it would triple its income overnight and rapidly reduce its reliance on development aid in coffee-producing regions.

A major point we make, however, is that this trade should be based on quality not charity. This is why when we do a free tasting for a potential office customer, we always start with the flavour and taste of our coffee.

## How does FairChain work?

Since early November, we have been running a pilot project in Ethiopia with blockchain pioneers bext360 and the FairChain Foundation to prove more than ever that coffee is capable of leading the way to a more honest, fairer society.

We've been following the progress of our coffee through the supply chain since November. The first step in the chain was real-time payments to Ethiopian farmers for their coffee cherries. This blockchain project will mean all Moyee's coffee will be fully blockchain-traceable from the washing station in Ethiopia to our retail and office customers in Europe.

The next phase of this project is really exciting as you have the ability to use tokens to 'Tip the farmer' directly from a consumer to a farmer's digital wallet in Ethiopia. This has the potential to connect customers and producers like never before.

## What is the USP?

A physical blockchain token - or a scannable code - on a coffee bag or on your take away cup would allow customers to see who their farmer was, what we paid them and how much added value we leave in Ethiopia by roasting there.

This allows a sceptical consumer to see that their coffee is actually fair, from where we said it was and in the top 5% of beans.

The average coffee farmer in Ethiopia earns about €480 per year, even with the premiums we pay,

and we can start to have a radical impact in coffee-growing regions by increasing this to €1,000 per year. Being able to offer our customers blockchain tokens to crowdfund towards an infrastructure project or to help farmers upgrade equipment and improve yields is our ultimate aim and an important part of our FairChain principles.

## Growth

We're on a mission to bring speciality coffee into the workplace and that's our main channel for the company in the next year. We've had great success in 2018 with co-working spaces and recently became the coffee partner for both The Tara Building & DogpatchLabs in Dublin. We've had good traction with tech companies like Groupon, fellow social enterprise FoodCloud and as well as creative agencies.

With a new eCommerce site about to be launched, we're also looking to bring on board more subscribers who join our FairChain Coffee Club and get a fresh coffee delivery each month.

Moyee is also launching a 'One million cups revolution' in May to show exactly the impact of one million cups of FairChain coffee would have in Ethiopia. We think this campaign will bring on board companies who want to contribute to this impact.