



**INSTITUTE FOR  
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**  
PRESS RELEASE

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## **About IATP**

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

# **Grow Ahead connects coffee drinkers and growers in alternative finance model**

**MINNEAPOLIS** – A new approach to social trade finance and crowd funding is offering coffee lovers the chance to support the small-scale farmers that produce their favorite brew. Grow Ahead, led in part by the Minneapolis roaster Peace Coffee, connects coffee growers with critically needed capital, bringing small loans provided by coffee enthusiasts in the United States and Canada to remote, coffee-growing regions around the world.

After oil, coffee is the world's most traded commodity. Globally, over 25 million farmers grow coffee to support themselves and their families. Many of these growers are very small, with a typical Fair Trade coffee farmer growing on less than eight acres of land.

Small-scale farmers around the world often struggle to access the financing needed to operate their farms. All too often, growers must borrow money at exorbitant interest rates that cut into their profits and their ability to meet their families' most basic needs. Grow Ahead aims to counteract this pattern by working in partnership with Cooperative Coffees, a unique coffee importer that is owned by its member-roasters.

"Financing is among the most common barriers for small-scale farmers trying to compete in a global marketplace that favors large-scale agriculture," said JoAnne Berkenkamp of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)—the parent organization of Peace Coffee. "IATP is excited about Grow Ahead's new model as a way to connect the farmers who grow our coffee with a reliable source of capital." IATP has helped kick-off the crowd-funding initiative by making a \$1,000 loan into the program.

At the end of the next growing season (Fall 2013), loans made this winter will be repaid in full, at which time lenders can either collect their funds, reinvest them in the next season or donate them to help sustain the crowd-funding initiative. Throughout the process, all loans are secured through a \$200,000 loan guarantee fund provided by the DOEN Foundation in the Netherlands, part of the consortium of fair trade partners who support this project.

“We have been working directly with coffee farmers since 1996,” said Lee Wallace, Peace Coffee’s CEO. “Part of our mission as a fair trade coffee roaster is to strengthen farmer organizations and to build meaningful connections between coffee drinkers and the growers who fill their cups day after day. Grow Ahead makes that connection tangible—you can provide the critical capital that brings the beans to market.”

Peace Coffee, along with participating roasters throughout North America, is offering an incentive to get involved: A free 12 oz. package of coffee for loans of \$100 or more.

Visit [www.growahead.org](http://www.growahead.org) to learn more about the project, watch a video and make a loan. Grow Ahead welcomes loans of \$25 or more from individuals and organizations.

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