

Root Capital Helps Launch New Trade Association: FAST

A significant sustainable trade “financing gap” for producer groups in developing countries risks retarding the continued growth of the market for sustainable natural products. Recognizing this, Root Capital has banded together with other players in the supply chain to create a “mission driven” trade association focused on maximizing the availability of sustainable trade finance. This new alliance, the [Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade](#), was launched on May 6th, 2007 at the 2007 Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) Conference.

As a participant in the original roundtable discussions around the need for an association, and now as a member of FAST’s Steering Committee, Root Capital looks forward to tackling the work ahead. “We’ve created a strategy that combines critical project work and global advocacy as the first steps towards enhancing the ability of socially oriented lenders to effectively deliver their services to producers throughout the developing world,” says William Foote, Root Capital President.

An international non-profit association, FAST represents financial institutions committed to sustainable production and trade of agricultural goods/handcrafts, and supports the producers who rely on their services. Members will include socially oriented lending institutions, sustainable SME (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) producer organizations, development focused institutions and other stakeholders in the agricultural commodities supply chain.

FAST will address the needs of its members through a variety of projects, including:

- *The Toolbox for Financial Literacy Training* will offer producers a deeper understanding of financial management, risk management and the appropriate use of financial services in building sustainable businesses.
- *The Generic Impact Assessment Tool* will enable members to generate a deeper understanding of the social and environmental impacts of their services.
- *The Consolidated Information Access Point* will connect producers and socially focused lenders through a streamlined information access point.
- *The Guarantee Facility for Social Lending* will be explored as a means of expanding the financial services available to the many “credit worthy” producers who are currently overlooked by traditional banking systems.

Read about the benefits FAST will create for producers, socially oriented lending institutions, stakeholders in the agricultural commodities supply chain, NGOs and socially motivated investors at: http://www.ecologicfinance.org/FAST_Launch.pdf