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Coffee helps Rwandan industry

TODAY'S SUBJECT: Paramount Coffee's support of the Rwandan coffee industry.

THE CAUSE: To help the African country of Rwanda recover from the devastating genocide of 1994 by developing its coffee industry.

BACKGROUND: Lansing-based Paramount, one of the largest coffee roasters and distributors in the Midwest, donates \$1 for every bag of its Fair Trade Rwanda coffee sold to an endowment fund created under Michigan State University's Partnership for Enhancing Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkages (PEARL) program. After the Rwandan genocide, MSU's Institute of International Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development developed a program that linked Rwanda's struggling coffee farmers with Paramount and other members of the coffee industry throughout the world.

RESULTS: The proceeds from the sale of Paramount's Fair Trade Rwanda coffee have funded, for example, the purchase of 400 goats for the rural coffee-growing village of Gashonga. The goats serve as a source of protein through their milk and cheese and, when they die, their meat. The goats also produce fertilizer for coffee growers and -- since the number donated was so sizable -- procreate to sustain the herd.

In addition, Paramount's donations to the PEARL endowment fund also paid an annual certification fee for a coffee-growing cooperative to maintain its Fair Trade status. Paramount's contributions also made it possible for a Rwandan farmer to travel to a Specialty Coffee Association of America Conference on behalf of the farmers of

her washing station.

ON GIVING: "Our goal is for Rwandan farmers to learn the coffee business and start walking on

their own legs. Once you go there and see their needs, you know that every dollar is a big help," says Paramount Chairman and CEO Angelo Oricchio, who was part of a delegation feted in Gashonga to celebrate the goat donation.

INFORMATION: Learn more about the MSU PEARL Program in Rwanda at the university's Institute of International Agriculture's Web site at www.iia.msu.edu/rwanda.html. Information on Fair Trade Rwanda coffee is available at www.paramountcoffee.com.

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