

Study: Coffee industry not great for environment

By Joe Satran, Huffington Post

Every day, coffee fans in cities from San Diego to Stockholm get a dose of self-satisfaction along with their morning caffeine jolt when they order fancy coffee that tastes great and that they assume is helping the environment.

But the recent uptick in coffee connoisseurship hasn't yet translated into a more environmentally friendly coffee industry. Quite the opposite. According to a study published in the latest issue of *BioScience*, the world's coffee farms are now more harmful to the environment than ever.

Specifically, the study's authors, led by Shalene Jha of the University of Texas, found that a far larger share of the world's coffee than ever before is now being grown in direct sunlight, rather than under the shade of a canopy of trees. These full-sun coffee farms are scarcely any different from the large plots of monoculture corn and soybeans that have been vilified by environmentalists over the past several decades.

By contrast, large trees provide a habitat for native wildlife, support soil health, fight erosion and confer side benefits, like fruit and firewood, to farmers. "Our scientists say a certified coffee farm is the next best thing to rainforest," Chris Wille, the head of sustainable agriculture at Rainforest Alliance, said of shaded farms.

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