

COFFEE HOLDING CO INC
Form 10-K
January 27, 2017

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

Form 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended October 31, 2016

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF
1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____.

Commission file number: 001-32491

COFFEE HOLDING CO., INC.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Nevada

11-2238111

(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization) (I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

3475 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, New York

10314

(Address of principal executive offices)

(Zip Code)

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (718) 832-0800

Securities registered under Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class:

Name of each exchange on which registered:

Common Stock, Par Value \$0.001 Per Share NASDAQ Capital Market

Securities registered under Section 12(g) of the Exchange Act: None

Indicate by check mark if registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes
No

Indicate by check mark if registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act.
Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§

232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (17 CFR 229.405) is not contained herein, and will not be contained in, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, or a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer" and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer Accelerated filer Smaller Reporting Company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

The aggregate market value of the voting and non-voting common equity held by non-affiliates of the registrant, computed by reference to the closing price of the registrant's common stock on the NASDAQ Capital Market on April 30, 2016, was \$20,042,945.

As of January 20, 2017, the registrant had 5,863,302 shares of common stock, par value \$0.001 per share, outstanding. Documents incorporated by reference

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Portions of the registrant's proxy statement for the 2016 annual meeting of stockholders to be filed pursuant to Regulation 14A within 120 days after the registrant's fiscal year ended October 31, 2016, are incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K.

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PART I

ITEM 1. BUSINESS

General Overview

Products and Operations. We are an integrated wholesale coffee roaster and dealer in the United States. Our core products can be divided into three categories:

Wholesale Green Coffee: unroasted raw beans imported from around the world and sold to large and small roasters and coffee shop operators;

Private Label Coffee: coffee roasted, blended, packaged and sold under the specifications and names of others, including supermarkets that want to have their own brand name on coffee to compete with national brands; and

Branded Coffee: coffee roasted and blended to our own specifications and packaged and sold under our eight proprietary and licensed brand names in different segments of the market.

Our private label and branded coffee products are sold throughout the United States, Canada and certain countries in Asia to supermarkets, wholesalers, and individually owned and multi-unit retail customers. Our unprocessed green coffee, which includes over 90 specialty coffee offerings, is sold to specialty gourmet roasters.

We conduct our operations in accordance with strict freshness and quality standards. All of our private label and branded coffees are produced from high quality coffee beans that are deep roasted for full flavor using a slow roasting process that has been perfected utilizing our more than thirty years of experience in the coffee industry. In order to ensure freshness, our products are delivered to our customers within 72 hours of roasting. We believe that our long history has enabled us to develop a loyal customer base.

In June of 2016, we acquired substantially all of the assets of Coffee Kinetics LLC (doing business as Sonofresco) through our wholly-owned subsidiary Sonofresco, LLC (“Sonofresco”), including equipment, inventory, customer lists, relationships and accounts payable. In addition to our wholesale green coffee, private label coffee and branded coffee product offerings, we currently sell tabletop coffee roasting equipment to our customers through Sonofresco.

We were incorporated on October 9, 1995 under the laws of the State of Nevada under the name Transpacific International Group Corp (“Transpacific”). On April 16, 1998, Transpacific completed a merger with Coffee Holding Co., Inc., a New York corporation. Upon the consummation of the merger, Coffee Holding Co., Inc. was merged into Transpacific and Transpacific changed its name to Coffee Holding Co., Inc.

Our corporate offices are located at 3475 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, New York 10314. Our telephone number is (718) 832-0800 and our website address is www.coffeeholding.com. The information on our website is not incorporated by reference into this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

Our Competitive Strengths

To achieve our growth objectives described below, we intend to leverage the following competitive strengths:

Positioned to Profitably Grow Through Varying Cycles of the Coffee Market. We believe that we are one of the few coffee companies to offer a broad array of branded and private label roasted ground coffees and wholesale

green coffee across the spectrum of consumer tastes, preferences and price points. While many of our competitors engage in distinct segments of the coffee business, we sell products in each of the following areas:

Retail branded coffee;

Mainstream retail private label coffee;

Specialty retail coffees both private label and branded including organic and fair trade coffees;

Wholesale specialty green and gourmet whole bean coffees including organic and fair trade coffees;

Food service;

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Instant coffees;

Tea; and

Tabletop coffee roasting equipment.

Our branded and private label roasted ground coffees are sold at competitive and value price levels while some of our other branded and specialty coffees are sold predominantly at premium price levels. Premium price level coffee is high-quality gourmet coffee, such as AA Arabica coffee, which sell at a substantial premium over traditional retail canned coffee, while competitive and value price level coffee is mainstream or traditional canned coffee. Because of this diversification, we believe that our profitability is not dependent on any one area of the coffee industry and, therefore, is less sensitive than our competition to potential coffee commodity price and overall economic volatility.

Wholesale Green Coffee Market Presence. As a large roaster-dealer of green coffee, we believe that we are favorably positioned to increase our specialty coffee sales. Since 1998, we have increased the number of our wholesale green coffee customers, including coffee houses, single store operators, mall coffee stores and mail order sellers, by 425% from 150 to 787. We are a charter member of the Specialty Coffee Association of America and one of the largest distributors of Swiss Water Processed Decaffeinated Coffees along the east coast. Our over 40 years of experience as a roaster and a dealer of green coffee allows us to provide our roasting experience as a value added service to our gourmet roaster customers. The assistance we provide to our customers includes training, coffee blending and market identification. We believe that our relationships with wholesale green coffee customers and our focus on selling green coffee as a wholesaler has enabled us to participate in the growth of the specialty coffee market while mitigating the risks associated with the competitive retail specialty coffee environment.

Diverse Portfolio of Differentiated Branded Coffees. We have amassed a portfolio of six proprietary name brands sold to supermarkets, wholesalers and individually owned stores in the United States, including brands for specialty espresso, Latin espresso, Italian espresso, 100% Colombian coffee and blended coffee. In addition, we have entered into a licensing agreement with Del Monte Corporation for the exclusive right to use the S&W and IL CLASSICO trademarks in the United States and other countries approved by Del Monte Corporation in connection with the production, manufacture and sale of roasted whole bean and ground coffee for distribution to retail customers. Our existing portfolio of differentiated brands combined with our management expertise serve as a platform to add additional name brands through acquisition or licensing agreements which target product niches and segments that do not compete with our existing brands.

Management Has Extensive Experience in the Coffee Industry. We have been a family-operated business for three generations. Throughout this time, we have remained strong through varying cycles in the coffee industry and the economy. Andrew Gordon, our President, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and David Gordon, our Executive Vice President – Operations, have worked with Coffee Holding for 34 and 36 years, respectively. David Gordon is an original member of the Specialty Coffee Association of America. We believe that our employees and management are dedicated to our vision and mission, which is to produce high quality products, as well as to provide quality and responsive service to our customers.

Our Growth Strategy

We believe that significant growth opportunities exist by selectively pursuing strategic acquisitions and alliances, targeting the rapidly growing Hispanic market in the United States, increasing penetration with existing customers by adding new products, and developing our food service business. By capitalizing on this strategy, we hope to continue to grow our business with our commitment to quality and personalized service to our customers. We do not intend to compete on price alone nor do we intend to expand sales at the expense of profitability.

Selectively Pursue Strategic Acquisitions and Alliances. We have expanded our operations by acquiring coffee companies, entering into strategic alliances and acquiring or licensing brands, which complement our business objectives and we intend to continue to seek such opportunities.

Grow Our Cafe Caribe and Cafe Supremo Products. We believe the Hispanic population in the United States is the fastest growing and now represents the largest minority demographic in the United States. We believe there is significant opportunity for our Café Caribe and Café Supremo brands to gain market share among Hispanic consumers in the United States. Café Caribe, which has historically been our leading brand by poundage, is a specialty espresso coffee that targets espresso coffee drinkers and, in particular, Hispanic consumers. Café Supremo is a specialty espresso coffee which is priced for the more price sensitive Hispanic espresso coffee drinker.

Further Market Penetration of Our Niche Products. We intend to capture additional market share through our existing distribution channels by selectively adding or introducing new brand names and products across multiple price points, including:

Specialty blends;

Teton tea;

Private label “value” blends;

Specialty instant coffees;

Sales of our tabletop coffee roasting equipment; and

Cold brew.

Develop Our Food Service Business. We plan to expand further into the food service business by developing new distribution channels for our products. Currently, we have a limited presence in the food service market. Food service coffee products tend to have a higher gross profit margin than our traditional supermarket product retail offerings. We have expanded our food service offerings to include instant cappuccinos, tea products and an equipment program for our customers. We attend various annual trade shows held by different buying groups, which provide us a national audience to market our food service products.

Expansion into China and Other Countries in Asia. During 2013, we (i) introduced our Don Manuel brand for sale in the Shanghai market through an exclusive licensing arrangement with the DTS8 Coffee Company, Ltd., (ii) commenced sales of green coffee into China and (iii) continued to build upon prior sales of our S&W coffee in certain countries in Asia. We intend to pursue opportunities to increase sales of our green coffee, private label coffee and branded coffee into certain countries in Asia.

Our Core Products

Our core products can be divided into three categories:

Wholesale Green Coffee: unroasted raw beans imported from around the world and sold to large, medium and small roasters and coffee shop operators;

Private Label Coffee: coffee roasted, blended, packaged and sold under the specifications and names of others, including supermarkets that want to have their own brand name on coffee to compete with national brands; and

Branded Coffee: coffee roasted and blended to our own specifications and packaged and sold under our eight proprietary and licensed brand names in different segments of the market.

Wholesale Green Coffee. The specialty coffee market represents the fastest growing area of our industry. The number of gourmet coffee houses have been increasing in all areas of the United States. The growth in specialty coffee sales has created a marketplace for higher quality and differentiated products, which can be priced at a premium in the marketplace. As a large roaster-dealer of green coffee, we are favorably positioned to increase our specialty coffee sales. We sell green coffee beans to small roasters and coffee shop operators located throughout the United States and carry over approximately 90 different varieties. Specialty green coffee beans are sold unroasted, direct from warehouses to small roasters and gourmet coffee shop operators, which then roast the beans themselves. We sell from as little as one bag (132 pounds) to a full truckload (44,000 pounds) of specialty green

coffee beans, depending on the size and need of the customer. We believe that we can increase sales of wholesale green coffee without an increase in infrastructure as well as without venturing into the highly competitive retail specialty coffee environment. We believe that by utilizing our current strategy we can be as profitable or more profitable than our competitors in this segment by selling “one bag at a time” rather than “one cup at a time.”

Private Label Coffee. We roast, blend, package and sell coffee under private labels for companies throughout the United States and Canada. Our private label coffee is sold in cans, brick packages and instants in a variety of sizes. As of October 31, 2016, we supplied coffee under approximately 26 different labels to wholesalers and retailers. We produce private label coffee for customers who desire to sell coffee under their own name but do not want to engage in the manufacturing process. Our private label customers seek a quality similar to the national brands at a lower cost, which represents a better value for the consumer.

Branded Coffee. We roast and blend our branded coffee according to our own recipes and package the coffee at our facilities in La Junta, Colorado and Brecksville, Ohio. We then sell the packaged coffee under our brand labels to supermarkets, wholesalers and individually-owned stores throughout the United States.

We hold trademarks for each of our proprietary name brands and have the exclusive right to use the S&W, IL CLASSICO brand names in the United States in connection with the production, manufacture and sale of roasted whole bean and ground coffee for distribution at the retail level. For further information regarding our trademark rights, see “Business—Trademarks.”

Each of our name brands is directed at a particular segment of the coffee market. Our branded coffees are:

Cafe Caribe, a specialty espresso coffee that targets espresso coffee drinkers and, in particular, the Hispanic consumer market;

Don Manuel, is produced from the finest 100% Colombian coffee beans. Don Manuel is an upscale quality product which commands a substantial premium compared to the more traditional brown coffee blends. We also use this known trademark in our food service business because of the high brand quality;

S&W, an upscale canned coffee established in 1921 and includes Premium, Premium Decaf, French Roast, Colombian, Colombian Decaf, Swiss Water Decaf, Kona, Mellow’d Roast and IL CLASSICO lines;

Cafe Supremo, a specialty espresso that targets espresso drinkers of all backgrounds and tastes. It is designed to introduce coffee drinkers to the tastes of dark roasted coffee;

Via Roma, an Italian espresso targeted at the more traditional espresso drinker;

Il CLASSICO, an S&W brand espresso product; and

Premier Roasters, retail high end premium whole-bean canisters and food service packs.

Other Products

We also offer several niche products, including:

specialty instant coffees;

tea; and

trial-sized mini-brick coffee packages.

Raw Materials

Coffee is a commodity traded on the Commodities and Futures Exchange subject to price fluctuations. Over the past five years, the average price per pound of coffee beans ranged from approximately \$1.03 to \$3.05. The price for

coffee beans on the commodities market as of October 31, 2016 and 2015 was \$1.64 and \$1.21 per pound, respectively. Specialty green coffee, unlike most coffee, is not tied directly to the commodities cash markets. Instead, it tends to trade on a negotiated basis at a substantial premium over commodity coffee pricing, depending on the origin, supply and demand at the time of purchase. We are a licensed Fair Trade dealer for Fair Trade certified coffee. Fair Trade certified coffee helps small coffee farmers to increase their incomes and improve the prospects of their communities and families by guaranteeing farmers a minimum price of ten cents above the current market price. Our Ohio Facility operated by Generations Coffee Company, LLC (“GCC”) is certified organic by the Organic Crop Improvement Association (“OCIA”). All of our specialty green coffees, as well as all of the other coffees we import for roasting, are subject to multiple levels of quality control.

We purchase our green coffee from dealers located primarily within the United States. The dealers supply us with coffee beans from many countries, including Colombia, Mexico, Kenya, Indonesia, Brazil and Uganda. For the fiscal years ended 2016 and 2015, approximately 43% and 64%, respectively, of all of our green coffee purchases were from five suppliers. One of these suppliers, Rothfos Corporation, accounted for approximately \$8.5 million, or 13%, in 2016, and \$22.1 million, or 21%, in 2015, of our total product purchases. An employee of Rothfos Corporation is one of our directors. We do not have any formalized, material agreements or long-term contracts with any of these suppliers. Rather, our purchases are typically made pursuant to individual purchase orders. We do not believe that the loss of any one supplier, including Rothfos, would have a material adverse effect on our operations due to the availability of alternate suppliers.

The supply and price of coffee beans are subject to volatility and are influenced by numerous factors which are beyond our control. Supply and price can be affected by factors such as weather, politics, currency fluctuations and economics within the countries that export coffee. Increases in the cost of coffee beans can, to a certain extent, be passed on to our customers in the form of higher prices for coffee beans and processed coffee. Drastic or prolonged increases in coffee prices may also adversely impact our business as it could lead to a decline in overall consumption of coffee. Similarly, rapid decreases in the cost of coffee beans may force us to lower our sale prices before realizing cost reductions in our purchases.

We subject all of our private unroasted green coffee to both a pre-shipment sample approval and an additional sample approval upon arrival into the United States. Once the arrival sample is approved, we then bring the coffee to one of our facilities to roast and blend according to our own strict specifications. During the roasting and blending process, samples are pulled off the production line and tested on an hourly basis to ensure that each batch roasted is consistent with the others and meets the strict quality standards demanded by our customers and us.

Our Use of Derivatives

The supply and price of coffee beans are subject to volatility and are influenced by numerous factors which are beyond our control. Historically, we have used, and intend to continue to use in a limited capacity, short-term coffee futures and options contracts primarily for the purpose of partially hedging the effects of changing green coffee prices and to reduce our costs of sales, as further explained in Note 2 of the Notes to the Condensed Consolidated Financial Statements in this Report. In addition, we acquired, and expect to continue to acquire, futures contracts with longer terms, generally three to four months, primarily for the purpose of guaranteeing an adequate supply of green coffee. Realized and unrealized gains or losses on options and futures contracts are reflected in our cost of sales. Gains on options and futures contracts reduce our cost of sales and losses on options and futures contracts increase our cost of sales. The use of these derivative financial instruments has generally enabled us to mitigate the effect of changing prices. We believe that, under normal market conditions, our hedging policies are a necessary component of our business model not only in controlling our cost of sales, but also giving us the flexibility to obtain the inventory necessary to continue to grow our sales while trying to minimize margin compression during a time of historically high coffee prices. However, no strategy can entirely eliminate pricing risks and we generally remain exposed to losses on futures contracts when prices decline significantly in a short period of time, and we would generally remain exposed to supply risk in the event of non-performance by the counterparties to any of our futures contracts. Although we have had net gains on options and futures contracts in the past, we incurred significant losses on options and futures contracts during past reporting periods in 2015. In those cases, our cost of sales increased, resulting in a decrease in our profitability or increase in our losses. Such losses have, and similar losses could in the future, materially increase our cost of sales and materially decrease our profitability and adversely affect our stock price. See “Item 1A – Risk Factors - If our hedging policy is not effective, we may not be able to control our coffee costs, we may be forced to pay greater than market value for green coffee and our profitability may be reduced.” Failure to properly design and implement an effective hedging strategy may materially adversely affect our business and operating results. If the hedges that we enter do not adequately offset the risks of coffee bean price volatility or our hedges result in losses, our cost of sales may increase, resulting in a decrease in profitability or increased

losses. As previously announced, as a result of the volatile nature of the commodities markets, we have scaled back our use of hedging and short-term trading of coffee futures and options contracts, and intend to continue to use these practices in a more limited capacity than we did previously. See “Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk—Commodity Price Risks.”

Trademarks

We hold trademarks, registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, for all six of our proprietary coffee brands and an exclusive license for S&W, IL CLASSICO brands for sale in the United States. Trademark registrations are subject to periodic renewal and we anticipate maintaining our registrations. We believe that our brands are recognizable in the marketplace and that brand recognition is important to the success of our branded coffee business.

Customers

We sell our private label and our branded coffee to some of the largest retail and wholesale customers in the United States (according to Supermarket News). We sell wholesale green coffee to GMCR. Sales to GMCR accounted for approximately \$22.6 million or 29% of our net sales for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2016, and \$63.8 million or 54% for the fiscal year ended October 31, 2015.

Although our agreements with wholesale customers generally contain only pricing terms, our contracts with certain customers also contain minimum and maximum purchase obligations at fixed prices. Because our profits on a fixed-price contract could decline if coffee prices increased, we acquire futures contracts with longer terms (generally three to four months) primarily for the purpose of guaranteeing an adequate supply of green coffee at favorable prices. Although the use of these derivative financial instruments has generally enabled us to mitigate the effect of changing prices, no strategy can entirely eliminate pricing risks or increased losses and we generally remain exposed to losses on futures contracts when prices decline significantly in a short period of time, and we would generally remain exposed to supply risk in the event of non-performance by the counterparties to any futures contracts. See “Our Use of Derivatives.”

Marketing

We market our private label and wholesale coffee through trade shows, industry publications, face-to-face contact and through the use of our internal sales force and non-exclusive independent food and beverage sales brokers. We also use our web site (www.coffeeholding.com) as a method of marketing our coffee products and ourselves.

For our private label and branded coffees, we will, from time to time in conjunction with retailers and with wholesalers, conduct in-store promotions, such as product demonstrations, coupons, price reductions, two-for-one sales and new product launches to capture changing consumer taste preferences for upscale canned coffees.

We evaluate opportunities for growth consistent with our business objectives. In addition, we have established relationships with independent sales brokers to market our products across the United States, in areas of the country where we have not had a high penetration of sales and Canada. We utilize our in-house sales personnel to market our private label brands. We intend to capture additional market share in our existing distribution channels by selectively adding or introducing new brand names and products across multiple price points, including niche specialty blends, private label “value” blends and tea and our own brands, filter packages, and peripheral products.

Charitable Activities

We are also a supporter of several coffee-oriented charitable organizations and during fiscal 2016 and 2015, we donated approximately \$46,000 and \$67,000, respectively, to charities.

For over 20 years, we have been members of Coffee Kids, an international non-profit organization that helps to improve the quality of life of children and their families in coffee-growing communities in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

We are members of Grounds for Health, an organization that educates, screens, and arranges treatment for women who have cancer and live in the rural coffee growing communities of Mexico.

We are a licensed Fair Trade dealer of Fair Trade certified coffee. Fair Trade certified coffee helps small coffee farmers to increase their incomes and improve the prospects of their communities and families. It guarantees farmers a minimum price of \$1.90 per pound.

We are the administrative benefactors to a non-profit organization called Cup for Education. After discovering the lack of schools, teachers, and basic fundamental learning supplies in the poor coffee growing communities of Central and Latin America, “Cup” was established by our employee, Karen Gordon, to help build schools, sponsor teachers, and purchase basic supplies such as books, chalk and other necessities for a proper education.

Competition

The coffee market is highly competitive. We compete in the following areas:

Wholesale Green Coffee. There are many green coffee dealers throughout the United States. Many of these dealers have greater financial resources than we do. However, we believe that we have both the knowledge and the capability to assist small specialty gourmet coffee roasters with developing and growing their businesses. Our over 40 years of experience as a roaster and a dealer of green coffee allows us to provide our roasting experience as a value added service to our gourmet roaster customers. While other coffee merchants may be able to offer lower prices for coffee beans, we market ourselves as a value-added supplier to small roasters, with the ability to help them market their specialty coffee products and develop a customer base. The assistance we provide our customers includes training, coffee blending, market identification as well as providing access to an extensive variety of coffee products and inventory. Because specialty green coffee beans are sold unroasted to small coffee shops and roasters that market their products to local gourmet customers, we do not believe that our specialty green coffee customers compete with our private label or branded coffee lines of business. We believe that the addition of Organic Products Trading Company, LLC (“OPTCO”) and Sonofresco as well as our two green coffee salespersons in South Carolina and Oregon allows us to compete more effectively throughout the country.

Private Label Competition. There are several major producers of coffee for private label sales in the United States. Many other companies produce coffee for sale on a regional basis. Our main competitor is the former retail coffee division of Sara Lee Corporation, which was purchased by Segafredo Zanetti Group in 2006, now known as Massimo Zanetti Beverage. Massimo Zanetti Beverage is larger and has more financial and other resources than we do and, therefore, is able to devote more resources to product development and marketing. We believe that we remain competitive by providing a higher level of quality and customer service. This service includes ensuring that the coffee produced for each label maintains a consistent taste and is delivered on time and in the proper quantities. In addition, we provide our private label customers with information on the coffee market on a regular basis.

Branded Competition. Our proprietary brand coffees compete with many other brands that are sold in supermarkets and specialty stores, primarily in the Northeastern United States. The branded coffee market in both the Northeast and elsewhere is dominated by three large companies: Kraft General Foods, Inc. (owner of the Maxwell House brand), Smuckers (owner of the Folgers Café Bustelo brands) and Massimo Zanetti Beverage which also markets specialty coffee in addition to non-specialty coffee. Our large competitors have greater access to capital and a greater ability to conduct marketing and promotions. We believe that, while our competitors’ brands may be more nationally recognizable, our Café Caribe brand is competitive in the fast growing Hispanic demographic and our S&W brand has been a popular and recognizable brand on the west coast for over 80 years.

Government Regulation

Our coffee roasting operations are subject to various governmental laws and regulations, which require us to obtain licenses relating to customs, health and safety, building and land use and environmental protection. Our roasting facility is subject to state and local air-quality and emissions regulation. If we encounter difficulties in obtaining any necessary licenses or if we have difficulty complying with these laws and regulations, then we could be subject to fines and penalties, which could have a material adverse effect on our profitability. In addition, our product offerings could be limited, thereby reducing our revenues.

We believe that we are in compliance in all material respects with all such laws and regulations and that we have obtained all material licenses and permits that are required for the operation of our business. We are not aware of any environmental regulations that have or that we believe will have a material adverse effect on our operations.

Employees

We have 70 full-time employees. None of our employees are represented by unions or collective bargaining agreements. Our management believes that we maintain good working relationships with our employees. To supplement our internal sales staff, we sometimes engage independent national and regional sales brokers as

independent contractors who work on a commission basis.

ITEM 1A.
RISK FACTORS

An investment in our common stock is subject to risks inherent in our business. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below together with all of the other information included in this report. In addition to the risks and uncertainties described below, other risks and uncertainties not currently known to us or that we currently deem to be immaterial also may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations. The value or market price of our common stock could decline due to any of these identified or other risks, and you could lose all of your investment.

Risks affecting our Company

Because our business is highly dependent upon a single commodity, coffee, any decrease in demand for coffee could materially adversely affect our revenues and profitability. Our business is centered on essentially one commodity: coffee. Our operations have primarily focused on the following areas of the coffee industry:

the roasting, blending, packaging and distribution of private label coffee;

the roasting, blending, packaging and distribution of proprietary branded coffee; and

the sale of wholesale specialty green coffee.

Demand for our products is affected by:

consumer tastes and preferences;

global economic conditions;

demographic trends; and

the type, number and location of competing products.

Because we rely on a single commodity, any decrease in demand for coffee would harm our business more than if we had more diversified product offerings and could materially adversely affect our revenues and operating results.

If we are unable to geographically expand our branded and private label products, our growth will be impeded which could result in reduced sales and profitability. Our business strategy emphasizes, among other things, geographic expansion of our branded and private label products as opportunities arise. We may not be able to implement successfully this portion of our business strategy. Our ability to implement this portion of our business strategy is dependent on our ability to:

market our products on a national scale;

increase our brand recognition on a national scale;

enter into distribution and other strategic arrangements with third party retailers; and

manage growth in administrative overhead and distribution costs likely to result from the planned expansion of our distribution channels.

Our sales and profitability may be adversely affected if we fail to successfully expand the geographic distribution of our branded and private label products. In addition, our expenses could increase and our profits could decrease as we implement our growth strategy.

If our hedging policy is not effective, we may not be able to control our coffee costs, we may be forced to pay greater than market value for green coffee and our profitability may be reduced. The supply and price of coffee beans are subject to volatility and are influenced by numerous factors which are beyond our control. We have used and expect to continue to use to a lesser extent than used previously short-term coffee futures and options contracts for the purpose of hedging the effects of changing green coffee prices. In addition, we have acquired and expect to continue to acquire to a lesser extent than done previously futures contracts with longer terms, generally three to four months,

for the purpose of guaranteeing an adequate supply of green coffee. Realized and unrealized gains or losses on options and futures contracts are reflected in our cost of sales. Gains on options and futures contracts reduce our cost of sales and losses on options and futures contracts increase our cost of sales.

The use of these derivative financial instruments has generally enabled us to mitigate the effect of changing prices. However, no strategy can entirely eliminate pricing risks and we generally remain exposed to losses on futures contracts when prices decline significantly in a short period of time, and we would generally remain exposed to supply risk in the event of non-performance by the counterparties to any futures contracts. Historically, we generally have been able to pass green coffee price increases through to customers, thereby maintaining our gross profits, however, we may not be able to pass price increases through to our customers in the future. Failure to properly design and implement an effective hedging strategy may materially adversely affect our business and operating results. If the hedges that we enter do not adequately offset the risks of coffee bean price volatility or our hedging results in losses, our cost of sales may increase, resulting in a decrease in profitability or an increase in losses. Although we have had net gains on options and futures contracts in the past, we incurred losses on options and futures contracts during some reporting periods in 2015. In those cases, our cost of sales increased, resulting in a decrease in our profitability or an increase in losses. Such losses have, and similar losses could in the future, could materially increase our cost of sales and materially decrease our profitability or increase losses and adversely affect our stock price.

Our revenues and profitability could be adversely affected if our joint ventures or acquisitions are not successful. We have historically utilized acquisitions and joint ventures to grow our business and we intend to continue to seek opportunities for new joint ventures and acquisitions that will be complementary to our business. While we believe that our joint ventures will be successful, losses in our joint ventures or any future joint ventures would hurt our profitability. In addition, we generally will not be in a position to exercise sole decision-making authority regarding our joint ventures. Investments in joint ventures may under certain circumstances, involve risks not present when a third party is not involved, including the possibility that joint venture partners might become bankrupt or fail to fund their share of the required capital contributions. Joint venture partners may have business interests, strategies or goals that are inconsistent with our business interests, strategies or goals and may be, in cases where we have a minority interest, in a position to take actions contrary to our policies, strategies or objectives. Any disputes that may arise between us and our joint venture partners may result in litigation or arbitration that could increase our expenses and could prevent our officers and/or directors from focusing their time and effort exclusively on our business strategies. In