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Promoting and Supporting Fair Trade

Most organisations buy tea, coffee, sugar, and biscuits. All are available fairly traded. Buying these products is one way of showing that your organisation can help make a difference. The Fairtrade Mark is a guarantee of a fair deal for farmers and workers in some of the poorest countries of the world. It also sends out a clear message that the present unjust global trade rules are not acceptable. The Fair Trade Foundation has launched a workplace awareness campaign – their suggestions include:

- Agree to buy products carrying the Fairtrade Mark, <http://eaclink.info/?TQIFI>
- Find out where to buy Fairtrade products. Many office supply companies now stock Fairtrade products. Check out local stores, fair trade outlets such as Traidcraft shops and the Fair Trade Foundation website (see Resources). A local Fair Trade Group may also be able to help.
- Hold a tea and coffee tasting event or a chocolate and snack sampling session for an afternoon break.
- Implement a Fair Trade policy in your workplace and publicise it. Use Fair Trade products at external events too.

If you're unsure about any aspects of this issue, check out the 'myths of fairtrade', <http://eaclink.info/?TQIFI>.

Why Fairtrade?

Global trade rules are often unfair to the poor and marginalized and skewed towards benefiting rich countries. In contrast the fair trade movement seeks to reconnect producers with consumers, creating a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect.

Fairtrade guarantees farmers and producer organisations a fair and stable price for their products that covers their costs and enables them to support their families and invest in their businesses, local education, health and their communities for the future. It reduces some of the risks, including loss of livelihood, and producers are expected to take into account environmental sustainability too.

The momentum for change is growing. Consumer pressure is driving more retailers to stock products carrying the FT Mark. There are also a broader range of goods that are fairly traded but have not applied to use the logo. Over 220 UK cities, towns, parishes had been awarded FT status by spring 2007. This is reviewed annually and needs more organisations to start using these items so your efforts help locally too. Similar programmes now cover schools, universities and places of worship. There is an annual Fairtrade Fortnight campaign.

Making the switch to using Fairtrade sends a signal that your organisation is committed to principles of fairness, equality and social justice. It doesn't matter how small you are, changes you make help benefit the lives of farmers and producers across the developing world.

What can we do?

- Convert your workplace to Fairtrade. Visit www.fairtrade.org.uk for updated information on how to make the switch.
 - Make a commitment to these products in your purchasing policy (this may be called a **Green Housekeeping policy**, <http://eaclink.info/?UESPO>).
 - Tell others what you do – publicise it in your newsletters etc
- Encourage other groups or partners in your networks to become Fairtrade

Confused about the terminology? Is it Fair Trade or Fairtrade?

Essentially Fairtrade refers to the mark and the associated campaigning activities, while fair trade is the general concept/political issue, including Fairtrade products, ethical trading, changing World Trade Organisation rules etc.

So if you are dealing with anything that refers to the Fairtrade Mark itself, the Fairtrade Foundation, Fairtrade Boroughs or specific Fairtrade-certified products, 'Fairtrade' should be spelled as one word with a capital F.

What is the Fairtrade Mark about?

The FAIRTRADE Mark is an independent consumer label which appears on products as a guarantee that farmers and producers in the developing world are getting a better deal.

The Fairtrade Foundation is the independent body in the UK that awards the FAIRTRADE Mark to products that meet Fairtrade standards. These cover education, healthcare, housing, fair pay, safe working conditions and other welfare issues that avoid exploitation of workers. For example, on certified tea plantations in India it means that good standards of social and economic welfare are in place for tea pickers and their families. The Foundation is part of an international network of organisations setting Fairtrade standards and certification.

A YouGov survey (2007) found only 17% of UK workers say their companies are currently serving Fairtrade products at work. 38% say they think their workplace should make products carrying the Fairtrade Mark available to staff at work.

"If trade undermines life, narrows it or impoverishes it, then it can destroy the world. If trade enhances life, then it can better the world" The late Dame Anita Roddick (Fairtrade Foundation newsletter, spring 2007)

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Myths and confusions about Fairtrade

There are still some people who think it's all too difficult or too expensive. This page dispels a few myths you may hear.

Myth: *Fairtrade items are hard to find.*

Fact: In the UK Fairtrade sales are doubling every two years. With over 2,500 Fairtrade certified products it's easier than ever to help make a difference. An updated list of products is available on the Fairtrade Foundation website, www.fairtrade.org.uk/products.htm. This includes information on suppliers and retailers. Local Fairtrade groups will have information on availability in your area – many produce listings or directories.

Myth: *Fairtrade products are too costly*

Fact: A small price premium is payable to local producers as a guarantee and buffer against fluctuating world trade prices. As sales increase, many FT products are cost-competitive. Retailers are sometimes to blame for inflated prices too. Buying in bulk (e.g. tea and coffee for offices) is generally more economic.

Myth: *Most Fairtrade products are transported by air*

Fact: Fresh flowers are the only Fairtrade product to be routinely transported by air. Most Fairtrade certified products are shipped not flown – per mile, international shipping is less intensive than trucking within the UK.

Myth: *Fairtrade tea and coffee just doesn't taste so good*

Fact: This was a fair criticism levelled at some of the early brands but is certainly no longer true. High quality products are widely available and winning food awards. People still unconvinced? Arrange a Fairtrade tea and coffee break with a selection of different products or a 'blind' tasting session and see if people change their minds.