

What is Fair Trade?

This week is Fair Trade Fortnight in the UK and World Fair Trade Day is in May. Maybe you buy products with a Fair Trade label or from a Fair Trade shop. But what does 'Fair Trade' mean and how and when did this movement start?

The Fair Trade movement is about 60 years old. It started with NGOs buying handicrafts from developing countries. This was useful extra money for women who often had no other way of making money. Food products were next, and now there are thousands of fairly-traded products including clothing, flowers and even footballs. Thousands of Fair Trade shops and supermarkets around the world now sell these goods and there are more than 1 million small-scale producers and workers in over 50 countries in developing countries involved in Fair Trade.

Coffee is the best-known Fair Trade product and after oil it is the world's most valuable product on the world market. It is difficult for small-scale farmers to reach international markets. They cannot control the price for their produce as the buyers decide this. However, when prices fall, coffee growers can get less money for their coffee than it cost them to grow it. Fair Trade guarantees a minimum price so that farmers know how much they will get for their produce and can plan for the future.

All Fair Trade organisations try to reduce poverty through trade for small-scale producers. The key guarantees are that the farmers will get a fair price which the producers are happy with. If the price falls in the international market, the producers will still get the guaranteed price. They also have a long-term agreement with the buyers, so they don't need to worry if they will sell their produce or not. Another guarantee is that they will have safe and healthy working conditions and equal pay for men and women. They usually receive some extra money to help the local community and they can spend this on anything that will help the community, such as health or education. For example, they might decide to build a well for the village or a nursery school.

Fair Trade products sometimes cost a bit more, but consumers worldwide spent £1.6 billion on Fair Trade products in 2007 and this is growing every year, so many people are happy to pay a little extra to help the millions of people who depend on small-scale farming for their food and wages.

1 Work in pairs. Think about how different trade is for small-scale farmers and large companies and exchange ideas with your partner.

2 Read the article and decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F). Circle the correct statements and correct those that are false.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1 The first Fair Trade product was food. | T/F |
| 2 You can only buy Fair Trade products in Fair Trade shops. | T/F |
| 3 With Fair Trade, men and women earn the same money. | T/F |
| 4 Fair Trade products cost the same as other products. | T/F |

3 Here are some numbers from the article. Match them with the correct information. Then read the article quickly to check your answers.

1 million	thousands	60	millions	2007	50	1.6 billion
-----------	-----------	----	----------	------	----	-------------

- The Fair Trade movement is _____ years old.
- There are _____ of fairly-traded products.
- There are more than _____ small-scale producers in over _____ countries involved in Fair Trade.
- Consumers worldwide spent £ _____ on Fair Trade products in _____ .
- Many people are happy to pay a little extra to help _____ of small-scale producers.

4 There are some adjectives in the text. Complete the table with the comparatives.

adjective	comparative	adjective	comparative
fair		small	
expensive		valuable	
difficult		useful	

5 Now complete the sentences with the correct comparative from the table above.

- 1 Is it _____ for small-scale farmers than large-scale farmers to reach international markets?
- 2 Are Fair Trade products _____ than other products?
- 3 Is oil _____ than coffee on the world market?
- 4 Is it _____ to pay women the same wages as men than to pay men more?
- 5 Is it _____ for the farmers to have a long-term agreement with the buyer than to have a short-term agreement?
- 6 In developing countries are the farms usually _____ than in richer countries?

Now ask and answer these questions with your partner.

6 Match the words from the box to their partner from the text.

small-scale nursery reduce long-term key working local reach

- 1 _____ international markets
- 2 _____ guarantees
- 3 _____ community
- 4 _____ farmers
- 5 _____ poverty
- 6 _____ conditions
- 7 _____ agreement
- 8 _____ school

7 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- What was the most interesting or surprising thing you learned about Fair Trade from this text?
- Is there a Fair Trade movement in your country?
- Are there any Fair Trade shops in your country or town?
- Would you be happy to pay a little more for Fair Trade products?

Glossary

NGOs (noun) - non-governmental organisations: organisations that are not part of the government, but may work with government departments

developing countries (noun) - developing countries are poor and do not have many industries

handicrafts (noun) - beautiful things made by people using their hands

valuable (adj) - worth a lot of money

reach (verb) - to arrive at somewhere

key (adj) - very important

guarantee (noun) - a promise that something will happen

community (noun) - the people who live in an area

well (noun) - a deep hole that is dug in the ground to provide a supply of water

nursery school (noun) - a school for children between the ages of three and five

wages (noun) the money you earn for working