

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

May 2010



The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of peace.



Fair Trade Products – Change Lives

I can't believe that we have been so blessed! Most of us reading this have lived the "good life." Oh sure, some of life's ups and downs have crossed our paths, but we have had the ability to go on, and thank God for our lives each day.

Not so for all human beings, for some living on our Earth is a horrible ordeal. The sorrows of human exploitation are just as much a reality for many, as the "good life" is for us. So often, we are helpless to impact any real change to stop the misery of many others. However, we can change the lives of some, by promoting and using a socially responsible system of trade that prioritizes the needs of poor human beings rather than the needs of conventional "free trade" that often leaves farmers, pickers and artists living in extreme poverty. World market prices often create conditions that have led to: extremely low wages, illegal child labor, and sometimes slave labor, in addition to the use of unsustainable environmental practices.



We can bring visibility to the world's producers that provide us with "Fair Trade Products." As a consuming society, we make numerous purchases, but rarely do we ask the questions:

- who produced this food/item?
- under what conditions was it grown/created?
- was the producer adequately compensated for his/her efforts?

Coffee Shop

Why buy Fair Trade....

Fair trade products have undergone a careful monitoring process which ensures that the following criteria have been met:

- the producer receives a fair price or wage;
- the working environment is safe and democratically run; and
- no child labor was utilized.

May 8th is World Fair Trade Day



On this day, we want to remind ourselves of what we can do to support the well-being of families, communities and the Earth. We can take steps to ensure that farmers, laborers, and artists are paid a living wage, and that products we purchase aren't made in sweatshops, processed by exploited laborers or, especially, not by child slave labor. By purchasing "Fair Trade Certified" items, you are promoting both social responsibility and environmental sustainability. The products consumers then enjoy means that everyone wins with Fair Trade

What are some products that we can make a small difference by purchasing? Fair Trade Certified (FTC) food products most often are coffee, sugar, cocoa, tea, chocolate, wine, rice, bananas, ice cream, olive oil, and body care products. These items are available at many retailers: Costco, Smith's Kroger Brand, Safeway/Vons, Sam's Club, Target, Trader Joe's, Wal-Mart, and Whole Foods Market. Look for the Fair Trade Logo on the products.

A few examples:

- **Chocolate:** What a treat for us, but for thousands of child cocoa laborers, that work to help support families on the West Coast of Africa, it is no treat. But we can make choices that will help these children. Fair Trade Certified Chocolate is available for us to purchase here in America. It does cost a little more, but for the luxury of a good piece of chocolate, we can choose to help farmers get a fair price for their cocoa, stop abusive child and forced labor, and still enjoy our treat.
- **Ice Cream Treats:** Ben & Jerry's has announced that it's going fully Fair Trade across its entire world, providing yummy Fair Trade Certified chunks and swirls. Ben & Jerry's Ice Creams are available in many grocery stores. Look for the Fair Trade Logo on chocolate you purchase and you are making a difference from your small corner of the world.



Cecilia Appianim of Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union, co-owners of Divine Chocolate
Photo by Sophi Tranchell



Some brilliant ideas...

On May 8th or thereabouts, have a Fair Trade Tasting Party!

- ▶ How about a Coffee/Tea tasting party--with all the enhancements that flavor it up.
- ▶ How about a Banana Split party! Fair Trade Bananas and Ice Cream (Ben and Jerry's).
- ▶ How about a Wine and Cheese party with Fair Trade Certified wine.

Many trading partnerships are active within a network of producers, importers, wholesalers, certifiers, labelers, retailers, and consumers who are trying to right the injustices that have taken place for many years.

For individuals and communities of producers, participation in Fair Trade has directly led to survival, dignity, respect, and improved lives. Participants often credit Fair Trade for helping them eat adequately, access health care, and send kids to school.

Fair Trade Resource Network

For more information, go to: www.transfairusa.org
www.fairtraderesource.org
www.notforsalecampaign.org
www.stopenslavement.org
www.crs.org



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