What is the Future of Fair and Sustainable Coffee | Transforming the Tea Industry | La FEM: Empowering Women Farmers | Sustainability in Fair Trade Crafts

FOR A BETTER WORLD

ISSUES & CHALLENGES IN FAIR TRADE

THIS IS A FREE PUBLICATION

ISSUE 7 FALL 2013

FAIR WORLD PROJECT
www.fairworldproject.org

Stop Monsanto and Take Back our Food Supply

Trade Policy Reform Corner: Fair Trade & Immigration and Land Grabs

Cultivating an Authentic Fair Trade

REFERENCE GUIDE TO FAIR TRADE CERTIFIERS & MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

Fair trade certifiers and membership organizations all agree on these basic fair trade principles:

- ✓ Long-term direct trading relationships
- ✓ Prompt payment of fair prices and wages
- ✓ No child, forced or otherwise exploited labor
- ✓ Workplace non-discrimination, gender equity and freedom of association
- ✓ Safe working conditions and reasonable work hours
- ✓ Investment in community development projects
- ✓ Environmental sustainability
- ✓ Traceability and transparency

Fair Trade validation systems can be grouped into two major categories. The table shows their main attributes and several prominent examples.

3rd Party Inspection & Certification	3rd party certifiers field-inspect growing and processing, possibly trading operations and compare performance against a set of FT standards.	Fairtrade America; IMO's Fair for Life; FUNDEPPO's Small Producer Symbol; Agricultural Justice Project *FWP does not recognize FTUSA as a credible fair trade certifier
Membership Organizations	Organization evaluates FT commitment and practice of companies against its membership criteria. No systematic verification of conditions along the value chain.	Fair Trade Federation (FTF); World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO); Domestic Fair Trade Association; Cooperative Coffees

This chart summarizes the logos of several certification programs and membership organizations. A product sold by a company that is a member of a fair trade membership organization may not have gone through third-party certification; conversely, a product certified as "fair trade" under a certification program does not mean that the company that produces the certified product is a dedicated fair trade company.

We acknowledge that other socially responsible systems are available. While they certify for many of the same standards, they do not embody all fair trade principles.

*Fair World Project (FWP) no longer recognizes Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) as a credible fair trade label. For small producer organizations (i.e. traditional fair trade producers), FTUSA recognizes the Fairtrade International (FLO) standards and has not developed their own. In this case, we believe that brands should work with FLO directly. For other standards, such as farmworkers on large farms and unorganized producers, FTUSA has developed their own standards, but has ignored repeated requests to dialogue with the larger movement to address serious concerns, for example concerns from small coffee producers that opening up fair trade to large coffee farms will have a detrimental effect on their own operations.

For more information on Fair Trade Certifiers and Membership Organizations visit www.fairworldproject.org

Contributors in this Issue

JUANA VILLAREYNA ACUÑA

is an agronomist from the rural community of El Sontule, Nicaragua with a certification in Gender and Development with an emphasis on Economy. She has spent twelve years working with Fundación Entre Mujeres (La FEM), a feminist organization that works with rural women to facilitate multidimensional empowerment processes through ideological, political, social and economic aspects.

SEN. MARALYN CHASE

D-Shoreline represents the 32nd Legislative District of Washington state which includes Shoreline, Lynnwood, Edmonds, Woodway, Mountlake Terrace and north Seattle. Senator Chase is Co-Chair of Yes on 522, the campaign to label genetically engineered foods in Washington.

MATT EARLEY

is a co-founder of Just Coffee Co-op where he is the Farmer Relations and Outreach Coordinator. When not wandering around coffee country, Matt can often be found in Madison, WI hanging out with his family and creating general chaos. He is a bona fide Kentucky Colonel and has the papers to prove it.

MANISH GUPTA

is the founder and CEO of Handmade Expressions, a wholesale fair trade company that distributes sustainable, eco-friendly crafts handmade by its artisan partners in India. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Fair Trade Federation, is a member of the Social Venture Network, and is actively engaged in sustainability conferences and workshops around the U.S.

SUE KASTENSEN

is the founder and Director of Fair Shake, a Web-based prisoner reentry resource center. She is a co-founder of Fair World Project and now serves as an advisor. She created Sun Dog Hemp Body Care and serves on the Board of Directors for the Domestic Fair Trade Association.

KAREN HANSEN-KUHN

is the International Program Director at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. She has been working on economic justice since the beginning of the NAFTA debate, focusing especially on bridging U.S. and developing country perspectives on trade, food and economic policy.

JOANN LO

is the Executive Director of the Food Chain Workers Alliance. She helped start the Garment Worker Center which organized garment workers in Los Angeles, CA in a successful campaign against retailer Forever 21, memorialized in the Emmy-winning documentary "Made in L.A." In 2005, Joann joined Enlace and became a Co-Director.

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DAVE MURPHY
is the founder of Food Democracy Now!, a grassroots movement of more than 650,000 American farmers and citizens dedicated to reforming food and agriculture policy. In 2007, he filmed Barack Obama's famous promise to label GMOs. Dave's writing has appeared in The Nation, Huffington Post and New York Times.

PHYLLIS ROBINSON
is the Education and Campaigns Manager at Equal Exchange, a worker-owned fair trade cooperative selling coffee, tea, chocolate and bananas from small farmer cooperatives throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia. She began working at Equal Exchange eight years ago as the Producer Relations Coordinator and is now co-leading a new initiative, Principle Six Cooperative Trade Movement.

JEREMY SEIFERT
is a filmmaker, activist and father of three, whose debut film, "DIVE!," has won at twenty-two festivals worldwide, establishing him as a storyteller with heart and humor. His second film, "GMO OMG," tells the hidden story of the takeover of our food supply by giant chemical companies. Jeremy lives in North Carolina with his wife, Jen, and their children, Finn, Scout and Pearl.

CHRIS TRETER
is the founder and President of Higher Grounds Trading Co., Michigan's 100% fair trade and organic coffee roasting company. He is also a co-founder of On the Ground, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting farming families around the world.

LEE WALLACE
is the Queen Bean of Peace Coffee, a fair trade organic coffee company based in Minneapolis, MN. She has served on the Board of Directors for Cooperative Coffees, the Fair Trade Resource Network and United Students for Fair Trade, as well as on the Roaster Advisory Council for TransFair USA.

Additional Contributors:
Cosmic Egg Studios
COSMIC EGG STUDIOS cosmicegg.com
Cosmic Egg Studios is an eco-friendly design firm that services many of the like-minded companies in this industry.

Letter from the Director

It is hard to imagine a time before Monsanto meant anything to me, but, like for many of you, there was that time. A cartel of just six huge chemical companies (Monsanto, Dow, Dupont, Bayer, BASF, Syngenta) now dominates the agricultural seed and chemical input markets. *(See: http://www.panna.org/issues/pesticides-profit/chemical-cartel)*. Monsanto has come to symbolize for many of us the antithesis of fair trade. While their mission is to sell more chemicals and to control a larger and larger share of the agriculture sector, the mission of fair trade is to give farmers control of agriculture, through values like democratic organization and capacity building, and to farm sustainably, minimizing the use of inappropriate technology including chemicals that pollute our land, water, food and bodies.

More recently, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have taken center stage. GMOs touch on many of the principles of fair trade and the values of those advocating for a more just economy. Most GMOs are bred to be herbicide-resistant, meaning farmers buy and spray more and more weed killer on our food crops. The increased use of herbicide has harmful effects on the environment, as well as on farmers and workers who are directly engaged in applying the chemicals. In exchange, farmers must give up their rights to the traditional practice of saving seeds for next year's crop, as the GMO technology is patented and must be bought year after year. Consumers are denied a basic level of transparency, as foods containing GMO ingredients are not labeled in the United States, despite widespread support for such labeling. Though there is mounting evidence that GMOs may have negative health effects on those who consume them, many of us are just as concerned about the farmers who are compelled to give up long-held agricultural traditions in exchange for expensive, input-intensive technology, as well as the farmworkers who often bear the brunt of increased chemical exposure.

The feature articles in this issue focus on GMOs and social justice, covering, for example, the incredible power Monsanto has over our food supply and political system, how GMOs affect all of us as consumers and producers, and the fight for transparency in food labeling.

The issues go deep and the first step is increased understanding, which leads to engaged action and advocacy. I feel confident that, as we begin to articulate and address these problems and win fights for basic transparency in labeling, we will also begin to see the way towards a food and agricultural system that works for consumers, farmers and workers – one that is not just at the service of Monsanto and friends.

To a day when all trade is fair,

Dana Geffner

Dana Geffner
Executive Director

Distribute Fair World Project's For A Better World

"For a Better World" is a free semi-annual publication that features articles from a variety of perspectives, including farmers, farm workers, consumers and committed fair trade brands. FWP helps consumers decipher fair trade certification schemes and is an excellent educational resource. Distribute "For a Better World" for free at your business or organization. Order now by visiting our website at: **www.fairworldproject.org**

Letter to the Editor

Tell Us What You Think. We would like to hear your thoughts.
Send letters to: Fair World Project - PO Box 42322, Portland, OR 97242
or email comments to editor@fairworldproject.org. Include your full name, address, daytime phone and email. The editorial team may shorten and edit correspondence for clarity.

Mission:
Fair World Project (FWP) promotes organic and fair trade practices and transparent third-party certification of producers, manufacturers and products, both here and abroad. Through consumer education and advocacy, FWP supports dedicated fair trade producers and brands and insists on integrity in use of the term "fair trade" in certification, labeling and marketing.

Why FWP Exists:

- Conscious consumers armed with informed purchasing power can create positive change and promote economic justice, sustainable development and meaningful exchange between global South and North
- The Organic movement, with the advent of federal regulations, has lost sight of the social criteria of fair prices, wages and working conditions.
- Family farmers and farmworkers in the developing world are often impoverished by unfair volatile prices, wages and working conditions.
- North American and European family farmers and farmworkers face similar challenges, and thus we need to bring fair trade criteria home with "Domestic Fair Trade."
- Existing certifiers and membership organizations vary in their criteria and philosophy for the qualification of products and brands for designation as "fair trade." FWP will work to keep the term "fair trade" from being abused and diluted.
- FWP cuts through politics in the world of fair trade in order to catalyze the rapid expansion of the universe of fair trade products, in particular promoting certification to rigorous standards that give consideration to the local context of a project.

The Fair Trade Movement:
The fair trade movement that FWP is part of shares a vision of a world in which justice and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures and practices, both at home and abroad, so that everyone through their work can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood.

For more Information on Fair World Project please visit www.fairworldproject.org

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John Klossner and inspired by Food Democracy Now's "I Stand With Farmers" image seen on page 8

Fair Trade Timeline

Contributed by the Fair Trade Resource Network (www.ftrn.org)

1946 — Edna Ruth Byler imports needlecrafts from low-income women in Puerto Rico, and displaced people in Europe, laying the groundwork for Ten Thousand Villages, North America's first fair trade organization

1948 — Church of the Brethren establishes SERRV, North America's second fair trade organization, to import wooden clocks from German refugees of WWII

1968 — United Nations Conference on Aid and Development (UNCTAD) embraces "Trade not Aid" concept, bringing fair trade into development policy

1969 — Oxfam and other European humanitarian organizations open the first World Shop in the Netherlands to sell crafts, build awareness and campaign for trade reform

1972 — Ten Thousand Villages opens their store, the first fair trade retail outlet in North America

1986 — Equal Exchange is established as the first fair trade cooperative in North America, importing coffee from Nicaragua as a way to make a political statement with a high-quality, household item

1988 — Farmers and activists launch the first fair trade certification system, Max Havelaar, in the Netherlands to offer third-party recognition and a label for fair trade products

1989 — International Fair Trade Association (IFAT), now WFTO, is established by trade pioneers as the first global fair trade network

1994 — Fair Trade Federation

NEWS IN BRIEF

For more FWP News:
www.fairworldproject.org/newsroundup

Hope for Hemp

Hemp, also referred to as industrial hemp, refers to the low-THC varieties of Cannabis, grown for seed and fiber. Hemp is cultivated legally in just about every industrialized country – except the U.S. After years of advocacy and education by hemp businesses and associations, sustainable farming organizations and concerned citizens, Rep. Jared Polis's (D-CO) hemp amendment to the 2013 Farm Bill passed with strong bipartisan support. Unfortunately however, the Farm Bill itself did not pass. Congress will continue to consider the Farm Bill, the primary agricultural and food policy tool of the federal government, and other pending hemp legislation, later this year.

To learn more, get involved and stay up-to-date, go to www.VoteHemp.com.

Domestic Fair Trade in the Marketplace: Farmer Direct Co-op

Farmer Direct is a cooperative of sixty organic family farms on the Canadian Prairies and the first organization to be domestic fair trade certified to the Agriculture Justice Project Social Justice Standard. Farmer Direct Co-op bulk products are now available throughout the U.S. and Canada at Whole Foods Markets. Farmer Direct Co-op and Whole Foods Market's partnership represents an important step forward in the introduction of farmer-directed domestic fair trade.

Read more about Farmer Direct Co-op at www.FarmerDirect.coop.

2014 Named International Year of Family Farming by UN General Assembly

The International Year of Family Farming 2014 is an initiative promoted by the World Rural Forum and supported by over 360 civil society and farmers' organizations. This worldwide celebration, declared by the United Nations General Assembly, aims to become a tool to stimulate active policies for sustainable development of agricultural systems for farmer and fishing families, communal units, indigenous groups and cooperatives. All this work is being done from the perspective of effectively combating poverty, and hunger and the search for rural development based on respect for the environment and biodiversity.

Read more at www.FamilyFarmingCampaign.net.

Dean's Beans Receives "Nobel Prize for Business"

Dean's Beans, the Massachusetts-based fair trade pioneer and organic roaster was recently honored by the Business for Peace Foundation. Based in Oslo, Norway, the foundation's panel of Nobel Laureates awards ethical businesses with what is commonly known as the "Nobel Prize for Business." Included on the panel is Dr. Muhammed Yunus, creator of the Grameen Bank microloan system.

"To me, the award is a vindication of social justice in trade, so it belongs to all the dedicated fair traders out there, not the marketers, the 'tradewashers' or the hangers-on," says Dean Cycon, founder and CEO of Dean's Beans. "Congratulations to everyone in the movement who has forsaken profit as usual to make meaningful change in the world!"

Of the eighty Business for Peace Foundation nominees from fifty countries and five Honorees, Dean was the one Honoree from the U.S. Great work, Dean!

Read more about the Business for Peace Foundation at www.BusinessforPeace.no and check out Dean's Beans at www.DeansBeans.com.

Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

Over 1,800 people have been killed in preventable factory fires and building collapses in the Bangladesh garment industry since 2005. Most of the 5,000 garment factories in Bangladesh are not up to fire and building safety codes. Civil society organizations have put forth a National Action Plan on Fire Safety (NAP) to improve fire safety in Bangladesh.

Forty companies, including Abercrombie & Fitch, H&M, PVH (Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein) and SeanJohn, have now joined together in the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. However, companies like Gap and Wal-Mart have refused to join.

Take action and urge Gap to join the accord at www.GapDeathTraps.com.

FWP World Fair Trade Day 2013 Sweepstakes Winner: Congratulations to Kim A. from FL!

Fair World Project's 2nd Annual World Fair Trade Day (WFTD) Joint Promotion was a huge success, with over 850 natural product retailers around the country participating in promoting our partner brands, all of which are dedicated to fair trade throughout their supply chains. In collaboration with Intrepid Travel, FWP hosted a fair trade vacation sweepstakes with over 7,100 entries, and we are pleased to announce that Kim A. from Sarasota, FL is the winner. Kim and her husband will be traveling to Peru with FWP this October to visit cooperatives that sell to our partner brands Alter Eco and Equal Exchange.

Thank you to everyone who participated and to our partner brands Alaffia, Alter Eco, Divine Chocolate, Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, Equal Exchange, Farmer Direct Co-op and Maggie's Organics.

Don't miss next year's sweepstakes! Sign up for the FWP mailing list at www.FairWorldProject.org.

First Round of Negotiations for New "Free Trade" Agreements

In July, the U.S. hosted the first round of negotiations for a new "free trade" policy, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), also known as the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA). Like other free trade agreements, this agreement between the U.S. and the European Union raises both questions about the transparency of negotiations and concerns that public health and the environment will be undermined by its provisions.

Learn more at www.FairWorldProject.org/overview/free-trade-agreements/

Sign up for FWP's enewsletter at www.fairworldproject.org

1997 Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO) is formed

1999 ir Trade Federation is rmed as the first network fair trade organizations North America

2002 FLO launches the international "FairTrade" certification mark

2004 TransFair USA begins certifying fair trade coffee using the TransFair USA label

2006 The Institute for Marketecology (IMO) begins their "Fair for Life" certification program

2007 Producers form national and regional fair trade associations across Asia, Latin America and Africa

2008 Fair trade retail sales top $1 billion in the U.S. and $2.5 billion worldwide.

2010 Domestic Fair Trade Association incorporated

AJP fully certifies for the first time in North America, Farmer Direct Co-op

Organic Consumers Association (OCA) launches Fair World Project, the first fair trade consumer organization, to promote and protect the integrity of the fair trade movement

2012 Fair Trade USA (formally Transfair USA) leaves the Fairtrade International (formally FLO) system. Fairtrade International enters the U.S. market as Fairtrade America with the International Mark.

TRACTORS AND PLANES RAIN DOWN PESTICIDES IN POST-WWII AGRICULTURE IN THIS ANIMATION ABOUT SUPER BUGS AND WEEDS.

Photo Credit: Erik Buckham, Palaceworks

IS THIS THE END OF REAL FOOD?

GMO OMG

Contributing Writer

Jeremy Siefert

When people first hear about just the basic facts concerning Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs or Genetically Engineered Foods) – the DNA of seeds altered with genes from other organisms like bacteria so food crops can withstand herbicides that will kill all other plants, patented by giant chemical companies and found in 80% of processed foods – the standard response is "Oh, my God." For some, it's just an exclamation, but for others, I imagine, it's the beginnings of a prayer. There's a mixture of horror and disbelief, as if finding out we're living inside a very strange sci-fi novel. Beyond that, it's the sting of humiliation from being ignorant about something so big, mixed with the anger that comes from feeling like you've been duped.

Even without understanding what a GMO is or why it matters, most of us believe as citizens of a supposedly free and democratic society that we have the right to know if GMOs are in the food we eat. The fact we don't know, and that our right to know has been taken away by corporate greed and government collusion, should upset and mobilize people. When all the food and seed and water and air is owned and patented by giant multinational corporations, will we even protest? Do we have the wakefulness and willpower to take that first step and stand up for this basic right?

That central question is why a tiny story from Haiti impacted me so deeply and inspired me to make a film about this hidden takeover of our food and the world's seeds. Months after the horrific earthquake that leveled Port-au-Prince, ten thousand rural farmers marched in the streets against Monsanto. In the midst of their hardships, these farmers rejected seeds donated to Haiti by the giant agrochemical company, crying out "Down with Monsanto!" They symbolically burned Monsanto's seeds which represented slavery, debt and the extinction of their own seeds and way of life. They stood unified in their fight for food sovereignty and native seeds as a common inheritance of all humanity.

I kept asking myself "What do they know that we don't?" Having long suffered, they possess courage and conviction that we have never even begun to arouse in ourselves. We haven't known that we needed this courage or conviction because most of us didn't even realize there was a fight on our hands for the future of food, our right to choose and the health of the environment and our families.

After a long drive north from the ruins and tent cities of Port-au-Prince into the treeless mountains, and then hours further to Hinche and Papaye, I remember my very first conversation with Chavannes Jean Baptist, the leader of the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP). He began with a big smile on his face, saying "The objective of Monsanto is to make money. The objective of Monsanto is not the quality of food that people are eating. Monsanto's objective is not to protect life. It's not to protect the environment."

Chavannes' smile then disappeared, replaced with passion and urgency: "When people like me say these types of seeds are poisonous, when I say these seeds are destroying the life of the land and destroying the people, that's when I attack the interest of Monsanto."

He cut to the heart of the issue, and it was right there in the open for everyone to see. The agrochemical industry spews lies just like the lead and tobacco industries did before them; and we believe them until the truth finally bursts forth, usually from the work of brave scientists, researchers, professors and activists who risk their careers and reputations to go against the status quo.

Monsanto says they're all about farmers, and yet the company has sued hundreds in court and bullied thousands with its mass of lawyers and private investigators. The biotech industry says we need GMOs for higher yield, and we need that higher yield to feed the world, but, for anyone paying attention, that is the furthest thing from the truth. The facts on the

ground show that GMOs don't actually increase yields, and thirty years of peer-reviewed research from the Rodale Farming Systems trial shows that organic farming can match their yields and do even better in times of flood and drought … all without toxic chemicals, synthetic fertilizers and patents. We also know that the wealthiest countries waste almost half of the food they produce, meaning that the world produces enough food to feed nearly fourteen billion people right now. And it's no secret that most GMOs go into making the worst food on the planet, devoid of the nutrients we need for real health, or into ethanol production – not into feeding the poor. But they tell the lie so well, exploiting the poor to prey on our emotions, that most of us believe it without looking beyond their slick thirty-second advertisements.

Are we surprised that the industry is lying to us? A giant corporation only focused on profit and securing markets for further growth is almost beholden to itself and its shareholders to lie if lying means profit. I don't want to become a jaded, pessimistic person, always thinking the worst, but I also don't want to be a fool either. And not being a fool in the current climate of "corporatocracy" means assuming that giant corporations monopolizing the market are probably lying to us and abusing power. That isn't being cynical; it's just common sense.

"HOW WE EAT DETERMINES, TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT, HOW THE WORLD IS USED."
- WENDELL BERRY

Chavannes wasn't deceived by the promises of increased yield and profit, miracle seeds and wonder chemicals. He knew, as we all know, that these companies aren't asking themselves "What's good for this society, for people's health, for the earth?" No, the questions they are asking are "What will increase profit? How can we produce more in a shorter amount of time, eliminate competition, ensure repeat customers and make more money?"

The new reality of the world is that giant chemical companies are feeding us and our families. And those questions of profit and growth are the ones they're paying attention to, not the ones concerning you or your family or this land we all share and live on.

Maybe corporate greed and corruption aren't enough to deter people from a cheap hamburger because, well, there will always be selfish monsters abusing power, but we still have to eat, right? Perhaps the death of the family farmer under the current paradigm of big industry and corporate consolidation within the food system doesn't really hit home enough to make a change?

But I would hope that the potential health risks would at least cause parents to stop feeding their children GMOs until all the data is in. Long-term, independent studies show damage to rat livers and kidneys when fed an exclusive GMO grain diet, and new findings link Monsanto's "Roundup" weed killer to Parkinson's disease and cancer.

With peer-reviewed, independent studies coming out with real results that contradict the industry's short-term studies, it seems safe to say that all is not well with this genetically altered food. Should we really allow ourselves to be a part of this experiment? And even if you're willing to take the risk, do you have the right to subject your fellow citizens or children to it?

How can we live without destroying the sources of our life?
- Wendell Berry

Once you know about GMOs, it is not an issue you can stay on the fence about, because you eat every single day. There's no way out, because what you eat shapes the world around us. What you eat makes you a participant in a larger system, one that interacts with the planet, whether you like it or not.

In his book, The Unsettling of America, Wendell Berry writes "In order to understand our own time and predicament and the work that is to be done, we would do well to shift the terms and say that we are divided between exploitation and nurture."

That is the real divide in our food system, in energy, in consumerism and in our relationships with one another. If you choose to ignore GMOs and the giant corporations taking over our food because it's overwhelming or you like the convenience and affordability of their products, then you've chosen to participate in the system of exploitation.

Those of us who do not live on and from the land, must stand in solidarity with farmers here and around the world who choose the way of nurture – understanding the interconnectedness of all life and embracing a way of living that regenerates soil, seed and life, so we have something to pass on to our children.

If you choose to be a "nurturer" rather than an "exploiter," then there are simple, powerful, practical ways to live out that philosophy. First, vote with your fork; second, demand labeling for GMOs and stand up for your right to know; and, third, participate in our democracy and help promote fair food and farm policies, creating the systemic changes necessary for true sustainability.

On a personal level, which collectively can grow into national significance and create real change, you can vote with your fork. Don't buy GMOs or any products that come from the biotech or agrochemical industry. Buy organic, local, seasonal food. Shop at farmers' markets and join a Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA). It will be tough making the transition, and it will cost more, but this is something you can start doing today.

To make this first step achievable, we have to fight for the labeling of GMOs, and that fight is happening in states across the country right now. The biggest push happened in the fall of 2012 with California's Proposition 37. Over six million people voted for their right to know, but the pesticide and junk food industry (companies like Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Dupont and Monsanto) spent over a million dollars a day on deceptive ads in the last month to narrowly defeat the proposition. However, no one in the movement saw it as a defeat. They had exposed the industry's fear of labeling and willingness to spend millions to keep us in the dark, and they raised consciousness across the nation,

paving the way for labeling efforts around the country. Connecticut and Maine have already enacted mandatory GMO labeling, as long as other major New Engla nd states do so, and Washington state's I-522 ballot initiative is the battle that promises to blow this issue wide open this year.

In November, the people of Washington will vote for their right to know, but they will be voting for all of us, and thus all of us should sign up, donate and volunteer. A victory in Washington, close on the heels of victories in Connecticut and Maine, will force "Big Food" to accept that labeling GMOs at the national level is inevitable and cut a deal with regulators (the FDA in this case), as happened in Europe a decade ago.

WHAT YOU EAT MAKES YOU A PARTICIPANT IN A LARGER SYSTEM, ONE THAT INTERACTS WITH THE PLANET, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.

If we can't stand up against these companies and raise our voices for ourselves and our children, then we may truly be lost. But I don't believe we have lost our capacity for outrage just yet. I believe once people know, once the darkness has been chased away by flickers turning into bonfires of light, people will act. Indeed that is what's happening right now, in big and small ways, and it's just a matter of time before the almost imperceptible swell deep in the ocean moves closer to shore, picks up speed, rises into a great wave and pounds us. Watch out Monsanto and Dow and Dupont and CEO Hugh Grant, and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and President Obama and the FDA, and all you colluders in industry lies, big money and injustice. Watch out, because the crashing wave is coming soon – and we won't stop until our basic freedoms to choose and know what we are eating are fully restored.

Beyond voting with our forks and the immediate fight for GMO labeling, I agree with Wenonah Hauter, author of Foodopoly and Executive Director of Food & Water Watch, that the next step is politicizing the growing numbers of people joining the movement for real food, who are voting with their dollars, and organizing direct relationships between farmers and eaters. She writes, "Creating a just society where everyone can enjoy healthy food produced by thriving family farmers using organic practices can only be realized by making fundamental structural changes to society and to farm and food policies."

I feel hope every time I see my son, Finn, with his seed collection, showing his awe and wonder at the world around him. I feel hope when I realize that we don't have to keep doing what we're doing, exploiting the earth for profit and applying the industrialized model to how we grow our food. I feel hope when I see the power of the Earth to regenerate itself and heal the damage we have done, if only we will stop our plundering and let it heal. And seeds give me hope as well – every one a tiny miracle and promise of life.

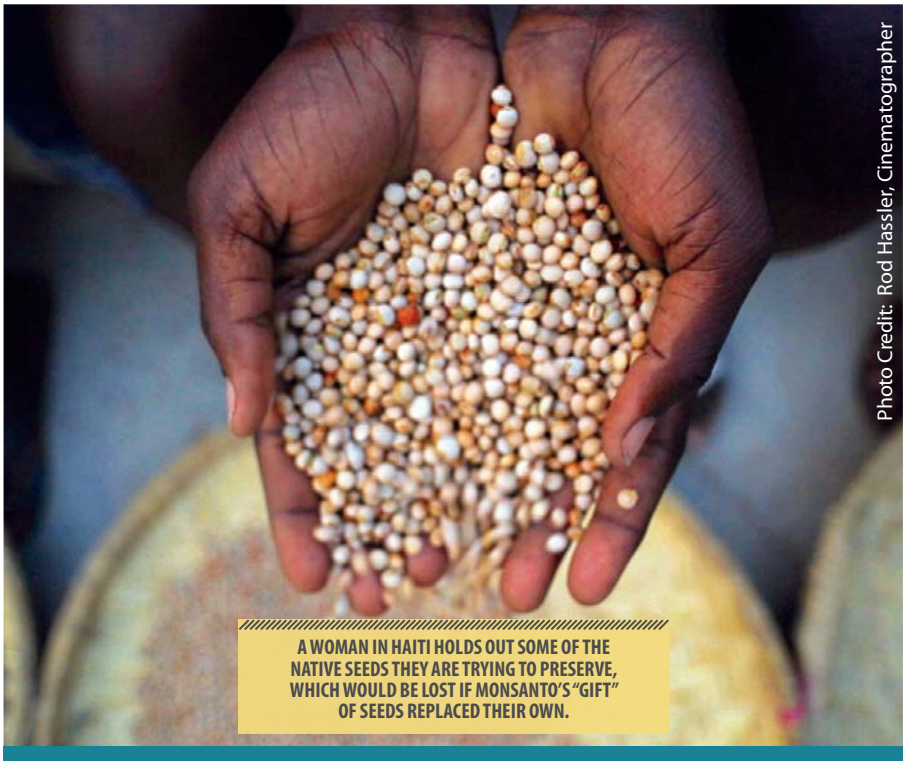


Photo Credit: Rod Hassler, Cinematographer

A WOMAN IN HAITI HOLDS OUT SOME OF THE NATIVE SEEDS THEY ARE TRYING TO PRESERVE, WHICH WOULD BE LOST IF MONSANTO'S "GIFT" OF SEEDS REPLACED THEIR OWN.

YES ON 522
LABEL GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

The focus of most people in favor of labeling genetically engineered food is the need to know what they are putting in their bodies and feeding their children.

I get that. In this day and age, we count every calorie and every gram of fat. People want to know what they are eating.

That is the biggest part of the motivation behind Initiative 522, which will appear on the November ballot in Washington State. If approved, it will require that our state establish a system for labeling genetically engineered food.

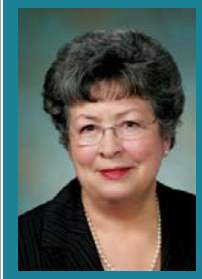
I, too, am concerned about the long-term health impacts of consuming genetically engineered food, but my primary concern today is one even more universal than calorie counting. My primary concern is about the economy.

Many of our trading partners, specifically those in the European Union and Pacific Rim, have banned the importation of unlabeled genetically modified foods. All told, more than sixty countries now refuse to import such products without proper labeling.

I would prefer that we had a federal labeling system in place, but I don't have to tell you that waiting for the Feds to act on anything takes more time than we have. Instead, we have to protect the health of our communities by developing our own system now.

Connecticut became the first state to pass a law requiring such labeling, but the law will not be enacted until neighboring states follow suit. Fortunately, similar bills are indeed advancing through other legislatures throughout New England.

Washington is still the only state where labeling is currently on the ballot this fall – so we will be letting our voters decide if they want genetically engineered foods to be labeled. Success in Washington will not only help build national momentum and engage more Americans in the effort, but it will also help lay the groundwork for future campaigns across the nation.



Sen. Maralyn Chase, D-Shoreline, represents the 32nd Legislative District which includes Shoreline, Lynnwood, Edmonds, Woodway, Mountlake Terrace and north Seattle. Senator Chase is Co-Chair of Yes on 522, the campaign to label genetically engineered foods in Washington.

STOP MONSANTO & TAKE BACK OUR FOOD, OUR FARMS, OUR DEMOCRACY & OUR PLANET

Contributing Writer

Dave Murphy

Stopping Monsanto is one of the most pressing issues of our time. As a single company, Monsanto is just the tip of the iceberg representing the threat that unchecked corporate power has in corrupting our democratic institutions, driving family farmers off the land, threatening human health and contaminating our environment.

The problem with Monsanto is not just their corrosive lobbying practices, but the fact that the products they produce, genetically engineered food crops made to resist high doses of the chemical weed killers they sell, are in more than 70% of the processed foods that we eat and feed our families every day.

In terms of corruption and consumption, Monsanto's reach is global. Their toxic impact reaches far and wide, from farmers' fields to our nation's capital to leading universities to media editorial boards and even to the White House. Along the way, their patented genetically engineered pollen contaminates organic farmers' fields, their poisonous chemicals infiltrate our waterways and our food, and their lobbying tactics undermine our basic rights.

After more than 100 years in business, Monsanto's name has become synonymous with greed, arrogance, corruption and poison. In a stunning display of **calculated callousness** ① towards the impact that their products have on human health and the planet, Monsanto is responsible for some of the most lethal chemicals known to history, including **Agent Orange**, ② **PCBs and DDT.** ③

In the 1980s, Monsanto made a strategic decision to combine their chemical company with the emerging science of biotechnology. Today, the same company that **poisoned America's veterans in Vietnam** ④ is responsible for producing the food that appears on our plates every day.

If you think that the same company who lied about the health impacts of Agent Orange to the U.S. government and our veterans is telling you the truth about the science behind genetic engineering and the food they are feeding us, then you are either uniformed, delusional or perhaps a member of Congress.

This past spring, Monsanto made the single largest strategic error in their 100-year history when they finally succeeded in sneaking a special corporate loophole protecting their genetically engineered crops from judicial review into a must-pass spending bill.

By successfully pushing for Section 735, now known as the infamous **"Monsanto Protection Act,"** ⑤ Monsanto finally exposed the truth to millions of outraged citizens about how they operate as a lawless corporation, willing to manipulate our nation's laws to protect their flawed GMO technology and able to get away with it because our elected officials at the highest levels have become accomplices in the ultimate corruption of our nation's laws.

Now that Congress and the President have shown their true colors to the American people and free citizens around the world, it is our civic duty to expose and resist this descent into lawless tyranny that not only keeps the American people from having the basic right to know what's in our food, but also prevents open and independent scientific studies from being conducted on patented GMO crops.

The fight over the "Monsanto Protection Act" has become the **turning point** ⑥ in the debate on political lobbying and genetic engineering in the U.S. For the past twenty years, Monsanto has been able to get their laws written behind closed doors while no one was watching. Today, however, we've built a movement that is paying close attention to every lie they tell the media and our elected officials, watching for every time they try to corrupt our democracy.

At Food Democracy Now! we are greatly encouraged that activists and everyday citizens around the world are waking up to the toxic impact that corporations like Monsanto have on our planet and are willing to join the growing movement to take back our basic democratic rights.

For far too long, Monsanto has been allowed to operate under the cover of darkness, manipulating our elected officials, the media and scientific institutions, who would normally all serve as safeguards against their deeply flawed technology. Their unchecked power is corrosive to the health of our democracy, our well-being and our planet, and it must be stopped. As free citizens, it is our right and our duty to protest their unlawful encroachment into the most basic and fundamental aspects of our lives, the food that we eat and the laws that govern us.

What elected officials and Monsanto apologists need to know is that we will no longer be silent. Monsanto's days are numbered, and the era of telling lies and getting away with it is over. Monsanto and our elected officials have one choice now: label GMOs in the U.S., or they will go the way of the dinosaur.

Thank you, Monsanto. Your corruption has become your own undoing.

INFORMATION GUIDE ON MONSANTO'S CORRUPTION:

① Monsanto's History of Eco-Poisoning & Un-Accountability:
www.activism101.ning.com/profiles/blogs/monsantos-history-of

② Monsanto's Agent Orange:
www.wjpbr.com/agentor.html

③ PCBs and DDT:
www.pollutioninpeople.org/toxics/pcbs_ddt

④ The Poisoning of America's Veterans in Vietnam:
www.agentorangerecord.com/information/the_quest_for_additional_relief/

⑤ The "Monsanto Protection Act:" 5 Terrifying Things to Know About the HR 933 Provision:
www.ibtimes.com/monsanto-protection-act-5-terrifying-things-know-about-hr-933-provision-1156079

⑥ Is Outrage Over the "Monsanto Protection Act" a Turning Point for the Food Movement?:
www.huffingtonpost.com/michele-simon/monsanto-protection-act_b_3327270.html

LaFEM:

Empowering Women Farmers through Food Sovereignty and Environmental Stewardship

By: Juana Villareyna Acuña

Photo Credit: Chelsea Bay Dennis, Stone Hut Studios

Juana says, "Through feminism, I have learned to question the machista, patriarchal and neoliberal capitalist mandates which society has taught us to believe are natural. But they are not natural; they are learned and can be changed in favor of justice for women and equality for all."

Faced with the challenge imposed by climate change and the use of indiscriminate agrochemicals that degrade our natural resources, 260 women farmers in the north of Nicaragua, organized in cooperatives and backed by La FEM, have started a series of initiatives that are environmentally friendly. La FEM is a cooperative of women farmers, organized with the Foundation of Women from the north of Nicaragua, that promotes the production of native seeds and the use of methods to help address climate change as forms of resistance to the use of seeds and technological packages offered by multinationals like Monsanto.

In Nicaragua, multinational companies continue to promote the use of indiscriminate agrochemicals through enormous public relations campaigns that try to manipulate peoples' consciences while hiding the negative consequences.

Nicaraguan soils have been continuously degraded as the result of poor agricultural practices in the past, combined with the effects of climate change and the emergence of chemical-resistant diseases. This presents a serious threat to the production levels of many different crops that not only provide food for rural communities, but also supply local and foreign markets. In response, the women farmers have taken huge steps in the production of organic crops.

These multinationals offer "terminator seeds" that don't germinate after a single season, technological packages that only generate further dependencies and are a threat

Maritza Ivania, one of the first group of women to become organized with la FEM, walks through her field of native corn.

to the continued use of our native seeds. When confronting this type of dictatorship, Nicaraguan farmers' life plans become entrapped in a struggle for their own existence.

These efforts focus on the organization of groups of women who specialize in the production of organic and foliar fertilizers whose cost of production, when combined with resources found within their communities, are very beneficial. With actions like these, we are also confronting the effects and damages created by "coffee leaf rust" that have devastated coffee farms in Nicaragua.

In spite of their adversities, cooperative members managed to export over 60,000 pounds of organic, fair trade coffee to the United States and Denmark, with special allies, such as Just Coffee, whose support and solidarity has been critical, not only economically but also emotionally.

In the north of Nicaragua, there is a popular saying: "Big problems, big solutions." In the face of climate change, La FEM and the farmer cooperatives are showing their ability to move forward with adaptation efforts in order to strengthen organizationally and improve the quality, productivity and yields on every farm.

Included in these laudable initiatives is the effort to establish an organic fertilizer plant to produce more than 350,000 pounds of organic fertilizer per year. The fertilizer would be applied to the fields with the purpose of achieving organic agriculture in every production cycle.

In the same way, La FEM has been working for over ten years to promote and articulate different tasks meant to rescue distinct varieties of native seeds. Each year, farmers harvest between 450,000 and 500,000 pounds of beans, one of the main staples in the Nicaraguan diet. The women of La FEM have become empowered in validating native seeds that are resistant to droughts and pests, which is precisely relevant now given ongoing climate change.

In the area of agricultural production, La FEM works with new strategies to strengthen varieties of native crops that are adaptable to the region. The women farmer cooperatives rely on four seed banks in order to guarantee quality and plant the seeds at opportune times in each growing cycle. These crops are produced in the rainy season, as well as year-round in areas with irrigation.

These and other actions have only been possible thanks to the level of consciousness and integrated empowerment reached on behalf of farmers, driven by La FEM. These actions emphasize the defense of women's rights as a fundamental focus of the struggle against gender violence.

It is important to point out that last year, during a forum sponsored by La FEM and the Spanish NGO Paz con Dignidad, a study was presented to women farmers by the Multinational Observatory on Latin America (OMAL) about the negative impacts that businesses like Unión Fenosa, Repsol, Telefónica or Banco Santader have on Nicaragua. The forum helped raise awareness about how to avoid acculturation and preserve the national culture.

Stand with La FEM and support the rights of women, farmers and citizens as they care for their people, their land and the food that supports us all.

Cristhian Guzman Merlos speaks about how being organized with la FEM has greatly impacted her life at a celebration for the international Day of Rural Women.

TRADE POLICY REFORM CORNER

Fair Trade & Immigrant Rights

Contributing Writer

Joann Lo, Food Chain Workers Alliance

As we all know, fair trade and immigration are two interconnected issues. Unjust free trade agreements and international trade policies have forced family farmers off their lands and decimated domestic industries in other countries. Many people have few choices other than migrating in search of work, safety and a better life for themselves and their families. Many of these migrants cross the border to become farmworkers and other food system workers in the U.S.

Almost twenty million people in the U.S. work in the food system, and more than half of the workers in some food industries are undocumented immigrants. The Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012 report "*The Hands That Feed Us*" concludes that undocumented workers are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because of their immigration status. In fact, we found that undocumented workers were over two and a half times as likely to earn less than the legally-required minimum wage as compared to documented workers.

This past summer, the legislative agenda of Congress and the Obama Administration included a major immigration reform bill. While the attention to immigration reform was more than welcome, many of the specific provisions considered from the beginning were very problematic. For example:

- The path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who have been in the U.S. since before December 31, 2011, would be a minimum of thirteen years. In the meantime, these immigrants who work and pay taxes would not have access to affordable health insurance and economic support programs.

- While some reforms were proposed for guestworker programs, the continued reliance on temporary foreign labor would still leave farm and food workers vulnerable to exploitation.

- The proposal focused heavily on border enforcement, meaning more militarization and criminalization of immigrants. Rather than putting $4.5 billion more towards border control, why not invest that money in education and skills training for the communities already here?

- For future immigrants, the bill would create a merit-based system that would replace family unity as the cornerstone of immigration policy. This would begin a shift to immigration that favors employability and, in the long term, has consequences for demographics, making it harder for low-income people of color to immigrate to the U.S.

Advocates worked to minimize the damage of immigration reform in this round, but what should we do then to advocate for fair trade and immigrant rights from the start?

- Immigration reform does not change the fact that workers' rights will still likely be violated by unscrupulous employers and companies, so workers will continue to organize, and fair trade activists should support their campaigns. You can also support efforts to increase the minimum wage that will benefit immigrant and other low-wage workers. Learn more about current organizing campaigns for food workers, and how to support raising the minimum wage, at www.foodchainworkers.org.

- Immigration reform also does not address the unjust trade policies and agreements that often force people in other countries to migrate. Get involved with efforts to fight the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership which is being called the "NAFTA of the Pacific." Learn more at www.citizenstrade.org.

Land Grabs

Contributing Writer
Karen Hansen-Kuhn

Conflicts between small-scale farmers or farmworkers and foreign investors have been raging for decades, if not centuries. The pace and scope of land grabs over the last few years, however, is new. In the decades leading up to the 2008 food and financial crisis, free trade and investment agreements created the legal conditions for land grabs, but low commodity prices depressed the demand for farmland in developing countries. When food prices spiked, there was a rush of new investments by corporations, financial investors and sovereign wealth funds, many of which were not directly involved in food production.

Millions of hectares have since been leased or sold, often without the knowledge or consent of the communities who will be most affected by those decisions. The Land Matrix (www.landmatrix.org), a new collaborative Web tool, has documented more than 1,000 cases involving nearly thirty-three million hectares. The site tracks deals (involving 200 or more hectares) made since 2000 that involve the conversion of land from smallholder production or community use in low- and middle-income countries. Other estimates have ranged as high as 100 million hectares.

There are several overlapping challenges here. First, land tenure laws are unclear in many countries. Under the customary laws prevalent in many African countries, for example, community elders might sign off on land deals without consulting the people farming those lands. Or, decisions can be made far up the chain in remote bureaucracies. In any case, the idea that these lands are somehow vacant blank slates just waiting for new investments is usually flat wrong, and expanding industrial agricultural production (often for export) in delicate ecosystems (where farmers may practice shifting cultivation) can have devastating social and environmental impacts.

Who are the land grabbers? Some are national governments lacking capacity for local production and feeling burned by recent failures in global markets. But much of the grabbing is being done by banks, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds and hedge funds looking for the next new target for innovative investments. The rising demand for biofuels also creates new incentives for investors interested in exploiting this huge new market. The investment fund TIAA-CREF, for example, launched a new fund for investments in farmland. In that case, and with similar investments by pension funds and hedge funds, the firm purchases land outright or leases it for decades into the future. They are assuming that land prices will continue to rise as demand for food production increases, and that assumption itself, along with the volume of new investments, puts upward pressure on land prices and therefore even greater pressure on farmers around the world.

In tracking land grabs, the Land Matrix came up with some surprising conclusions. It turns out the land grabbers often bite off more than they can chew, buying or leasing hundreds of thousands of hectares, when it turns out they can only cultivate about 5% of that amount. In many cases, the deals shrink or collapse, but in others the foreign investors simply hold on to the property rights, biding their time for a better deal down the road.

The solutions, like the problem, are complex. Campaigns to challenge specific land grabs are emerging every day, led by such groups as the Oakland Institute. Campaigns and stunts in Europe, led by the World Development Movement, convinced at least a few investment firms to divest from land. At the international level, efforts are underway to move the UN Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land Tenure from an innovative tool of soft law to something real and enforceable. All of these efforts, along with others challenging free trade and investment agreements (like the Trans-Pacific Partnership) that are driving these bad deals, are needed to help keep land in the hands of farmers around the world.

For more information on the causes of land grabs, see Land Grabs and Fragile Food Systems: The Role of Globalization by Sophia Murphy.

Cultivating an Authentic Fair Trade

Jose Osmin Romero, member of Las Marias 93 cooperative in El Salvador. The same mountain these farmers hid and fought on has now become their peaceful livelihood, covered in coffee.

Contributing Writers

Matt Earley and Chris Treter

Fair trade falls short when the relationships along the chain are reduced to simple "trading partnerships." Trade is the vehicle for the relationship, but the road it travels should lead to the foundation of real global communities, through which people connected by economic exchange can see each other and interact. This is the transformative piece of the ideal. True fair trade is often buried beneath "certifications" that do more for the marketing of coffee in the Global North than for the actual well-being of the farmer in the Global South. If we want to build an authentic model of fair trade that stands up to its name, we must work directly with small farmers and transform the term from a marketing device to a real movement based on building economic democracy. Certifications alone do not accomplish this and, at times, can actually "dumb down" the real work that we need to do in our companies and in our communities.

We started our respective businesses as experiments in building this type of exchange. In January of 2013, we went to Southern Mexico and Central America to see what a decade of fair trade has done for the farmer cooperatives we work with and the families that comprise them.

In those travels through Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, we met with our partners and listened to their thoughts and stories, which sometimes inspired us and at other times broke our hearts. Through conversations, it became even more clear that the term "fair trade" does not have a unified meaning. There are some potentially good things that can come from big corporations following minimum fair trade standards – including short-term benefits for farmers. But what we increasingly found is that the small-scale farmers we work with are not satisfied with the results of "certified fair trade," and they are investing in building a more authentic model that truly is better for all involved.

In order to participate in an authentic fair trade, we need to hang our hats on our relationships and not simply on the prices we pay. Nearly 75% of the world's coffee growers are small-scale farmers working less than five acres of land. Many of these farmers and their families make up the one-sixth of the world's population without access to potable water. Additionally, health care, education, food security and other human rights are not always a given. The cash from coffee sales – even at fair trade minimum prices – is not enough to cover all the needs in their households and communities. In a better model, we connect and dedicate some of our own resources beyond that sale to helping farmers get to where they want to be. Our conversations with coffee farmers reinforced the notion that "consumer" and "producer" are just two of the many roles we claim as members of a global community. We connect with the people who grow our coffee when we engage in the economic transaction of purchasing it, but we should also use that connection to find more ways to creatively support and work with the coffee farming communities.

We began working with the Chiapas, Mexico cooperative Maya Vinic in 2002, some four years after the Acteal Massacre galvanized the formation of the group. This was the beginning of a great friendship, and we continue to visit Chiapas at least once a year. On our most recent visit, we were able to see old friends and talk about how things were going in general. There have been some successes in the past year with Maya Vinic's new cafe in San Cristobal and with a swell of members joining the cooperative.

Despite small successes, the lives of these farmers remain difficult. In the village of Aurora Esquipulas, we slept in the house of a farmer named Gerardo. He told us that he would not make enough this year to pay for his production – or for unexpected costs like a trip to the clinic, new shoes for his kids or a home repair. He had hoped to replace his dirt floor with concrete this year, but now he must put that project off until 2014.

While there, we attended the christening of a water line, water tanks and washing station in

the hamlet, the results of a project run by a local NGO that our companies and customers contributed to through our affiliated non-profit organizations. The takeaway for us was a clear sentiment that buying and selling coffee from small-scale farmers is not enough, and that we can do more. Fair trade premiums are received by the cooperative, but they are not enough to fund many of the needed projects in coffee communities.

In Guatemala, we visited with the Comite Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA), just off the shores of the volcano-rimmed Lake Atitlan. Formed in 1982 during the civil war, CCDA emerged as a civilian support group dedicating itself to campesino and indigenous rights. Today it represents over 1,800 coffee farmers and many more campesinos who are involved in the larger political organization.

CCDA President Leocadio Juracan told us, "The majority of coffee farmers are just producing the raw materials for large multinationals." He respectfully asked how letting multinationals take the wheel of fair trade – like we have seen with FTUSA's "Fair Trade for All" – can be fair in any way. Leo stressed the importance of building "solidarity trade networks," which CCDA calls "fair trade plus," between people, communities and organizations with similar political goals, as opposed to working with the multinationals who have traditionally exploited small farmers. He pointed to the plantation next to the community and drew a clear connection to the historically exploited farmworkers who work under harsh conditions for little money. Working toward a better model, CCDA is our first partner to join the new Small Producer Symbol (SPP) certification that is owned and operated by small-scale farmers. This seal is a great opportunity to build a better fair trade system with real farmer control and help ensure that farmers can stay on their lands and out of the plantation fields.

In El Salvador, we visited Las Marias 93. The farmers of Las Marias were once members of the FMLN rebel army. In 1993, they put down their arms and picked up machetes to farm land that they received through the peace accords. Now they make a living on the slopes of the same mountain where they fought. After years of fighting for their land, they now face a new enemy.

This year, 40% of Las Marias' harvest has been ruined by a fungus called Roya (or coffee rust). Heavy rain and an inability for plants to dry – a real result of climate change – is creating this epidemic, devastating crops in Southern Mexico, Central America and elsewhere. Coffee farmers all over the world need serious help to recover from this still-unfolding crisis; their livelihoods are in danger, and their coffee plants are dying. The free market's response will not be kind. Despite the fair trade ethos of building long-term partnerships with farmers, the response from roasters and importers using "the seal" has for the most part been slow.

The stakes for building a better model of fair trade have never been higher, as farmers continue to struggle. Compromised fair trade certifiers and multinational corporations will not create real change – they will actually prevent it. Instead of simply trusting certifications, we should use our own resources to take the next steps in building a movement that truly uses trade as one tool for creating a better world. But without direct engagement from companies and coffee drinkers collectively building an authentic fair trade, we cannot accomplish this. Beyond purchasing items from dedicated companies and producer groups, you can get more involved by contacting your local mission-based fair trade organization to see how you can plug in. We started the non-profit organizations On The Ground (www.onthegroundglobal.org) and Outside the Bean (www.outsidethebean.org) to address some of the needs we have seen. You can look for like-minded organizations or resources in your community to dig deeper, or consider starting an initiative yourself.

Though we may not always realize it, we are intimately connected to the people who produce the things that clothe us, feed us and generally make our lives better. In return, we can use the vehicle of trade as a way to break down barriers and to truly see our partners on the other end of the road traveled by these products. Without that dynamic, how can we claim that the trade we do is fair?

Veronica Sabala, community leader, farmer, and member of La Fem in Nicaragua, looks at her dying crop of coffee, due to La Roya, a disease taking out much of Central America's crop.

Photo Credit: Chelsea Bay Dennis, Stone Hut Studios

Drying coffee beans in the sun at CCDA co-op in Sololá, Guatemala

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF FAIR & SUSTAINABLE COFFEE?

Contributing Writer

Lee Wallace

Peace Coffee was founded in 1996 by the Minneapolis non-profit Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). At the time, IATP was working with partners in Mexico who were searching to build a market for their fair trade organic coffee, and they were also talking to allies in Europe about bringing a fair trade label to the U.S. Ultimately, the organization birthed a successful coffee company and was one of the founders of TransFair USA, the first fair trade certification program in the U.S. Understandably, while the staff at Peace Coffee worked to get into the community as much as possible to explain fair trade and our model, both IATP and Peace Coffee continued to be among the biggest boosters of third-party certification, pointing out the benefits of the system to both coffee-growing communities and consumers.

The split between Fair Trade USA (TransFair USA) and Fairtrade International (FLO) served as a precipitating event to reassess our approach and system. The fair trade movement is clearly at a crossroads with major implications for much of the marketplace, but specifically the specialty coffee sector. At a time when social, environmental and economic sustainability is finally becoming a mainstream consideration for many companies and consumers, there remain a number of gaps and challenges for creating fair and sustainable value chains. As a result, this is an opportune time to reflect on how far we have come and, perhaps more importantly, how far we still have to go to achieve our mission. This necessitates a real and frank analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing tools and frameworks, and it pushes us to explore what we need to continue on to the next stage of this journey.

Are our current definitions and tools up to the task of providing fairer and truly sustainable coffee value chains? What will inspire all of us to continue on this journey? What role can and should various initiatives play in this process?

With the support of Catholic Relief Services' Fair Trade Fund, and partnering with a renowned sustainable standards expert, Sasha Courville, we embarked in 2012 on a journey to try to understand what the next steps are for Peace Coffee and our farmer-partners. Over the last year, we have conducted interviews along our own value chain (covering producer, importer and roaster perspectives), as well as across the fair trade standards world and the broader sustainable coffee community. A longer paper that describes the project in greater depth will be available in the summer of 2013 (visit: www.peacecoffee.com). While admittedly many questions still remain, one thing is clear: the world around all of us is shifting, and we need to think differently in order to keep pace.

In the seventeen-year history of our company, we have seen the market for fair and sustainable products explode. According to The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity Report for Business (TEEB), the worldwide market for certified agricultural products (including organic) was $40 billion in 2008, and it is estimated to grow to $210 billion in 2020 and $900 billion by 2050. Voluntary standards and certification systems have become widely accepted by many governments, businesses of all sizes and a large number of civil society organizations as effective market-based tools to raise awareness and drive desired sustainability outcomes. Leading businesses have recognized that sustainability is necessary for their long-term viability, and they are using multi-stakeholder standards as tools to transform their value chains.

That success is clearly reflected in the system we work within. If we look specifically at the growth of certified fair trade, there are now over 827 certified (FLO) producer organizations in fifty-eight producing countries, representing over 1.2 million farmers and workers. Sales of certified fair trade products grew 27% between 2009 and 2010, and FLO estimates that six million people benefit directly from the system today. Fair trade coffee imports grew worldwide by close to 19% in 2010.

We have come a very long way from the early days pioneered by the solidarity movement, where fair trade products could only be accessed through dedicated fair trade outlets. However, while the growth numbers tell one story, the challenges of success that fair trade and the broader sustainability standards movement now face are significant indeed.

First, the tool of fair trade certification itself has limitations. It was initially set up as a demonstration project to highlight the injustice of international trade rules and to offer an alternative vision. The business models, governance structures and infrastructure used to get us to this point are not well-suited to rapidly scaling up impacts, transforming entire value chains and regions, and integrating with systems that are working to achieve broader change. At the same time, it is difficult for those same systems to experiment with what might be the next big transformation towards fair and sustainable value chains.

Second, the coffee industry faces some key challenges that are going to require some new ways of thinking. Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to the viability of coffee

Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony at Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union

AIPEP Coop Member in Bolivian holding her beans roasted by Peace Coffee

production across many regions. Mitigation and adaptation strategies will be critical to ensure continued supply and to manage the social, economic and environmental impacts on affected communities. More broadly, it needs to be recognized that – despite decades of work on fair and sustainable coffee supply chains – many coffee producers still face fundamental challenges with ensuring sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families. Ultimately, the industry will need to figure out how coffee farmers can make ends meet, not just from day to day or season to season, but decade after decade. This may require a mix of higher prices, other forms of income such as support for conservation and other environmental benefits that organic and sustainable coffee farms provide, and other ways to diversify farm income and/or increase productivity while maintaining environmental benefits and services. Managing these challenges effectively will require collaborative work across the value chain and beyond, as well as unprecedented partnerships – partnerships that demand fair-trading relationships as a fundamental building block.

Certification is still an important tool, though. For example, it provides an external check that producers are complying with the core values and activities represented by the standards. It also provides a vehicle for capacity building and a systematized approach towards organizational strengthening. For most, finding an alternative way to check at the producer level is too hard, too expensive and just not viable, especially as the number of producer partners grows.

The pioneering successes of FLO and others have led to a host of next-generation initiatives which are intended to learn from the mistakes of the past and take advantage of new technologies. Some of this proliferation muddies the waters and makes it hard for consumers to distinguish credible and legitimate efforts from "green-washing," while some allows for much-needed innovation and renewal. A key challenge facing anyone interested in experimenting with how to do better is how best to balance the need to open up a safe space for learning and innovation, while also ensuring the credibility of the process at the same time. From our perspective, the only way to achieve this is through transparency of process and a commitment to demonstrating tangible results.

While the FLO-TransFair USA split may have exacerbated the situation, tensions between the small, dedicated fair traders and the big players have been growing over a number of years in the coffee industry. As fair trade and sustainable coffee enters the mainstream, what is there to differentiate a small-scale 100% fair trade company from a multinational? There are indeed unique strengths, as well as weaknesses, that come with both being small and embedded in communities and with being large and having access to significant resources. It is our view that points of differentiation should be based on commitment and impact, not on size.

We still have a lot of work to do to digest the information we have gleaned from our interviews and to determine how we are going to integrate the findings into our operations. I would be remiss if I did not point out that a number of our peers are already doing really good work, and we have been excited to learn about it.

As part of my job, I give a lot of talks and presentations. I stand up in front of college classes, congregations, business associations and conferences and explain who we are at Peace Coffee and what we do. I tell the story of how the company started and what we are trying to achieve, and I leave hoping that I have helped people in their efforts to better navigate the very confusing (often intentionally so) terrain of the grocery aisle.

A few years ago, I was speaking to a social work class at a local university. Predictably, I got a question about what can be made better, especially at the origin, and how we intend to not only continue to meet our mission but also to have even greater impact. By the time I got done explaining our importing model (we import cooperatively with over twenty other coffee companies) and our aspiration to be one of the best buyers a growing organization has, one of the students said "I'm sold – and I want every purchase I make to go above and beyond, the way Peace Coffee does. But how can I figure that out without getting completely overwhelmed?"

The answer to that incredibly important question, sadly, is still not there. However, as we begin to look at new ways to think about and measure impact, it is increasingly clear that we also need to look at new ways to communicate with consumers. As new models proliferate, it becomes difficult for even experienced coffee traders to keep track of the legitimacy of various efforts. What tools and assurances are we going to provide to consumers to cut through the "green- and trade-washing?" At Peace Coffee, we have been heartened to see a positive response from consumers to our transparency initiatives – such as adding QR codes to our packaging, allowing coffee drinkers to travel virtually to the region and cooperative and trace the purchase process all the way back, including being able to view our contracts, see the prices we paid and read the terms of purchase.

We are excited to continue pursuing this work, and we encourage others to join us on this important journey.

Photo Credit: Peace Coffee

Contributing Writer
Phyllis Robinson, Education and Campaigns Manager

TRANSFORMING THE TEA INDUSTRY:
From Plantations to a Small-Farmer Model

"The predominant ownership and management model for tea gardens in Darjeeling is rooted in colonial history. In view of the changing cultural, political and economic climate, a new framework that revolves around worker involvement, participation and ownership was conceived. This revolutionary concept is not only critical to the success [of Potong], but it is important for the development of the larger Darjeeling tea community."

- Prem Tamang, Tea Promoters of India

Fairly Traded Coffee, 1986

When Equal Exchange pioneered fair trade coffee in 1986, the founders were told they were crazy: how could they create a viable business model while simultaneously helping small farmers gain access to the market, pay them an above-market price, educate consumers about the source of their coffee, and connect producers and consumers in relationships based on respect and integrity?

Close to three decades later, there is no question that the founders' idealistic vision has radically transformed the coffee industry. While "fair trade" may not yet be a household term, the concept has entered the mainstream coffee market. Over 400 new fair trade coffee roasters have sprung up across the country, and a number of larger companies are dedicating a portion of their coffee purchases to fair trade. Consumers are increasingly choosing to buy coffee sourced from fair trade cooperatives, and the producer members of those cooperatives are, in general, doing far better than their non-fair trade counterparts.

Fairly Traded Tea, 2013

Skip ahead twenty-seven years now, and let's take a look at the tea industry. By far, the vast majority of tea found on grocery store shelves comes from large-scale plantations. Even 95% of tea that is labeled "fair trade" is sourced from plantations, one of the last vestiges of the colonial system. The basic structure of the plantations has not changed since colonial times, consisting of absentee owners and very low wages for workers.

The certifiers claim that there is not enough small-farmer tea to create a viable supply chain, that plantation tea is the only way to offer consumers a fair trade tea. However, while it is true that in some cases workers have more participation in certain decisions than do those working on non-fair trade plantations, by only working with large-estate tea, the current fair trade model focuses far too much on supply and not nearly enough on structural, systemic change.

Transformation of the tea industry is both possible and long overdue. Due to the feudal nature of plantations, workers are often trapped in a system of dependency. In many cases, workers receive their housing, schooling and medical care from the estate. This means that if the plantation is abandoned, thousands of workers and their families are left without any form of income or services. In fact, in many regions economic, political and cultural realities are causing this system, frozen in a bygone era, to crumble on its own. Tea workers, however, can't afford to wait for slow change, and committed fair traders and activists need to take action now to create a new model based on hu-

man rights and economic justice.

A Different Kind of Tea Model

We think the time for change is now. Our tea partners – in India, Sri Lanka and South Africa – share this conviction. On a recent trip to Darjeeling, India, we visited our partners Tea Promoters of India (TPI) and saw an array of exciting projects that are part of their vision for a transformed tea industry, one where the farmers are empowered to make decisions, take risks, build their own businesses and improve their lives and communities.

TPI, one of the tea industry's most progressive and visionary companies, is known for its pioneering initiatives in successfully rehabilitating ailing and abandoned tea gardens. The company specializes in promoting and supporting small tea growers in the region who are typically economically disadvantaged. Below are just two of the innovative models that TPI has helped to create and support.

Small-Farmer Cooperatives

Sanjukta Vikas Cooperative, also referred to as Mineral Springs, was one of the first small-farming initiatives in the plantation-controlled region of Darjeeling. The land that cooperative members now occupy was a tea plantation in the early part of the century that was abandoned in the 1950s. The farmers depended mostly upon subsistence farming of corn, millet, potatoes and vegetables, eventually forming themselves into a dairy cooperative that sold into the local market. Today, with technical assistance and training from a local NGO, and the processing and marketing assistance of TPI, the 450 cooperative members have reintroduced tea on their farms and now successfully export high quality, organic fair trade tea into the international market.

Walking through the community felt like that mythical Shangri-la from the movies. The village was clean and well-maintained, and water flowed in abundance; the brightly-painted homes were surrounded by sweet-smelling flower gardens, terraced hills and shaded farms planted with oranges, bananas, onions, garlic, ginger and turmeric. Colorful Buddhist flags were strung across the trees in front of a handful of houses, while the cooperative itself is also home to Christians and Hindus.

We visited farms and spoke with many farmers. The commitment they had made to bio-dynamics, organic farming and permaculture was clear. We were shown how materials are recycled and reused;

Potong Tea Farmers and their families outside the Potong Tea Offices

how nothing is wasted. Another constant was the sense of pride and self-assurance that the farmers displayed, which contrasted sharply with other places we've visited. Owning their land and having options affords farmers a stronger sense of investment and control over their businesses.

Worker-Owned Plantations

The Potong Tea Garden represents a unique effort to address a difficult challenge: how to build a new tea system out of a decaying and crumbling plantation model that remains largely unchanged from the days of the British Empire. Established over 100 years ago by the British, Potong Tea Garden was repeatedly abandoned, taken over, mismanaged and abandoned again. Throughout that time, 2,500 people depended on the plantation for their livelihoods, shelter, medical needs and educational services. As Sher Bahadur, Potong's board president, told us in November of 2009, the plantation system was structured in such a way that workers were never taught any other means of livelihood.

"We were 100% dependent on the tea plantation," he said. "So when the plantation was abandoned, what could we do?"

In 2005, after a series of government and private-industry takeovers ran the garden further into the ground, the current owner realized that colonial management systems were no longer viable and asked TPI to consider co-running the estate. Representatives of TPI, committed to making small-farmer ownership possible, proposed a solution to keep the estate in operation: the workers would purchase 51% of the ownership shares (to be paid over time) and would assume day-to-day management of the garden. TPI would purchase 25% of the shares and provide the workers with technical assistance and market support. Like Sanjukta Vikas, the farmers could process their tea at TPI's facilities.

After forty-five days of deliberation, the workers agreed and a Management Team was created, comprised of farmers, TPI and representatives of the Kolkatta business which still owned a minority share. TPI then helped the workers to form a legally registered body under the name Potong Tea Workers Welfare Committee (PTWWC). With this action, the former plantation workers took the first step toward becoming a full-fledged tea cooperative.

The workers are learning to own, manage and operate their tea garden. With training and technical assistance from TPI, they are learning new skills, taking risks and rebuilding operations. As one worker-owner told us,

"Before, the management was the supreme authority and we were scared of them. Now, we discuss things amongst ourselves. We have a new structure, and we can work with dignity for our own development and for no one else. This is our model; if we are successful, then we will have a future."

Nothing Short of Transformation

It wasn't easy for the early fair trade founders to challenge an entire industry, especially one so rooted in economic, political and historic power. But through the success that the fair trade movement has had in coffee, we have demonstrated that consumers are a "sleeping giant" – once awakened and shown a path grounded in fairness, respect and mutual dignity, people will act on their values, aim high and purchase ethically. Many will even go beyond consumption and also advocate for necessary systemic changes.

We believe there is a path toward a small-farmer tea model, like the ones we saw at Sanjukta Vikas and the Potong Tea Garden, one which paves the way for small farmers to gain greater access to the market, thus affording them more economic power, stronger control, better lives and healthier communities. There are already producer groups and alternative trade organizations working toward this vision. We are convinced that U.S. consumers, armed with information and knowledge, and given a real choice, will walk alongside us as we turn our vision into reality.

There is no reason to accept anything less.

Photo Credit: Equal Exchange

Contributing Writer

Sue Kastensen

Our Global Community: Who are the "Marginalized?"

Fair trade is, first and foremost, about people.

One of the main principles of fair trade, according to the World Fair Trade Organization, the Fair Labeling Organization and the Fair Trade Federation, is to create advantages and protections for marginalized or disadvantaged producers and workers. We can easily speculate who belongs in this group – small landowner farmers, workers in sweatshops, children harvesting cocoa, transplanted people in war-ravaged regions, many of them often located in the southern hemisphere.

But there are marginalized groups in the so-called "developed" world, too. In the U.S., we hear about the "undocumented" workers who pick the majority of our produce. We are aware they provide much of the labor in restaurants, meatpacking plants and hotels. These workers face challenges similar to some of the most marginalized groups in other regions, vulnerable populations that lack access to education, health care, safe living conditions and economic opportunity.

Some of these marginalized, undocumented workers will get arrested and sent to U.S. prisons. Once they become members of that community, can they still be considered "marginalized?" Or, do we now write them off with the rest of our incarcerated population, muttering things like "they all come out the same" and "they just learn to become better criminals?"

And what about other incarcerated individuals, who are also often from economically and educationally disadvantaged areas? Can they be considered among our "most marginalized?" Many members of the incarcerated population (both undocumented and citizens alike) have been disadvantaged for most, if not all, of their lives. Do we further marginalize these people by refusing to accept them back into the community, calling them "offenders," "felons" and worse, as if that is who they are – and will be forever – and not just something they did in a moment in time?

Solidale Italiano, an economic justice-based line of products made under fair conditions through Ctm Altromercato in Italy, is actively addressing these tough questions. In an amazing spirit of solidarity and commitment to the community, Economia Carceraria engages prisoners in creating products from seven different prisons all over Italy. In each prison, there is a group of inmates involved in production, and each group gets the logistical support of a social cooperative outside the prison. Ctm Altromercato believes that reconnecting inmates with the community through employment increases their sense of belonging to the greater community, provides marketable skills and assists in their reintegration.

Some of Economia Carceraria's principles include:

- The organization manages productive activity and promotes the reintegration of prisoners at the end of their sentence
- The organization disseminates information about the prison economy, social values and awareness of alternative measures to detention.
- To the extent possible, the organization supports the use of raw materials from environmentally sustainable and fair trade sources for the production of its products.

From Economia Carceraria's Solidale Italiano flyer:

"Adherence to these principles led us today to expand our relationship to productive activities involving 'internal places of imprisonment' in order to upgrade the status of the punitive sentence, from sentence to rehabilitation and re-education, and to promote social reintegration through the work.

The products of fair trade are vehicles of information for those who produce them and their living conditions, thus helping to create a critical awareness among consumers. "

What does the Italian public think about supporting Economia Carceraria? In the U.S., we generally believe that incarcerated people "get what they deserve" regarding not only their sentences but also the collateral consequences that follow them throughout their lives.

Rudi Dalvai, founder of Ctm Altromercato and Solidale Italiano, shares his perspective: "When we launched Economia Carceraria we communicated clearly to consumers through a press release. We received an incredible response; people wanted more! We did not receive a single negative letter."

"Punish? Yes. But only punish? Then we have no progress. Incarceration should include a chance to learn. Learning and earning – saving to start a new life. When they are released, they then have some money, marketable skills and, most importantly, confidence that they can do this on the outside as well as they did it in prison," he adds.

Can we open our minds and hearts to include the incarcerated among our "marginalized" populations? Can we include them in the vision of our global community? Thank you, Solidale Italiano, for showing us a more expansive and inclusive perspective.

Contributing Writer
Manish Gupta

Handmade Expressions:
Sustainability in Fair Trade Crafts

By working in my family's business in India, I learned how communities can be impacted by global trade and also how they can become very dependent on it. Most products we buy, or at least some of their components, have touched more than one continent, hundreds of processes, and countless number of hands. This insight into the impact on communities through trade inspired me to start Handmade Expressions in 2005 with our focus being on poverty reduction by creating jobs in areas most marginalized.

A large percentage of India's population lives in rural areas with insufficient access to jobs or markets. They do, however, have access to traditional artforms, and can hand-make beautiful products for international trade. Women also benefit from this economic empowerment, enabling them to support their families, gain skills and confidence, and become more independent.

However, it is not easy to manage a supply chain that connects rural artisans and U.S. buyers. One of the key strategies we adopted from the beginning was to focus on one country; we built our team in India to provide the on-ground support for communities to successfully engage in international trade. We also decided to focus on communities in need, rather than communities that are already involved in trade. This made our job even harder, yet it was central to our mission. It also gave us access to artforms and products that are more unique, as well as stronger direct partnerships with the artisans.

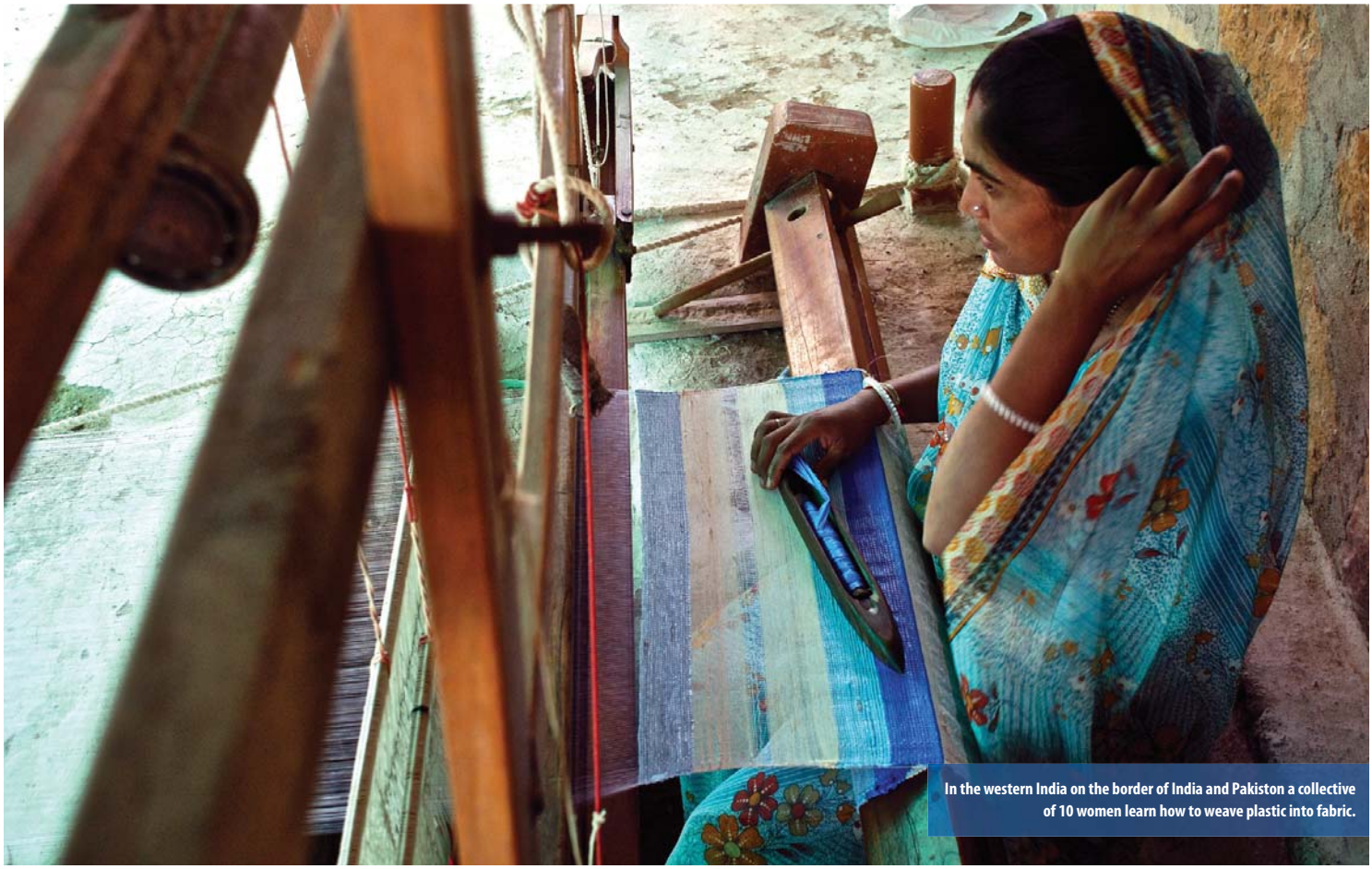
With years of hard work by our design team and our India sourcing team, along with the motivation of our artisan partners, we are proud today to have a strong product line and more than 1,300 retail partners in North America, Australia and the UK. We provide sustainable economic opportunities to a network of 20,000 artisans; 75 percent of which are women and 80 percent live in poor rural areas (where only 39 percent of people are employed).

What we realized in this journey is that once communities start to gain economic independence, they can take charge of their own development needs. Responsible trade leads to good jobs, which in turn fosters community development -- win-win-win! Since our beginning, Handmade Expressions has engaged in numerous projects in our partner communities, including solar lamps, education for women, water filtration and conservation, health camps, and skills and training workshops. In 2012 we completed 25 such projects totaling over $15,000.

A thriving environment is also critical to our mission, which requires a renewed focus on how we do business. This is especially challenging because it involves so many aspects of our operations -- raw material sourcing, production processes, packaging, shipping, and even product lifecycles. Each of these elements requires in-depth analysis to understand the impacts and explore possible alternatives. For example, our jewelry artisans buy metal from local traders. To trace which mines the metals come from, which mills purify it, and what processes are used can be overwhelming for a company our size. At times we wrestled with conflicts between creating employment and safeguarding the environment. We had to invest in learning the impacts, establish parameters around sourcing materials, and focus on big areas of impact while taking small steps each year.

As a result of our commitment, we have established a list of preferred materials and 72 percent of Handmade Expressions' products use these sustainable resources. The preferred materials list is based on the impact the materials have on our people and planet during their production, use and end of lifecycle. We include aspects such as amount of water used in production, toxicity of the process, renewability of the resources used, and compostability. Our goals are to use preferred materials as much as possible in

Gita Ji works on finishing handmade paper sheets in a paper processing artisan unit in NW Rajasthan.



In the western India on the border of India and Pakiston a collective of 10 women learn how to weave plastic into fabric.

our products, and to launch two product collections each year using only preferred materials. We would like to use preferred materials for 100 percent of our products; however, we have to balance the two key aspects of our mission, people and planet.

Some of our artisan groups practice artforms that cannot utilize preferred materials or use processes that are not completely safe for the environment. For us it becomes a crossroads between supporting communities with much-needed job creation or using only the most sustainable materials on our list. We can achieve both goals, but it will take time. We start by working with communities that need jobs and, as the relationship and trust grows, we share why it is important to move to more sustainable materials and processes. Then we can begin the process of converting to materials that align with our sustainable goals. We support the artisans with research, logistics and financing as needed to help with the transition. Within a short time, we can make significant changes towards sustainable production. For example, we worked with our batik artisans to help them shift to using non-toxic dyes. This could not have been done if we were not a trusted partner.

In our packaging we replaced polythene with bags made from upcycled saris. Previously worn saris are discarded, but many still have patches of fabric that can be used. The old saris are cut and stitched to create a bag. The vibrant sari fabric bags are fun and reusable compared to polybags, which are made of non-biodegradable material and end up in landfills and polluting oceans. Moving over from polybags to upcycled sari bags saves thousands of pounds of synthetic material from being produced. In addition to recycling materials, the production of sari bags provides a significant number of jobs for women in need of employment.

We also reduced our inbound shipping-related carbon emissions by 41 percent in 2012, and our outbound shipments are now 90-percent carbon-neutral. The majority of our carbon footprint was related to shipping products from India to the United States via air freight to expedite delivery. To improve our inventory control and reduce our carbon footprint, we now closely monitor inventory and sales.

More than half of our products (51 percent) are compostable at the end of their lifespans. For a product to be considered sustainable, we must not only look at how it is made, but what happens at the end of its life. Handmade Expressions wants our products to merge back into nature through composting, which then provides our planet the ability to recreate the resources. The key to making compostable materials is using natural materials and not combining them with non-natural materials in such a way that makes it hard to separate. For instance, while the cotton we use is compostable, adding a zipper makes the item non-compostable. At the same time, customers want a way to close their bags. This takes a creative solution. Our design team is experimenting with different ways to create bags without plastic or metallic accessories. One example includes a yoga mat bag that has knotted fabric buttons instead of zippers. For our wood products, we use natural wax as varnish, which keeps them compostable and also makes them safe for children. We track how many of our new products are compostable as a way to keep us focused on this aspect. In addition, we do not use new polyester fibers in our products.

The next phase of our sustainability evolution brought the people that purchase our products. Although our products are made responsibly, we are a very small part of the marketplace. For a larger shift in global production, consumers need to be aware of the practices they endorse through all of their purchases. We share our story and message in our product tags, website, catalog, newsletter, social media and events. In 2012 we hosted an extensive artisan tour in 10 U.S. cities to create a dialog between artisans and shoppers, and we're planning a campaign to raise awareness about the interconnectivity of purchases in a global context.

With commitment and creativity, Handmade Expressions has built a strong foundation of sustainability. I have to admit that it's not always easy to stick to the mission and turn down short-term opportunities; yet this journey is incredibly rewarding. The satisfaction of making direct, positive impacts for producers and our environment, and growing a global base of informed ethical consumers, keeps us going and striving for more.

Photo Credit: Handmade Expressions

STAND FOR YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW IF OUR FOOD IS GENETICALLY ENGINEERED

THE PATH TO NATIONAL LABELING IS THROUGH THE STATES

WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THE FOOD WE EAT AND FEED OUR FAMILIES

YES ON 522

LABEL GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS!

GET INVOLVED!

Contact your Senate and House representatives and ask them to support the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act introduced in April of this year.

Washington residents can go even further and vote YES on I-522, the GMO labeling initiative that will be on the ballot this fall.

Victory in Washington state will lead to national labeling:
Washington has major agricultural sectors and fisheries that are very concerned about GMO wheat, salmon and apples. Washington is where we can punch through to victory; other states will follow and national labeling is inevitable. Wherever you live in the US, please sign up at www.Yeson522.com to donate and volunteer to answer the opposition lies on TV while a huge grassroots surge reaches voters directly. If enough voters are reminded of their own rights and power, I522 can win.

Genetic Engineering = More Pesticides.
Chemical companies genetically engineer DNA from bacteria into food crops to either produce or tolerate the pesticides they sell. This foreign DNA produces foreign proteins in every cell of the plant that we eat in our food. No long-term independent safety studies have been performed on adverse health effects. Overuse of pesticide is creating resistant superweeds and superbugs and more and more pesticide is sprayed. Now chemical companies like Monsanto and Dow are engineering resistance in food crops to much more toxic weed killers like Dicamba and 2,4 D, the main ingredient in Agent Orange.

Over 64 countries around the world mandate labeling GMOs, including all in Europe, Japan and even China. Last year a huge coalition of consumer groups, health advocates and environmentalists supported California Proposition 37 to label GMOs. Due to a relentless attack of deceptive TV ads funded by pesticide and junk food manufacturers, just enough California voters were swayed to vote against their own interests in 2012. However that battle has sparked a nationwide movement and set us up for victory in Washington State where voters will vote on I522, The Washington Right to Know Genetically Engineered Foods Act.

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