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- ▶ **The Fabric of Humanity**
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- ▶ **Supermarkets, Tomatoes and Farmworker Justice**
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Fair Trade vs. Conventional "Free" Trade

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ABOUT FAIR WORLD PROJECT

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.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Welcome to the second issue of *For A Better World*, the Fair World Project's semi-annual publication. Our inaugural issue was a great success with stores, religious organizations and universities around the world requesting boxes of the publication to hand out. We went from printing 50,000 to 150,000 to meet demand!

This response is a sure sign of the growth of the fair trade movement and the need for more in depth analysis and stories of fair trade projects around the world.

In this edition contributing authors write about; fair versus conventional "free" trade; different fair trade craft production models to support artisans; vertically certifying fair trade apparel production from farm to factory in Central and North America; community-empowerment in Africa through fair trade Shea Butter production; the tragedy of the chocolate industry versus righteous chocolatiers; and who and what fair trade is for and about.

To a day when all trade is fair.

Sincerely,

Dana Geffner

Dana Geffner
Executive Director

CONTACT US

For more Information on Fair World Project please visit www.fairworldproject.org or contact us at:

Fair World Project
1625 SE 25th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214
800-631-9980
info@fairworldproject.org

Dana Geffner
Executive Director
dana@fairworldproject.org

Ryan Zinn
Campaign Director
ryan@fairworldproject.org

Sue Kastensen
Project and Creative Advisor
sue@fairshake.net

Cover Photo Credit:
Scott Robertson

Distribute Fair World Project's *For A Better World*



Distribute "For a Better World" for free at your business or organization. "For a Better World," a free semi-annual publication, is the first of its kind. Featuring articles from a variety of perspectives; from farmworkers to 100% committed fair trade brands to deciphering certification schemes and trade organizations, "For a Better World" is an excellent resource to educate consumers.

Order now by visiting our website at
www.fairworldproject.org

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 in Europe, laying the groundwork for Ten Thousand Villages, North America's first fair trade organization

1968

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

1972

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

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

1994

Fair Trade Federation is formed as the first network of fair trade organizations in North America

1999

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

2004

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

2007

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

1948

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

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

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

1989

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

1997

Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO) is formed

2002

FLO launches the international "FairTrade" certification mark

2006

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

2010

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

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE



Jocelyn Boreta, *Global Exchange*

Jocelyn has committed herself to arts, activism and economic justice through her undergraduate studies in Cultural Anthropology and long time work with Global Exchange's Fair Trade Program. Through her work targeting Levi Strauss in the settlement of the Saipan Lawsuit and as the director of the Fair Trade Retail Program, she supports grassroots craftsmanship and economically just production.



Bená Burda, *Maggie's Organic*

Bená had spent 14 years in the organic food industry, when a farmer introduced her to organic cotton. She founded Maggie's Organics in 1992 to "save acres of cotton from chemical cultivation". In 1999, the company added "improving lives of apparel workers" to their mission. She continues to be a pioneer in the organic industry.



Kai Huschke

Kai is an active professional involved in communications, strategic partnerships, community organizing and organizational development within the industries of outdoor recreation, publishing, human services and environmental justice. He currently works as a community organizer for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund in the Northwest, and is helping lead an effort to codify into law a Community Bill of Rights for the city of Spokane, Washington.



Phyllis Robinson, *Equal Exchange*

Phyllis is the Education and Campaign Manager at Equal Exchange, a worker-owned Fair Trade co-operative selling coffee, tea, chocolate and bananas from small farmer co-operatives 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 Co-operative Trade Movement.



Sean Sellers, *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*

Sean has been involved with efforts to improve labor conditions in U.S. agriculture since 2003. As a board member of Just Harvest USA, he works closely with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a community-based farmworker organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida.



Olowo-n'djo Tchala, *Allafia*

Olowo-n'djo is from Kaboli, Togo, West Africa. He dropped out of school in the sixth grade and worked beside his mother gathering and selling shea nuts. After moving to the U.S. he received his degree in 2004 from UC Davis in organizational theory and started Allafia Sustainable Skin Care with the goal of reducing poverty and gender inequality in his home country.



Ryan Zinn, *Fair World Project*

Ryan is Campaign Director for the Fair World Project. He has worked in the food justice movement since 1996 at home and abroad. His work has taken him throughout Latin America while working for the Center for International Law, Friends of the Earth-Paraguay, Global Exchange and the Organic Consumers Association.




Additional Contributors: Cosmic Egg Studios

Reference Guide to Fair Trade Certifiers and 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 three major categories. The table shows their main attributes and several prominent examples.

Category	Key Attributes	Examples
3 rd Party Inspection & Certification	3 rd party certifiers field-inspect growing and processing, possibly trading operations and compare performance against a set of FT standards.	Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO) and their national initiatives (TrainsFair USA, Canada); IMO's Fair for Life; Ecocert Fair Trade; Agricultural Justice Project 
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 
Brand Programs	Major brands develop in-house FT programs and work with a 3 rd party to inspect and certify the company's operations against the standards	Whole Foods (Whole Trade) 

*We acknowledge that other socially responsible systems are available. While they certify for many of the same standards, they do not rise to the level of fair trade.

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.

Fair Trade vs. Conventional “Free” Trade: An Introduction

by Ryan Zinn, Campaign Director, Fair World Project

Humans have traded with one another since the beginning of civilization. Trade gives us access to new foods, products and experiences, and creates economic opportunity and markets. Trade touches us all and has created incredible wealth for some; yet many remain impoverished and disenfranchised. To address marginalization and poverty in the global marketplace, “fair trade” has emerged to provide an alternative approach to trading, one based upon direct partnership and respect. Fair trade proves that greater justice in world trade is possible. It highlights the need for change in the rules and practice of conventional trade and shows how a successful business can also put people first. While many people are familiar with the term “free trade,” few understand the negative impact of the institutions and agreements that regulate and promote “free trade.” “Fair Trade” principles have been juxtaposed below with corresponding Free Trade realities to illustrate the key differences in the two approaches to trade. (To prevent confusion with “Fair Trade”, “Conventional Trade” is used instead of the term “Free Trade” below.)

<p>Fair Trade: Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships; Fair Prices & Wages; and Financing Support</p>	<p>Conventional “Free” Trade: The Global Maze and Lowest Common Denominator</p>
<p>Fair trade businesses have direct long-term trading relationships with the producer groups who supply their raw materials. These businesses negotiate a fair price for a product through mutual agreement with producers, that reflects market pricing but with a guaranteed minimum “floor” price. The floor price covers the cost of sustainable production plus a decent return, which protects producers when volatile market prices crash below the cost of production. Fair trade prices and wages thus reflect the true cost of production for farmers and artisans. Fair trade businesses also “pre-purchase/finance” with funds and other support to growers and artisans before or at harvest or when product is ready to ship.</p>	<p>Businesses in developed countries rarely have direct trading relationships with the farmers and producers in developing countries who grow and process their raw materials. Most conventional companies rely upon a complicated network of commodity markets and brokers that provide little information or assurances about conditions under which the product was produced. Low costs reign supreme and compensation and working conditions of farmers, workers or artisans never enter the equation. These producers are at the mercy of the volatile global market, and have limited access to affordable financing or loans. The current regime of “free trade” agreements enshrined by the World Trade Organization (WTO) has led to increased “offshoring” of manufacturing, because large multi-national corporations feel that to remain competitive they must seek cheaper labor costs and weaker environmental regulations. Moving their manufacturing operations, or alternatively, sourcing from third party manufacturers in countries with cheap labor and minimal worker protection and environmental regulations, is the norm today. The global economy is characterized by free flow of capital without corresponding labor and environmental regulations, leading to a downward spiral of real wages for many farmers and workers, and exacerbating the global environmental crisis. To compete in the global marketplace, developing countries often ruled by corrupt elites join inequitable trade agreements that water down labor and environmental laws. In the end, final product costs do not reflect the true human and environmental cost of production.</p>
<p>Fair Trade: No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor; Workers’ Rights to Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association</p>	<p>Conventional “Free” Trade: Zero Child or Other Worker Protection</p>
<p>Fair trade businesses must certify that no child or otherwise exploited labor was used in the production of a given product or commodity. Producer groups must comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as local child labor laws. At least the prevailing minimum wage must be paid for regular work weeks limited to no more than six eight hour days, with time and a half paid for any overtime. Fair trade businesses must enact policies and create</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on page 6</i></p>	<p>According to the International Labor Organizations (ILO) over 200 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are working around the world, often in poor working conditions and without access to proper schooling. Women often face workplace violence and sexual harassment, with few options for legal recourse. Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are designated industrial zones, often referred to as maquiladoras, where national and international labor laws are</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on page 6</i></p>

continued on page 6

Fair Trade: No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor; Workers' Rights to Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association

continued from page 5

systems to prevent the discrimination of employees, coop members or independent artisans based upon gender, race, national origin, religion, disability, caste, sexual orientation, union membership, political affiliation, HIV/Aids status or age. Additionally, the organization is obligated to provide equal access to promotion, training and pay to all.

Conventional "Free" Trade: Zero Child or Other Worker Protection

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suspended or not enforced to attract foreign investment in assembly work. EPZs are often undemocratic workplaces with workers working up to 12 hours per day for sub-minimum wages, and are notorious for labor violations and sexual harassment. In the last decades, workplace rights have been consistently eroded, supplanted by a "profits over people" philosophy. Free trade agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have in fact scrapped national and local laws that protect workers from discrimination and allow for democratic organizing in the workplace. Workers who have demanded a safer and more equitable workplace or have attempted to start a democratic union often face firings, abuse or discrimination.

Fair Trade: Environmental Sustainability

Fair trade farmer groups are prohibited from using synthetic pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers that harm wildlife and damage ecological health. They integrate practices that improve soil fertility, maximize environmental conservation and reduce erosion. Many are also certified organic and their buyers directly or indirectly support the shift to sustainable practices. Fair trade manufacturers and processors must minimize environmental impacts of downstream value-added processing.

Conventional "Free" Trade: Environmental Disaster

Global trade rules prioritize trade over environmental sustainability. In addition to the many companies that manufacture and source from countries with minimal or non-existent environmental regulations, the nondemocratic transnational trade bodies that administer global trade agreements actively discourage and punish member countries' efforts to enact environmental protections. Even the US is not immune: the World Trade Organization ruled that key provisions in the US Clean Air Act, like cleaner gasoline, were illegal. The World Trade Organization's rulings trump national, state and local laws, and member countries especially in the developing world must abide by their rulings or face fines. In the absence of any environmental protections embedded within conventional trade agreements, environmental destruction will continue unchecked.

Fair Trade: Investment in Community Development Projects

In addition to fair prices and wages, fair trade businesses contribute a fair trade premium, generally 5 to 10% of the cost of raw materials and labor, into a democratically administered fund which is invested in local community development projects to address sanitation, health and education needs in the producing communities.

Conventional "Free" Trade: No Strings Attached

Under free trade agreements and policies, corporations are free to set up shop virtually anywhere, often tax-free with huge financial incentives. Corporations are not required to invest in the welfare of the community they operate within – and they generally don't.

Fair Trade: Traceability and Transparency

Fair trade businesses are transparent and accountable for their "fair trade" claims, with annual third-party audits conducted by reputable third-party fair trade certifiers such as the Institute for Marketecology (IMO) and the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO). Organizational transparency fosters marketplace fairness and builds trust amongst producers, consumers and businesses. For example, Fair Trade Proof (www.fairtradeproof.org) publishes participating coffee roasters' financial transactions, contracts and evaluations. Another is IMO's Fair for Life program, which publishes all third party audits it conducts of fair trade companies certified under the FFL program (www.fairforlife.net).

Conventional "Free" Trade: The Great Unknown

In the globalized marketplace, supply chains are often long and opaque. Businesses in the developed world usually buy from intermediate brokers at the best price and have no idea who, where and under what conditions their raw materials are produced. Claims of environmental and social responsibility by such companies are often "greenwashed," highlighting relatively trivial activities of the business's conduct in the developed world, without any responsibility taken for their supply chains and the ultimate producers of their raw materials in the developing world.

The Many Faces of Fair Trade

by Jocelyn Boreta, Global Exchange

In the movement to distinguish fair trade crafts from mass manufactured global goods we strive to know the faces of production. The weathered faces of women weaving in the highlands; families gathered together around workshop tables carrying on a traditional art; teams of buyers and designers bent over design sheets and order forms. The closer one gets to fair trade the more diverse its faces become. It is critical that in defining fair trade craft standards and labeling processes that we identify this diversity as part of the reality and strength of the fair trade movement.

Through my work as a buyer for a fair trade craft wholesaler and retailer, working directly with artisan communities, it has become clear that in order to practice fair trade I must recognize its different faces:

- (1) the independent artisan
- (2) the small family business
- (3) the community cooperative
- (4) the large scale fair trade exporter

Each face represents an important and interconnected sector of the fair trade movement.



(1) THE INDEPENDENT ARTISAN

Louis holding a traditional retablo artpiece in his workshop.

The face of the independent artisan belongs to Louis, a traditional retablo artist (Latin American devotional painter) who designs, molds, paints and finishes each piece in his home on the outskirts of Ayacucho, Peru. His life-long training allows him to produce crafts for the local market and limited export. His access to the global market is limited and his survival depends on his connection to a small network of colleagues who work together to create innovative designs, set prices and make connections.



(2) THE SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS

Tito's family carving and painting colorful gourds.

The face of the small family business belongs to that of Tito Medina and four generations of gourd carvers. Tito, his parents, siblings and community members work together in Cochas, Peru to keep a family tradition alive in their production of decorative gourds. In building the family business, decision-making power and benefits are shared amongst the members. Again market access is highly competitive and limited to local connections and a few overseas contacts. Their success depends on the exclusivity of their designs, the capacity of their production and the chance to build sustainable connections and markets.



(3) THE COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE

At the community center where eighty members of the cooperative came to show us their artwork. This husband and wife team were excited to show us how they spun their wool.

The face of the community cooperative belongs to Hilos y Colores, an association of six working groups, spread throughout the highlands of Peru, each of which has an elected president who works closely with the next to represent group needs and coordinate production of beautiful wool weavings in each community. Production depends on a solid democratic process in decision-making and profit-sharing, which connects the rural indigenous communities. Labor is shared amongst the whole community, men and women, old and young, so as to engage and elevate

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(3) THE COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE

One of the six communities holding their artwork of woven wool belts.

all members. This type of organization focuses on sustainable community based enterprise in which members take ownership over production and share in its proceeds.

(4) THE LARGE SCALE FAIR TRADE EXPORTER

The face of the large scale fair trade exporter belongs to Allpa – a WFTO (World Fair Trade Organization) member – that has been working with artisan communities throughout Peru in the production of handmade crafts for over twenty-three years. Allpa has more than 100 workshops that produce hundreds of different items such as gourds, contemporary weavings, ceramics, bags, scarves, gloves and baskets. The artisans are given designs and Allpa provides consistent support, follow-up, technical assistance, financing and training. Decisions are made at the executive level and labor is organized from the top-down. Production is competitive. The most efficient weavers are given the most work and the most successful designs are thus reproduced at the lowest price. Through this process Allpa is able to produce market responsive, high quality products with constantly evolving designs, which provides sustainable growth and income for a wide range of artisans.

Even though the large scale exporter is the most competitive source of fair trade products, and most commonly recognized by international fair trade member organizations, it is important to remember that designs and traditional production processes are also sourced and sustained at the level of the independent artisan, family business and community cooperative. Each of these fair trade craft faces works to keep traditional craftsmanship alive. ■

Domestic Fair Trade Collaboration and Accountability Agreement Signed by Fair Trade Certifiers

For the the past year, the Domestic Fair Trade Association has been facilitating a dialogue among fair trade and social justice standard-setters and certification programs with the goal of working cooperatively to build a movement for socially just agriculture. Now several of these organizations along with key stakeholders have signed an agreement to continue this dialogue, transparently release program information, and work towards a code of conduct for fair trade and social justice certification programs. This commitment is an important statement of solidarity within the movement and an understanding that our common vision is stronger than our program differences.

The agreement, which we've called the Boston Accord, was signed by Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) partners including six chapters of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, Florida Organic Growers, Rural Advancement Foundation International, and El Comite de Apoyo a Los Trabajadores Agricolas as well as the Institute for Marketecology (IMO) and Scientific Certification Systems (SCS). AJP is the developer of the first domestic fair trade certification standards and Food Justice Certified label, IMO is a respected international fair trade certifier with the Fair for Life label and announced last year they are looking for pilot projects in North America, and SCS developed the Certified Fair Labor label for both domestic and international application.

Showing support for this important process, a number of stakeholders from across the food and agriculture system also signed the Accord including: Berkshire Co-op Market, Centro Campesino, Community to Community Development, Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, Equal Exchange, fairDeal Value Chain, Fair World Project, Farmer Direct Co-op, Midwest Organic Services Association, Once Again Nut Butter, Organic Valley, and Willamette Seed and Grain.

Maggie's Organics – The Fabric of Humanity

by Bená Burda, Maggie's Organics

Maggie's Organics has been making high-quality durable and affordable socks and apparel since 1992. We began quite by accident, when we learned the truth behind conventional cotton working with an organic corn farmer in Texas.

Before founding Maggie's, I was working with the farmer to improve the quality of his blue corn crop for the tortilla chips she was marketing at the time. The farmer suggested that adding cotton into his three year organic crop rotation would improve his corn yields. His experiment worked, and resulted in 200 acres of certified organic cotton, which he expected me to sell! In researching cotton, I learned that this one crop is grown on 3-5% of the world's cultivated land, yet uses nearly 10% of the world's pesticides and 25% of the world's insecticides! We committed ourselves to utilizing these 200 acres of organic cotton to tell the real story behind conventional cotton clothing, and Maggie's Organics was born.

Knowing nothing about the complex world of apparel production, it did not take long for us to feel overwhelmed. Even a basic t-shirt takes 6-8 weeks to produce and involves 4-6 separate contractors. Many mistakes were made: Natural dyes that faded in the sun – we called them mood shirts (if you didn't like the color, go outside for a few hours); Women's scoop tops that we marketed as wearing well day-into-evening because they started the day on your shoulders and were off-shoulder by the evening. But we persevered, studied hard, and were blessed with a customer base that believed in what we were doing.

As we expanded our product offering, we learned first-hand about the working conditions in textile plants while dealing with two ongoing problems: late orders and poor quality. We began to spend more time in the factories, trying to figure out why these problems recurred. This is where we learned the truth about who

makes the clothes we all wear: poor and often under-educated workers, mostly women, paid by the piece. In order to make enough money to feed their families, they stay at the same repetitive jobs for years, wreaking havoc on their bodies and minds. Worst of all, these workers are completely disenfranchised from the consumers who wear their clothes as well as the companies whose labels they sew.



Harvest December 2009 - Nicaragua - Fair Trade and Organic certified cotton grown from special Melba variety

We could no longer consider Maggie's an environmentally responsible company while engaging in such an irresponsible supply chain. We had to find a better way. This is when we met Jubilee House Community (JHC), a community development organization in Nicaragua that for ten years had worked to find employment for victims of natural disasters. JHC had access to many workers, both skilled and unskilled. We offered JHC a challenge: if they could create a facility where every worker had a vested interest in our success and had a way to determine their own success, we would turn all of our sewing contracts over to them.

JHC suggested a worker-ownership model, and together we helped to create the first of several 100% worker-owned

apparel cooperatives in Nicaragua called the Fair Trade Zone. This experience inspired us to continue pursuing other cooperative projects and to develop relationships with contractors that honor workers' rights. Our most recent co-op, Opportunity Threads in North Carolina, makes a stuffed animal line out of our excess socks. It was invaluable to each project that all of these workers had familiarity with the structure of cooperatives before we began. Co-ops are part of the landscape in Nicaragua, especially with folks who lived through the Sandinista revolution.

All of our projects required amazing amounts of fortitude, patience, and trial by all of us. We have plenty left to do to prove that this type of production facility can succeed long-term, but we are convinced that it is a replicable business model for small to medium-sized manufacturing concerns in many industries. And from our experience, the involvement of all three legs of the stool are imperative – workers, a community organization, and a brand.

Today, Maggie's Organics has developed three separate supply chains for all of our products:

- Our socks are made by five family-owned mills in North Carolina. We are proud that every pair of socks we have made in 18 years has been made in the USA.
- Our tights and legwear are produced in GOTS (Global Organic Textile Exchange) certified facilities in Peru, from cotton grown by cooperative farmers in the Canete Valley.
- Our new apparel line of Hoodies, Dresses, Wraps, Scarves, Pants, Tanks, Camisoles, and Men's Shirts is from our Central American Supply chain.

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From Left to Right: Rosa Davila, one of the founding members of the Fair Trade Zone. August 2009
Bená Burda with members of the Genesis Spinning Co-op – December 2009
Increasing cotton acreage at Palo Martinez' farm - July 2010

Each supply chain we use is committed to providing a quality Maggie's product that is produced with fair working conditions and practices and, as always, all of our cotton and wool is 100% certified organic. We are intricately involved with each step of production of our organic cotton apparel, from the farming to the finished garment. Our goal is to connect the workers who make our products with the consumers who wear them.

Recently, we have begun to work with independent monitoring organizations that offer third party verification programs that certify the working conditions and labor conditions in our supply chain. Our Central American supply chain is the first to be certified by both Scientific Certifications Standards Fair Labor Practices and through Fair

Trade USA by their new apparel pilot program.

This supply chain begins in Nicaragua, where we have helped to revive a devastated cotton farming industry by converting farmers to organic farming. The grower co-ops we work with in Nicaragua provide livelihoods for over 1200 people. All of the groups harvest their cotton by hand and use a specific variety of cotton seed that was developed by Nicaraguans to work best in their climate. Yields have increased each year, and farmers earn over twice what they would for conventional cotton per acre.

With the help of JHC, who coordinates all the growers, we have been able to develop worker-owned cooperatives for the ginning of the fiber and the spinning of the yarn. The yarn then

heads to Costa Rica where CIA Textiles dyes and finishes the yarn into different fabrics. This is also where the fabric is cut and sewn into our finished garments. CIA Textiles was founded over 60 years ago by a Jewish immigrant from Poland who was sent by his family to escape the Nazi invasion. His vision and compassion set the groundwork for workers' rights with a democratic workers' association, paying above average wages, and instituting many special benefit programs.

At Maggie's Organics, we are proud of what we have accomplished with every worker in our supply chains and we are honored with the partnerships we have developed. We are persistently searching for ways to grow and expand our efforts. In 2011, we plan to have our knitters in North Carolina utilize organic cotton yarn from our Nicaraguan farmers for our socks. We are continuing to build a vertical supply chain that is 100% worker-owned. We are also helping the Nicaraguan farmers supply organic cotton fiber to Peru. As we have grown over the past 18 years, we have found ourselves looking for more opportunities, not just for Maggie's, but also for our supply chain partners. ■

For more information: www.maggiesorganics.com

World Fair Trade Day: YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES!

Join us on May 14th, 2011 for World Fair Trade Day
Find out how you can participate in or create your own event here:
www.fairworldproject.org



Alaffia Shea Butter Cooperative members in front of the Alaffia Cooperative, Sokodé, Togo in December 2010.

African Self-Empowerment Through Fair Trade Shea Butter

by Olowo-n'djo Tchala

For the past 500 years trade with the continent of Africa has been unbalanced and in conjunction with rampant corruption and lack of democratic control, has led to the paralysis of economies across Africa. As a result Africa, with some of the richest resources and cultures on the planet, is still considered the poorest continent on Earth. The continent has also been quickly losing her great wealth of traditions and culture as young people increasingly yield to Western pressures and models. However, it is precisely these young people who can use their opportunities to sustain our communities by placing fair value on traditional resources and knowledge.

My personal history well illustrates the current situation of our continent. My mother has never set foot in school and worked long hours on her farm to raise her eight children in an 8' x 10' room. Like my brothers and sisters, I too dropped out of school in sixth grade. However, because of my mother's persistence, my opportunities were far greater than hers, and from an early age I understood that once I grew up I would like to help my mother have an easier life. This vision began to become real when I met my

wife Rose – a Peace Corps volunteer – in Togo in 1996. When I joined Rose in the United States two years later I began working as a janitor, while attending English as a Second Language classes at a local community college. From there I worked up to college level classes, eventually transferring to the University of California-Davis where I obtained my B.S. in Organizational Studies in 2004.

By my junior year at Davis it was clear to me that true African self-empowerment must begin with the continent herself, and that by placing fair value on our resources – tangible and non – we can support ourselves and our communities. I saw that sustainable community empowerment could come through trade in our resources rather than relying on foreign aid. In May 2003 my wife and I founded our fair trade shea butter cooperative based on these beliefs and a will to see them through. Seven years later our cooperative has over 300 members and is certified under IMO's Fair for Life Program.

As the key resource for our work we choose traditional shea butter for four main reasons. First, I believe that for Africans to rise out of poverty we must maintain and revive our traditional knowledge. Since shea trees are native

to the savanna of West Africa, the traditional crafting method still exists in rural communities, but is vanishing fast as younger generations do not see the economic return of participating in such work. Our recent recruitment of nine young ladies to the cooperative is proof that fair value on traditional knowledge can maintain our cultural resources. Secondly, traditional extraction of shea butter is an environmentally sustainable practice. Shea trees are adapted to the ecology of the savanna and therefore do not require fertilizers and pesticides. Thirdly, while traditionally women traded shea butter locally, the increasing international emphasis on this resource threatened this livelihood. Like my mother, most women that participate in the collection and crafting of shea butter do not receive fair prices for their labor on the international market. For this very reason, when we set up our cooperative, we made sure that every participant – from nut gatherers to shea crafters – is compensated fairly. Finally, traditionally handcrafted shea butter has real health benefits for our customers with proven skin moisturizing and healing properties.

In 2004 we made another critical decision, to create a line of body care based on our handcrafted shea butter. We felt at the time that for us to truly achieve our fair trade objectives we must completely eliminate the intermediate brokers and go directly to the market in the West. In this way our cooperative members gain a greater portion of the final price and customers are not over charged. In conventional trading systems the cost of intermediate brokers is compensated by lower prices paid to producers and higher prices charged to consumers. By integrating our entire supply chain through not only making the raw ingredient – shea butter – but also formulating, producing and distributing finished products ourselves - we are able to fulfill our fair trade objectives.

Foremost of these objectives was and continues to be our community projects. Since our first year, we have dedicated our sales to community empowerment projects in central Togolese communities. Our projects include providing bicycles to over 3,000 disadvantaged students,

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planting over 7,000 trees in the past seven years and currently supporting 400 women with full prenatal and delivery care. We conduct all of our projects with a long term goal of relieving poverty and contributing to a functional society.

In summary, while fair trade practices are not the only solution for Africa to rise out of poverty, our project shows that they can be an important force for community development. I urge our Western brothers and sisters to participate in fair trade whenever possible, and I strongly urge my fellow Africans to stand by their cultural heritage and employ morality when trading their resources and labor. As for Alaffia and myself, we have dedicated the rest of our lives to the empowerment of our communities through trade – on fair terms.

Alaffia's Community Development Projects

Bicycles for Education

We began our Bicycles for Education project in 2005. The idea for this project arose while we were brainstorming ways that our consumer community in Washington State could connect directly with the shea butter cooperative and support community projects there. Fair trade is a social movement and there is a need for people on both sides of the trade - producer communities in poor countries and consumer communities in wealthier ones - to participate in projects funded by the fair trade social premium.

Rural children, girls especially, are severely underrepresented in the Togolese secondary school system. While there are many factors leading to high dropout rates, time spent walking to and from school is one of them. Many children in rural Togo walk 5-15 miles to school making it impossible for them to have time to study. This is especially true for girls, who traditionally have more household chores than boys.

In June 2006 we shipped our first container of 600 bicycles to Togo. Since



Kousountou Secondary School student receives a bicycle from Alaffia's founder in December, 2010. This student previously walked 5 miles along a single lane path from her village to school each day.

then we have distributed over 3,000 bicycles in thirty villages in central Togo. Student participants are selected based on distance to school, family income and gender. Girls are given preference due to their much higher dropout rate.

Based on our follow-up studies, this project has been extremely successful. Not only are students who received bicycles staying in school and passing their exams, there have been other unexpected benefits such as a reduction in pregnancy rates for female students.

Schools Project

The causes for the failure of the educational system in West Africa are complex. A lack of funding is a major factor. Mismanagement and misallocation of the limited funds available contributes further to the educational crisis. General poverty makes formal education an expensive choice for parents and even more so when governments are unable to provide books, buildings or even pay for teachers. Even though the current education system has many problems beyond funding (curricula issues, lack of traditional educational models, poor training of teachers), we still believe all children should have access to the economic opportunities that education can present. Therefore we have supported education in our central Togo communities since 2004 through several projects.

Our very first project, which continues to this day, is providing school supplies

such as notebooks, pencils, pen, chalk and uniform fabric to 200 disadvantaged students each year. In addition, we carry out several school repair and furniture donation projects annually. Villages are often able to build a school using local labor, timber and bricks, but cannot afford critical materials, such as metal roofs and desks to complete the project. Alaffia provides bench seating for five schools each year to reduce overcrowding and increase class capacity.

Maternal Health Project

Rates of maternal mortality (MMRs), i.e. the death of a woman during or shortly after a pregnancy, remain alarmingly high in Africa, even as they decrease elsewhere in the world. The effects of maternal mortality on families and communities are obvious and varied. When a mother dies her children are left without their primary caregiver. Studies have shown reduced nutritional status and increased childhood mortality in motherless children in West Africa. These children move more frequently and are less likely to stay in school. Poor nutrition and lack of education during childhood exacerbate poverty situations. Thus, addressing maternal mortality in our communities is essential for alleviating poverty. Several in-depth studies at the community level have determined that the most critical of all the factors in reducing maternal mortality is access to quality maternity care and birthing professionals - physicians and qualified midwives - before, during and after childbirth.

Alaffia partners with several local health clinics in central Togo to provide prenatal care and post natal follow-ups for 400 women each year. Each participant in our maternal health program receives a monthly checkup, prenatal vitamins, any necessary medications (antibiotics, etc.) and delivery care – including any emergency or complication care. We continue to follow the mothers and their babies for six months after birth. Since our program began we have not lost a single mother or child. ■

Chocolate: the Bitter and the Sweet

Tragedy vs. Fairness in Making the “Food of the Gods”

by Kai Huschke

Cocoa beans – the central character of the long story of chocolate – are actually not beans at all but seeds of the cocoa fruit. Cocoa trees grow in equatorial regions of the Caribbean, West Africa, Southeast Asia and Central and South America. They typically produce two harvests per year with each fruit yielding about forty seeds. Before there can be chocolate, the fruit must be harvested and fermented, the seeds/beans removed and dried, and then the dried beans bagged for processing—all of which takes a lot of labor. The average cocoa farm is a few acres in size and tended by a handful of workers. There are an estimated six million cocoa farmers around the world with another thirty-five million people whose livelihood relies on the production and distribution of cocoa beans and cocoa products like cocoa liquor, cocoa butter, cocoa cake and cocoa powder.

A 3,500-year enterprise, the consumption, cultivation and trade of cocoa was born in the central and western regions of the Amazon. Chocolate and the various products derived from cocoa are commonplace today, but it would be centuries before the masses enjoyed what Olmec, Aztec and Mayan royalty originally relished in drink form mixed with spices. Cocoa’s eventual global journey would come at the hands of the powerful trading powers Spain and Holland (15th to 17th century), who battled over the cocoa trade to satisfy demand of Europe’s social elite. Slowly the love of chocolate penetrated deeper into society with what would resemble a chocolate bar appearing in the mid 1800’s, serving chocolate confections to satisfy the sweet tooth of Europeans and Americans alike. Today, Europe and N. America consume over 60% of the world’s chocolate, now a \$75 billion industry.

The Bitterness of Cocoa Labor Practices

Though chocolate is enjoyed the world over, many cocoa farmers have never even tried chocolate. The business end of



Under-aged child working the production of cocoa in the Ivory Coast.
Photo Credit: International Labor Rights Forum

chocolate is still the realm of the super elite with over 80% of the world chocolate market controlled by a handful of corporations. The European cocoa trade lineage has stayed virtually unsevered as corporations in the United Kingdom, Holland and Switzerland continue to be the major players. Controlling nearly the entire chain from bean-to-bar these corporations have the power to dictate beneficial versus harmful trade and labor practices. Cocoa beans are a commodity and the tonnage is high enough (three million tons traded annually) that fractions of a penny have major financial implications. The most controllable cost variable is people –the cheaper the labor the cheaper the cocoa beans.

Our love of chocolate contrasts bitterly with labor abuses that are prevalent and egregious in cocoa farming and production (especially in West Africa), including a significant number of children whose basic human rights are routinely violated. From toxic pesticide exposure to 12-hour work days to carrying excessively heavy loads to the use of sharp machetes without adequate training, children as young as five years old are forced to work in terrible conditions. The pay for children is minimal to zero, and the most outrageous aspect of the cocoa industry is that children are being sold in slavery. Thousands of children (mainly between the ages of 12 to 16; source: Save the

Children) are being trafficked through countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, ending up primarily in the Ivory Coast. These children not only endure dangerous work conditions, but often are victims of mental, physical and/or sexual abuse.

In 2001 the Chocolate Manufacturers Association (CMA) and World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), aiming to end child labor in the production of cocoa, signed the Harkin-Engel Protocol (named after U.S. Representative Eliot Engel and American senator Tom Harkin). Article I of the protocol states that the chocolate industry’s charge is to take “immediate and effective action to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor”. However, after nine years, the problem still persists even though the giants of the chocolate world like Nestle, ADM, Mars and Hershey signed the pledge to “prohibit and eliminate” child labor in the cocoa industry.

Raising the Bar, Changing Behavior

The lack of compassion and unwillingness to take substantive action within the chocolate industry led to the formation of an activist campaign called “It’s Time to Raise the Bar”, which targets the Hershey Corporation. This campaign – driven by Global Exchange, Green America, International Labor Rights Forum and Oasis – stems, one, from a recent report by the Payson Center for International

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Development at Tulane University on labor practices in cocoa production, showing that little has happened to eliminate the use of child labor; and two, Hershey's first-ever Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report which also shows Hershey doing little to correct problems in the industry such as human trafficking. The American based Hershey Corporation (annual revenues of \$5.3 billion) continues to lag behind others in sourcing from cocoa operations that are free of labor rights abuses, in transparency in its sourcing of cocoa, and in fair trade certification, all the while touting its social mindedness by donating (aka greenwashing) to aid programs in West Africa. Raise the Bar (www.raisethebarhershey.org) is meant to put serious pressure on Hershey to take direct responsibility for its own supply chains and end human rights abuses of children in the cocoa industry.

Fulfilling Chocolate Dreams: The Stories of Theo and Divine

Though the social injustices that permeate the industry are daunting, there are examples of conscious business and consumerism which have led to tangible impacts in improving the lives of many people. When we buy a bar of chocolate or cocoa powder for baking there are prompts that help us decipher which products have a higher standard. The USDA organic label is one assurance but the crucial one is that of fair trade. Third-party fair trade certifiers aim to make sure that companies practice putting people first: socially, economically and environmentally. Two shining examples that meld human compassion and equity into the chocolate recipe are Theo and Divine Chocolates.

Theo Chocolates (short for "Theobroma Cacao" or "food of the gods") was launched in 2006 by Joe Whinney – the first company to make, versus import, fair trade and organic chocolate in America. Whinney's path to founding a socially and environmentally sustainable chocolate company was blazed over a ten year period where he worked with cocoa



Cocoa farmers working with Theo Chocolate.
Photo Credit: Theo Chocolate

growers in Central America and Africa to improve environmental and social conditions surrounding cocoa production. A meticulous chocolatier, Theo is first of all environmentally and socially mindful in sourcing cocoa beans and other ingredients. They work directly with small farmers or farmer managed cooperatives in countries like Panama, Tanzania and Madagascar. They make sure that the premium they pay for both organic and fair trade directly benefits farmers and their communities. In addition, Theo spends time educating farmers on best practices for the production of cocoa beans to improve yields and incomes, and has introduced many – for the first time – to the joys of chocolate. Theo Chocolates carry IMO's Fair For Life fair trade certification. IMO is a third party fair trade certifier who verifies environmental practices are followed on farms, work environments are safe in both farming and processing, fair prices and wages are paid to farmers and workers, and no child or otherwise exploited labor is involved in farming and processing. IMO's Fair for Life also ensures the fair trade premium that Theo pays into a jointly administered project fund is democratically and appropriately used as a powerful tool for community development.

Divine Chocolate sprouted from the seeds of democratic opportunity. In the early 1990's a shift occurred in the cocoa market of Ghana creating an opportunity for farmer-run cooperatives to form. Besides delivering more profit to the farmers, the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative set out to expand the

involvement of women at all levels and to practice socially just farming. With partner NGO's the members of Kuapa Kokoo then voted in the late 1990's to enter the retail world of confections by producing their own chocolate bar to sell in the UK – Divine Chocolates.

Since then Divine has made its way to mainland Europe and the United States. As the majority shareholder, Kuapoa Kokoo (made up of over 50,000 farmers) uses dividends to improve its members' livelihoods and business of cocoa bean production, and funds social projects through its credit union. Divine Chocolates carry the TransFair label, a third party inspector and certifier that ensures that cocoa farmers receive a fair price for their harvest, direct trade links are created between farmer-owned cooperatives and buyers, farmers have access to affordable credit, and no slave or otherwise exploited labor is involved in cocoa farming. On the ground this translates to access to needed farm equipment, better schooling for children, community access to clean drinking water and receiving a premium price for cocoa beans.

A passion for chocolate, respect for people and planet, and building sustainable supply chains and healthy communities are what make Theo and Divine such delicious examples of what is possible in the complicated world of cocoa. Though legal change is needed to hold culprit individuals and corporations responsible for human rights abuses, we as consumers can play our part to improve the world of chocolate by buying only fair trade certified chocolate. It's past time that we properly honor the "food of the gods". ■

It's Time to Raise The Bar - www.raisethebarhershey.org
Theo Chocolates – www.theochocolate.com
Divine Chocolates – www.divinechocolate.com
Fair For Life – www.fairforlife.net
TransFair USA – www.transfairusa.org

Supermarkets, Tomatoes and Farmworker Justice

by Sean Sellers

Last November, the previously unthinkable happened – farmworkers and representatives of the \$620 million Florida tomato industry announced an end to their decade-long labor conflict with a symbolic handshake and signed accord.

The landmark agreement between the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), an internationally recognized workers' organization based in southwest Florida, and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE) will cover over ninety percent of the state's tomato farms and improve pay and conditions for 30,000 farmworkers. The industry is responsible for nearly all fresh tomatoes grown in the U.S. between November and June.

"This is a watershed moment in the history of Florida agriculture," said Lucas Benitez of the CIW. "With this agreement, the Florida tomato industry – workers and growers alike – is coming together in partnership to turn the page on the conflict and stagnation of the past and instead forge a new and stronger industry."

"This is the beginning, not the end, of a very long journey," continued Benitez. "But with this agreement, the pieces are now in place for us to get to work on making the Florida tomato industry a model of social accountability for the 21st century."

Hope is indeed on the horizon, thanks to the efforts of farmworkers, consumer activists, Florida tomato growers, and nine multinational fast-food and foodservice corporations who have joined in support of the CIW's Fair Food principles: *McDonalds, Taco Bell, Burger King, Bon Appetit, Subway, Whole Foods, Aramark, Sodexo and Compass Group.*

These principles include a wage increase, a strict code of conduct, a cooperative complaint resolution system, a participatory health and safety program, and a worker-to-worker education process. This unfolding process marks a sea change in Florida and U.S. agriculture.

With the sole exception of Whole Foods Market, however, the \$550 billion supermarket industry is refusing to do its

part. While resistance is perhaps to be expected from grocery goliaths such as Giant, Stop & Shop, Publix, Kroger and Walmart, the indifference of Trader Joe's – considered by some analysts to be one of the "world's most ethical companies" – is quite baffling.

Yet that is exactly the position of the quirky cheap-chic retailer, and, along with the rest of the supermarket industry, the effect may be to significantly diminish farmworkers' brightest hopes for change in several decades.



Tomato farmworker in the field.
Photo Credit: Scott Robertson

The Campaign for Fair Food

When consumers browse through the produce aisles at their local supermarkets, they are often unaware of the hidden exploitation behind the displays of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sub-poverty wages, the denial of basic labor rights, sexual harassment, health and safety risks, and wage theft are commonplace for U.S. agricultural workers. The Department of Labor describes farmworkers as a "workforce in significant economic distress," citing annual earnings of less than \$12,500 to support its conclusions.

In extreme cases, workers have been held against their will and forced to work for little or no pay with threats or the actual use of violence. Since 1997, a total of nine such farm labor slavery operations have been prosecuted in Florida. The CIW has been involved in the discovery, investigation, and prosecution of seven of those operations, helping to liberate well over 1,000 workers.

The CIW's Campaign for Fair Food seeks to improve wages and working conditions for Florida tomato pickers by calling on major buyers of tomatoes to pay a premium of one penny more per pound for their tomatoes, ensure that this penny is passed down directly to farmworkers, and work together with the CIW to implement a code of conduct in their supply chains.

Since the breakthrough with the FTGE, many changes are already evident on some of the state's largest farms. For the first time ever, many farmworkers now have a reliable mechanism to ensure proper payment for hours worked, as well as a grievance procedure to address abuses or violations of the code of conduct.

Many workers are also receiving a wage increase from the penny per pound, combined with an end to the over-filling of buckets, a standard practice in the industry that can reduce worker's piece rate wages by as much as ten percent.

"For this new model to achieve its full potential, however, retail food industry leaders must also step up and support the higher standards," explains Gerardo Reyes, also of the CIW. "Key players in the fast-food and foodservice industries have already committed their support. It is time now for supermarket industry leaders to seize this historic opportunity and help make the promise of fresh – and fair – tomatoes from Florida a reality."

Without the supermarket industry paying into the penny-per-pound program and conditioning their purchases on the Fair Food principles, workers' raises are shorted and the push to improve working conditions is undermined.

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Tomato farmworkers in the field. Photo Credit: Scott Robertson

Will the Supermarkets Step Up?

By pooling their massive purchasing power, supermarket chains are able to demand deep discounts from their suppliers.

Unfortunately for farmworkers, it is

precisely this type of high-volume, low-cost purchasing that has created strong downward pressure on wages and working conditions as suppliers look to cut costs in order to maintain profit margins. Supermarket chains may not

have created farmworker poverty, but they continue to play an active, and profitable, role in perpetuating it.

Since 2007, the CIW and its allies have called on supermarket chains to support the emerging solution to the human rights crisis in Florida's fields. This call is even more urgent given recent developments with the FTGE.

Yet with the exception of Whole Foods, supermarkets still refuse to join the Fair Food program. It is increasingly clear that the supermarket industry is attempting to shirk responsibility to pay into the system, short workers of its portion of the pay increase, and refuse to tie its purchases to the Fair Food principles.

Until this untenable position changes, supermarket chains can expect growing discontent from farmworkers and consumers alike. ■

To Tell the Truth: Who Owns Fair Trade?

by Phyllis Robinson

When TransFair USA announced last fall that it was changing its name to Fair Trade USA, an immediate and ongoing tsunami of outrage and indignation burst through the Fair Trade community. Alternative Trade Organizations, 100% Fair Trade roasters, student, religious, and consumer activists, and non-profit organizations, all of whom have dedicated themselves to the difficult but critically important work of building market access for small farmers across the globe, were affronted. How could any single organization, a certifying agency no less, claim the name Fair Trade? Fair Trade is a concept, a way of doing business, a value system, an entire movement built through the convictions and hard work of hundreds of thousands of individuals across the globe. Can one organization simply appropriate all that "Fair Trade" signifies, and claim it for itself?

Reactions to the announcement have differed, but mainly span from disappointment to anger. Some are dismayed that TransFair would undertake such a divisive move, thereby attracting



Cartoons courtesy of John Klossner, copywrite 2011.

bad publicity and potentially hurting those for whom Fair Trade is most supposed to benefit. Others are more indignant, seeing this step as one more in a long line of "corporate-like attitudes and behaviors" that blatantly disregard

and steamroll over the legitimate concerns of others in the movement. Still others give TransFair credit for devising such a bold marketing move: just when your organization is encountering growing public relations challenges,

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rebrand yourselves so that the average consumer makes the assumption that your organization and Fair Trade are one and the same.

It is interesting that the move comes at a time when criticism of TransFair's approach and its actions has never been higher. In fact, the name change coincides with the recent decision this past year of many organizations, including Equal Exchange, to drop the use of the TransFair logo on fairly traded products, in favor of the IMO (Institute of Market Ecology) "Fair for Life" certification. Not only does the departure of many of the original "100% Fair Traders" signal growing discontent with TransFair, but since companies must pay each time they use the TransFair logo on a product, discontinuing use of their seal also carries financial impact. For the first time, companies finally have a choice between Fair Trade certifications. It is no wonder that TransFair took this moment to try and become Fair Trade USA.

But at the end of the day, why make such a fuss over a name change?

I mean honestly, does it really matter what Transfair calls itself? Should we really be getting worked up about the preferences of one certifying agency? Aren't there far more pressing issues going on in this country and in the world right now that deserve our attention?

Much of the anger and resentment surrounding TransFair's name change results from their long history of overlooking and undermining the interests, opinions and values of others in the movement. Coming as it has after a long line of far more serious and consequential actions over the past decade, this appropriation of the name Fair Trade, is considered by many to be the proverbial "last straw." The real disagreement, between TransFair and others in the movement, however is much more than symbolism. It is about divergent views of the mission, the underlying values of Fair Trade, and the strategies employed to fulfill that mission. At stake are the fundamental questions: who is Fair Trade meant to serve and how should it best do so?

The roots of Fair Trade began in Europe after World War II as a faith-based initiative to help provide livelihoods for eastern European war refugees. Non-profits, such as Oxfam, with an interest in alleviating global poverty, worked to create markets for the refugees' products. In these early days, "fair trade" followed a charity, or solidarity, model where the disadvantaged received market assistance.



Santiago Paz, CEPICAFE coffee co-operative, Fair Trade Futures Conference, Sept. 2011

Meanwhile, small farmers in the Global South, historically marginalized and without access to social services, infrastructure, credit, markets, or technical assistance, were organizing themselves into co-operatives as a means of survival. In response, by the mid-70s, a new wave of businesses in Europe, called Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs), sprang up with the philosophy, "Trade Not Aid." They believed that market access was not something to be done out of charity, but rather, that Fair Trade was a right. The ATOs saw the farmer co-ops as equal partners; that work needed to be done in both the North and South in order to create a new system of trade that would benefit producers and consumers alike.

In the mid-1980s, Equal Exchange's founders created one of the first Fair Trade organizations in the United States to work with food products and small farmer co-operatives in the Global South. Like its allies in Europe, Equal Exchange's philosophy is deeply rooted in the conviction that the conventional trade system is unfair and that the mission of Fair Trade was to support small farmers, educate consumers, change business practices and ultimately create a new system of trade based on dignity, respect, and empowerment. This was not charity; it was structural change.

And so, the ATOs, Fair Trade coffee roasters, food co-operatives, social justice non-profits, interfaith organizations, students and other activists began the difficult work of growing a movement and opening markets for small farmer products. Alongside the traders' efforts to build supply chains and get small farmer products on the grocery store shelves, the activists worked tirelessly to build demand. They educated consumers about the importance of small farmers and the need to change the trade system which disproportionately favored large companies and plantations, marginalized small farmers and kept consumers ignorant about the source of their food and those who grow it.

An international body, the Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO), was created to certify small farmer co-operatives through a set of social and environmental criteria. In 1998, Equal Exchange, along with other organizations, supported the establishment of TransFair USA, a FLO-affiliate, to serve as an independent third party to ensure and verify that Fair Trade businesses in the U.S. were also meeting a set of Fair Trade guidelines. To participate in the system, and place the seal on a product, each industry pays a fee to TransFair.

Since that time, TransFair has grown to become a \$10 million organization. While it is technically a certifying agency, TransFair also began promoting Fair Trade and its licensees, organizing consumers, and marketing its seal as a brand. One of the

earliest criticisms leveled at TransFair was the fact that it simultaneously attempts to perform inherently contradictory functions: on the one hand certifying, regulating and receiving user fees from all companies, and on the other, spending this money to promote and heavily market a very limited number of specific companies. What should have been applauded as an effort to bring unprecedented visibility to the struggles of small farmers was undercut by the larger conflict of interest and the dumbing-down of the message; in short, neglecting consumer education in favor of the branding slogan, "Look for the seal."

It wasn't long before TransFair was courting large multi-national companies, such as Nestle, Chiquita, and Dole, lowering the bar to grow their brand. Providing certification to these companies, with their horrendous reputations, poor labor practices, and minimal commitments to the goals and mission of Fair Trade, has angered many who are striving to uphold Fair Trade to the highest level. Several years ago, TransFair received so much opposition to their attempt to bring Chiquita into the Fair Trade system, it eventually was forced to give up. However, last year TransFair did succeed in quietly getting a portion of Dole's bananas certified Fair Trade. The certification came at the same time that Dole (and Chiquita) was sued for its documented financial support of paramilitaries in Colombia, responsible for the murders of a number of labor unionists working on its plantations. Last year, both companies made it to the International Labor Rights Forum's list of 2010's five worst labor rights abusers.

Of all the controversial actions the certifier has taken, it has been TransFair's work in spearheading the entry of plantations into the Fair Trade system that has earned them the most ire, and probably done the most to weaken Fair Trade. In an effort to grow fast, Transfair and FLO have promoted a whole range of new products eligible for Fair Trade certification. Rather than do the necessary, and very difficult work to create and grow supply chains from small farmer organizations, the certifying bodies have taken the far

easier path and certified a whole host of plantation products. It is this "quantity" over "quality" approach which has small farmers, traders, and Fair Trade activists most upset.

At the Fair Trade Futures conference in Boston last September, Santiago Paz of the Peruvian small farmer coffee co-operative, CEPICAFE, summed it up best: "It's as if they're driving a car going 70 miles an hour and they have put their foot on the gas pedal. Now it's going 90, 100, 120-mph and suddenly the small farmer in the passenger seat is flying out the window. They are so concerned with growing the system, advancing at all costs, that they will only end with the extinction of small farmers."

Fair Trade is about transformation and this structural change only comes about by demanding and growing alternative models to the current system. It requires a commitment to small farmer organizations, to opening markets for small farmers, and to building a network of informed, educated and active consumers. Instead of supporting others in the movement to carry out this work, TransFair and its parent organization, FLO, have put their energy and resources into expanding the brand: not only do they certify multi-national companies whose overall practices do not show a commitment to these Fair Trade principles, but they have moved away from the idea of structural change.

In most products aside from coffee, chocolate, and a few others, large plantations can now be certified. In 2003, at the Specialty Coffee Association of America conference in Boston, the contingent of small farmer coffee co-operatives, and their industry allies, went wild when they learned that TransFair was trying to open up coffee and chocolate to plantations as well. TransFair used the argument that workers on plantations also need "assistance", but the fact remains that while every worker deserves dignity, respect, and labor rights, most plantations have not proven to be change agents. Small improvements, such as the installation of electricity and bathrooms,



Cartoons courtesy of John Klossner, copywrite 2011.

are services which should be provided by management anyway. Fair Trade is not about small improvements. Worse is that allowing plantations, with all the historical advantages they receive from governments, to compete with small farmer organizations in the same system, will in fact cause small farmers – with their limited resources – and access to technology, credit, infrastructure to fail.

And so, if anger over TransFair's name change has risen over the symbolic nature of the action, the deeper issues stem from its persistent and constant efforts to "corporatize" the Fair Trade movement. As Santiago Paz so emotionally and eloquently put it, what's at stake is nothing less than the future of Fair Trade; the future of small farmers.

Will the real owner of the Fair Trade movement please stand up? A ridiculous idea, of course. Fair Trade is a movement, not a brand. No one has the right to claim ownership over a movement. Just like in the 1970s popular game show, To Tell the Truth, when the panelists must guess which of the contestants can legitimately claim a specific identity, in this scenario, we are all the panelists. It is ultimately up to us to discern whether those claiming to "own" the movement are within their rights. ■

To learn more, or to sign the petition demanding that TransFair cease using the name, Fair Trade USA, visit <http://www.organicconsumers.org/transfairusa/index.cfm>
Cartoons courtesy of John Klossner, copywrite 2011.



Fair World Tour

Fair Trade and Beyond in Nicaragua

June 17, 2011 - June 25, 2011

FOR A BETTER WORLD



Please join Fair World Project on our inaugural tour with Maggie's Organics to explore the promises and challenges of fair trade in Nicaragua. Learn from growers, the workers and the families about their lives and working conditions first hand. As the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, as well as one of the most beautiful, Nicaragua provides a clear window into the distinctions between fair trade and free trade.

FWP tours offer participants the opportunity to build personal connections with producers by creating a rich environment for mutual learning and exchange. Our tours are fantastic opportunities to network with other fair trade professionals and supporters. Facilitated by leaders in the fair trade movement, participants can expect enriching conversations and experiences that address the complexities of free trade agreements, cultural diversity, human rights and fair trade certification and standards.

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- San Augustin and Malpaisillo: women's agricultural cooperatives
- El Porvenir Coffee Cooperative: see how opposing sides in the civil war are working side by side today
- Esperanza en Accion: a fair trade craft cooperative
- Ginning and Spinning Coops
- Managua, Granada, Leon Cultural tours
- Relax in beautiful Laguna de Apoyo

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Double-room accommodations; on-ground transportation including airport pick-up and drop-off
- Two meals a day.
- Translation and program activities
- Preparatory reading materials
- NOT INCLUDED: airfare, airport departure taxes, lunches, tips, and personal expenses. Single rooms are available for an additional \$200.

COSTS: \$1,200

HOW TO REGISTER:

Register online and pay a non-refundable deposit of \$400 by April 1st.

Register online!

www.fairworldproject.org

Contact: Ryan (ryan@fairworldproject.org) with any questions about this trip, or call toll-free 800-631-9980.

