

FREE PUBLICATION

FOR A BETTER WORLD

IDEAS AND ACTION FOR A JUST ECONOMY

FALL 2017 - WINTER 2018



THE

REGENERATION

ISSUE

A Soil-to-Soil Fashion
Revolution

Transforming our
Food System

End Factory Farming,
Restore the Soil



Fair World Project is a non-profit that advocates for fair trade policies that support small-scale farmers, artisans, and workers. We publish the perspectives of farmers, farmworkers, mission-driven business people, and activists working to build a better world.

WHY WE EXIST:

- Conscious consumers, armed with informed purchasing power, can create positive change and promote economic justice.
- Family-scale farmers and workers in both the Global South and Global North often face volatile prices, low wages and poor working conditions as a result of unfair trade policies and corporate practices. FWP promotes policy changes and market-based initiatives that address these systemic problems.
- Existing certifiers and membership organizations vary in their criteria and philosophy for qualification of products and brands certified to display eco-social labels or claims, such as fair trade. FWP educates organizations, retailers and consumers on the standards reflected in various certification schemes, and works to keep eco-social terms meaningful.

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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Send letters to **Fair World Project** or email comments to:

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NOTE: Editorial team may shorten & edit correspondence for print & clarity.



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COVER

From a composting workshop held at the Fero Cooperative near Yirgalem in the Sidama region of Ethiopia. Photo Credit: Cooperative Coffees.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Months ago, as we chose the theme for this issue of *For A Better World*, I could not have guessed just how freshly urgent the theme of “Regenerative Agriculture and Fair Trade” would feel. Yet, in the past few months, the U.S. government withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement and started discussions on renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Moments of tremendous change, even in this madness, offer an opportunity: can we reimagine our global systems to change the balance of power away from the corporate, money-driven interests that got us here in the first place? What will it take to do that, especially with a corporate-driven administration in office?

This issue takes those questions seriously. Our industrial food system and the fast-fashion industry are taking our planet in the wrong direction and exploiting workers all along the supply chain. Small-scale farmers are the heart of our global food and farming systems, and the ones most impacted by climate change and bad trade policies. From Kerala, India to California and beyond, communities are coming together to build another, better world. Strong communities, biodiversity, practices that regenerate instead of deplete the soil, and the question of how to shift to an economy that can account for the true costs of those practices – those are some of the common themes explored by contributors in this issue.

Whether it is market-driven initiatives, community development, or better policies and international agreements, the words of Rebecca Burgess from Fibershed, one of our contributors in this issue, remain in my mind: “Scientists are saying that we have 8-10 years to do most of the work needed to become carbon-neutral, which means that we are going to have to improve everything.”

To “improve everything” is a large call to action, but these times feel like we need it. I hope this issue inspires you with urgency and ideas to take action in your community and in our world.

To a Better World,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

P.S. – Sign up for our monthly newsletter at FairWorldProject.org for up-to-the-minute, actionable analysis as these trade and climate agreements continue to develop.

THANKS TO OUR CO-FOUNDER



The Fair World Project team would like to thank Sue Kastensen for her vision and inspiration over the years. Sue is a co-founder of the organization, and she has contributed creativity and content to *For A Better World* for the past seven years. We thank her for her work and support, and we wish her much luck in the future as she focuses on Fair Shake (www.FairShake.net), another organization she founded that is dedicated to supporting the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated people back into society.



DAVID BRONNER

Cosmic Engagement Officer (CEO) of Dr. Bronner's, the top-selling brand of natural soaps in North America. David is a grandson of company founder Emanuel Bronner and a fifth-generation soapmaker. Under his leadership, and that of his brother Michael, Dr. Bronner's has been recognized as a sustainable leader in the natural products industry.



REBECCA BURGESS

Executive Director of Fibershed and Chair of the Board for Carbon Cycle Institute. Rebecca has built an extensive network of farmers and artisans within her region's Northern California Fibershed to pilot the regenerative fiber systems model at the community scale.



TOMY MATHEW VADAKKANCHERIL

Founder and Promoter of Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK), a small-farmer organization consisting of 5,000 farmers in the hilly tracts of the Western Ghats in Kerala, India. Tomy Mathew is also Managing Director of Elements, Kerala's first organized foray into organic retailing. He is in his element when he slips away ever so frequently to the FTAK farms adjoining the tropical rainforests of the Nilgiri Biosphere.



RYAN ZINN

Political Director of Fair World Project, Organic and Fair Trade Coordinator for Dr. Bronner's and Director for Grow Ahead. Ryan has been involved in the food justice movement at home and abroad for twenty-one years, including work with such organizations as the Center for International Environmental Law, Friends of the Earth - Paraguay, Global Exchange and the Organic Consumers Association (OCA).

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PHOTO CREDIT: Adanech Horgaso, Red Fox Farm, photo credit Harald Mohr



Heat Wave in Bangladesh Sickens Garment Workers, Closes Factories

In May of 2017, a heat wave in Bangladesh caused chaos, as some 30,000 workers left work in the middle of their shifts. Soaring temperatures coupled with high humidity caused hundreds of workers to pass out on factory floors and others to be hospitalized. Eighteen factories, which export clothes to Western retailers, were closed for several days. Bangladesh has more than 4,500 garment factories, many of which lack basic ventilation and cooling systems. With a changing climate and rising temperatures, some experts estimate that these conditions could kill up to 60,000 people in Bangladesh in the coming decade.

NEW REPORT:

Pesticides Are More Dangerous than Previously Thought

A report* commissioned by the European Union (EU) Parliament reveals that over 100 different pesticide residues found on food are known to cause adverse neurological effects in humans. While previous studies have focused on specific lab-based results, this study suggests that previous methods have underestimated the risks, especially to children's developing brains. Furthermore, there are concerns that current risk assessment models do not address exposure to mixed or multiple pesticides, endocrine-disrupting effects or carcinogenic effects.

**Report title: Human health implications of organic food and organic agriculture.*



FAIRTRADE AFRICA PRODUCERS DECRY SAINSBURY'S FAIRWASHING

UK-based Sainsbury's announced that it will be dropping the internationally recognized fair trade label in favor of its own "fairly traded" label for their line of teas. At the heart of the dispute is control of the fair trade premium funds that get paid to producer groups along with a guaranteed minimum price for their products.

Citing a desire to "update" standards and support producers impacted by climate change, Sainsbury's says that the new program will still pay producers a minimum price, but the premium funds will now be controlled by a board in London.

In an open letter, Fairtrade Africa producer members responded:

"We are extremely concerned about the power and control that Sainsbury's seeks to exert over us, which actually feels reminiscent of colonial rule. We work for, OWN our product and OWN our premium. We see the proposed approach as an attempt to replace the autonomous role which fair trade brings and replace it with a model which no longer balances the power between producers and buyers."

Overall, this move is part of a troubling pattern of corporate buyers attempting to wrest control of the fair trade movement from producers and turn it into little more than "corporate social responsibility."



Independent Union Negotiates Contract with Washington Berry Farm

Familias Unidas por La Justicia (FUJ), the independent union representing berry pickers on the Sakuma Brothers Farm in Washington state, has successfully negotiated their first contract. Due to archaic labor laws in the U.S., there are very few labor unions representing farmworkers, and even fewer independent unions. The contract establishes some of the best wages for

farmworkers in Washington state, as well as protections against unjust firings.

Signed just in time for berry season, this contract is the first after a vote to organize brought to an end a years-long labor dispute and boycott of the farm and their main customer, Driscoll's Berries. For perspectives from both sides, see our story in the Fall 2017 issue of *For A Better World*.



MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS SWELL AROUND THE GLOBE

May Day, or International Workers Day, marks a day of solidarity and protest for workers around the globe. May 1, 2017 saw a renewed swell of people in the streets of the U.S., as a broad coalition came together calling for a more inclusive society and a more just economy. Given the recent spike in immigration actions and deportations, immigrant rights' was a common rallying cry in crowds across the U.S.

May Day originated in the U.S. as a commemoration of a general strike in Chicago when more than 300,000 workers walked off the job demanding better working conditions, including the once-radical demand for an 8-hour work day.



ENVIRONMENTAL AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS GROUP SCORES VICTORY AGAINST MULTINATIONAL INVESTORS

International funders have withdrawn their support for a hydroelectric dam in Honduras after years of international pressure. Honduran environmentalist and indigenous rights leader Berta Caceres was murdered for her opposition to the Agua Zarca dam, located on the Gualcarque, a river held sacred by the Lenca people. The Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (COPINH), the group that Caceres co-founded, has long petitioned international investors to withdraw support and provide reparations for the human rights violations linked to the project. For more information on the history of the project, see our story in the Fall 2016 issue of *For A Better World*.



Fair Trade

IS THE PATHWAY TO REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

WRITTEN BY RYAN ZINN

The climate is changing, and our industrial food and farming system plays a big role in that. Over the past few years, the movement for a food system that sustains people and planet has been growing. As conversations around topics like carbon sequestration that were previously just for academics and practitioners move into the mainstream, we cannot forget the people at the heart of it all: small-scale farmers and the movements that they have built.

WHAT IS REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

Regenerative agriculture is often characterized as a holistic approach to agriculture that emphasizes the restoration of soil health. It builds upon the experiences and traditions of the organic practices and movements that preceded it. Those practices include conservation tillage, mulching, composting, cover cropping, crop rotation and restorative livestock integration – techniques drawn from the experiences and traditional knowledge of small-scale farmers.

The benefits of regenerative agricultural practices are multifold, including carbon sequestration, increased resiliency in the face of drought and extreme climate events, and improved production. While approaches and experiences will vary depending on a given agricultural scenario (row crops, agroforestry, livestock, etc.), regenerative practices in general are low-tech, often inexpensive and relatively easy to implement.

Regenerative agriculture prioritizes the utilization of on-farm fertility and resources. The traditional techniques that regenerative farmers utilize greatly reduce the need to purchase off-farm fertilizers, pesticides and fuel. These practices not only reduce costs for farmers, but build up soil and support farm resiliency. One simple way to understand regenerative agriculture at the farm level is to think of the farm and soil as a bank account. Industrial agriculture depletes the account by extracting nutrients, water and human dignity, leaving the farm worse off each year. Regenerative agriculture, on the other hand, adds to the account by gradually improving soil, increasing the farm's capacity to produce safe and healthy food, and generating real value for farmers over the long term.

Given all this, why are more farmers not practicing regenerative agriculture today? The barriers are the same as those that have plagued farmers, including certified organic farmers, for decades: corporate consolidation of supply chains, including seed supplies, vanishing access to land, and unfair pricing and trade policies.

FROM BROKEN TO REGENERATIVE: TRANSFORMING OUR FOOD SYSTEM

Regenerative agricultural techniques have the potential to feed the world and cool the planet, as increasing soil organic matter through proper regenerative management at a global scale can sequester multiple gigatons of carbon. But soil health is just one piece of the food system puzzle. To successfully transition from our broken industrial food system, rife with exploitation and fueled by destructive chemicals and fossil fuels, we need to transform that system into one which can bear the true costs of growing food.

To ensure that regenerative agriculture's impacts and benefits are far-reaching and swift, we need to focus on several key economic aspects of the food chain: building solidarity with small-scale producers, supporting fair prices and practices for producers and workers in the supply chain, and raising the minimum wage. Furthermore, small-scale farmers must be afforded key protections as stewards of natural resources and the primary producers of food for the planet. Unfair trade agreements and national policies slanted towards big agribusiness are undermining small-scale farmers' economic viability. Natural resources, such as land, seeds and water, are currently being privatized and stolen at an alarming rate. The commodification of the food system must stop if we are to sustainably feed a warming planet.

According to the Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as Food First, small-scale farms around the globe are from 100% to 1000% more productive than industrial farms on a per acre basis. Measuring not just the yield of one or two commodities from a single farm, but the total production, including food, fodder, fiber and medicinal plants, it is clear that smaller farms overwhelmingly outperform larger farms. While large plantations can technically be certified organic, or even fair trade, they are incapable of competing with small-farms in terms of ecological, economic and social impact. Not all small-scale farmers practice regenerative agriculture, but regenerative agriculture is best practiced by small-scale farmers.

Numerous studies have demonstrated how buying from local businesses and farms has a multiplier effect, with money recirculating many times locally, magnifying the positive economic impact. Fair trade farmer organizations in particular have been especially effective at leveraging fair trade sales to create community and economic development programs that foster resiliency and self-determination. Large plantations, even those with ecological or social certification, ultimately do not have the same net positive impact as do small-scale farms, since monies ultimately leave the producer communities.

FALSE PROMISES

Though a small, but powerful, subset of the U.S. population denies the existence of climate change, corporate agribusiness is actively scheming to capitalize on the impending climate crisis. Under the banner of “Climate-Smart Agriculture,” agribusiness corporations like Monsanto and Yara, the world’s largest agrochemical and fertilizer companies respectively, are rebranding themselves as “climate smart.” Monsanto is now promoting its GMO crops as “ecological” no-till, in addition to purchasing start-up companies developing biologically-based pesticides and inoculants. Technical “fixes,” like the corporate climate smart agriculture approach, might have some negligible impact on reducing emissions or erosion, but they will not fundamentally enhance farm resiliency, as their objective is market consolidation, not the improvement of farmers’ livelihoods.

Small-scale diverse farms have proven to be more resilient in the face of devastating climatic disasters, like hurricanes and droughts. As noted by Eric Holt-Giménez, small agroecological farms in Nicaragua fared significantly better than large, conventional farms during Hurricane Mitch. This experience is reflected in rural communities, as extreme climate events, such as severe droughts, rains and radical temperature variations, have become the norm.

FAIR FOR FARMERS

Over the last 100 years, corporate-driven industrial agriculture has been forced on farmers at home and abroad. Characterized by hybrid seeds that function only with external inputs, like chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and the use of specialized equipment and irrigation, industrial agriculture has imposed a model commanding short-term production over long-term sustainability. Farmers have seen increased yields, but also increased costs, often accompanied by lower prices, cutting deeper still into farmers’ margins. Compounding this problem, supply chains across various sectors, from grains and

produce to meat and dairy, have been consolidated in the hands of a few large corporations, creating a de facto monopoly and driving prices still further down. According to the National Farmers Union (NFU), “farmers and ranchers receive only 15.8 cents for every dollar that consumers spend on food.” The rest is consumed by processors, traders and retailers. Low prices, coupled with high input costs and unfair competition, leave small-scale family farmers in a precarious position.

Many of the tools that have emerged from industrial agriculture have facilitated farmers’ ability to cultivate and harvest more acres with less labor. However, with falling farm gate prices and rising debts, many farmers have been forced to seek off-farm income. Interestingly, many farmers have actually recorded greater profits by reducing the number of acres cultivated, while increasing the diversity of crops and animals managed. Regenerative agriculture has the potential to support more families and to grow more nutritious food.

PAYING FOR THE TRUE COSTS OF FOOD

If farmers and ranchers are to employ regenerative agricultural practices, feed their communities and cool the planet by sequestering carbon, they must be adequately compensated for their work. The fair trade movement provides an important framework to organize for the future. Fair trade principles, like long-term direct trading relationships, payment of fair prices and investment in community development projects, offer a road map for holistic and regenerative production. Fair trade certification is one pathway to appropriately compensate farmers for the true costs of production.

While the system of fair trade certification has its flaws, it does offer a model by which we can think about incorporating premiums for organic and social production into the cost of goods. Fair trade criteria establish a minimum price for a given item plus a premium for social development projects.

Fair trade also prioritizes close connections between buyers and farmers. By shortening supply chains, removing intermediaries and facilitating more value-added activities at origin, a larger percentage of

a product’s value stays local in the producer community. These phenomena have a multiplier effect, spurring the development of local entrepreneurship and new services for local communities.

In addition to incorporating more farmers into fair trade relationships, it is critically important to create capacity to process fair and regenerative products. Though there are hundreds of millions of farmers and billions of consumers, the processing sector, from coffee roasting to grain milling, is small, consolidated and usually out of reach for many small-scale farmers. More development and investment is needed in local post-harvest processing sectors to make them dynamic enough to accommodate a wide range of products from diverse small-scale farms.

FROM REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE TO A JUST ECONOMY

To practically implement regenerative agriculture at a significant scale, all workers will need to earn living wages. For truly regenerative production, the end price must take into account the true costs of production, ultimately resulting in higher food costs for consumers. Slow progress has been made in recent years to raise minimum wages at the local, state and federal levels. The regenerative agriculture movement must actively support these efforts to ensure the future success of regenerative agriculture.

Embedding fair trade in regenerative agriculture actually represents a tremendous opportunity as well. As farmers continue to retire from farming, or abandon it due to an unfair marketplace and climate pressure, we will need a massive influx of new farmers. As the marketplace demands more regeneratively produced products, climate change forces farmers to incorporate more resilient tactics, and governments adopt true cost accounting methodologies for agriculture, regenerative agricultural practices will be inevitable. While the transition to regenerative agriculture will not be without its challenges, it represents an historic opportunity.

Regenerative agriculture will incentivize new jobs – from new farmers and researchers to post-harvest processors and compost operators. The momentum toward a regenerative economy presents a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-employ millions of people with meaningful, quality work. A critical first step in advancing regenerative agriculture is supporting the transition of current farmers, along with

recruiting and training new farmers. A regenerative future will not only safeguard and sustain the 800 million small-scale farmers currently at risk, but it will also support a new generation of young farmers.

HOW TO GROW A FAIR FOOD SYSTEM

There is a lot of work ahead to transform our food system and fully embrace regenerative agricultural principles. Here are a few steps that we can all take to help get us there:

Support committed brands sourcing from small-scale farmers.

In the absence of a holistic standard or seal for regenerative agriculture, the best way to vote with your dollars is to support committed, mission-driven brands that source from small-scale organic and fair trade farmers.

Engage in the political process.

To realistically move the needle towards regenerative agriculture requires a redoubling of efforts to restrict chemical agriculture, dismantle corporate agribusiness monopolies, and eliminate subsidies and crop insurance programs that drive destructive practices.

Fund the transition to a regenerative future.

Small-farmer organizations in the developing world have limited access to the funds they need to invest in long-term projects and capacity building. Through Grow Ahead, Fair World Project's partner organization, you can lend or give directly to small-scale family farmer organizations. Learn more at GrowAhead.org.

Transform institutional purchasing.

Every year, government entities, including schools, hospitals and prisons, spend billions of dollars on food procurement. By shifting even a small fraction of those public procurement purchases toward products made with truly regenerative practices, we can catalyze a massive spike in regenerative production.

WHAT DOES

"REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE" mean to you?

We asked that question to a handful of leaders, growers and thinkers from around the world. Here are a few of their thoughts.

“Regenerative agriculture, based on our Andean experience, is the direct relationship with life. It gives life back to Mother Earth, provides food that connects with every aspect of human beings and their communities, and changes human attitudes so they can be in harmony with Pachamama. Regenerative agriculture means complete sustainability of life under different names: ancestral natural agriculture, ecological, alternative, organic. It is growing diversity in small farms; it is building trust between producers and consumers in combination with ancestral knowledge and technology, all for the conservation of a natural balance.”

— **JUAN PATRICIO PILCO HIPO** (ECUADOR),

Founder and leader of Dressing the Mountains in Green

“While certified organic is a solid foundation, we know that the true gold standard is regenerative organic agriculture, the type of farming that can do more than produce food that meets a minimum standard; it can improve the resources it uses for generations to come. True regenerative organic agriculture unites soil health, carbon sequestration, animal welfare and farmworkers' rights in a holistic system that encourages continual innovation for environmental, social, economic and spiritual well-being.”

— **JEFF MOYER** (U.S.), *Executive Director of the Rodale Institute*

“Over the millions of years of our Earth's evolution, a number of essential cycles were created: the water cycle, the energy cycle, the mineral cycle, the microbial cycle, the carbon cycle, and others. Over the last eighty years, however, we have industrialized, commoditized and centralized the production of our food. These changes were implemented to make our food cheap and abundant, and they were wildly successful in accomplishing these things. But the unintended consequences were the degradation of our land, air and water – and the erosion of the welfare of our livestock and the impoverishment of rural communities. Now, the unintended consequences are being noticed. Enlightened consumers have made the decision to pay farmers more for their food in an effort to change production practices to be more regenerative, humane and fair.”

— **WILL HARRIS** (U.S.), *Fourth-generation cattleman at White Oak Pastures*

“Regenerative agriculture asks us how to evolve the capacity of all the members of an agro-ecosystem, from soil microbes to customers of a grocery store. As below, so above. What are the business relationships that mimic what we know builds soil and grows healthy foods?”

— **GREGORY LANDUA** (U.S.), *CEO of Terra Genesis International*

“For me, regenerative agriculture is a model where we all have a place. That is, it is a way to recreate community with every living being around us, from the smallest microorganism to the largest tree. It is a conscientious production process, where we think through all of our decisions to give and to take. But above all, it is equitable and inclusive agriculture which embraces, which integrates, and which is, as the Zapatistas say, 'para todos todo,' everything for everyone. A world where we all have a place!”

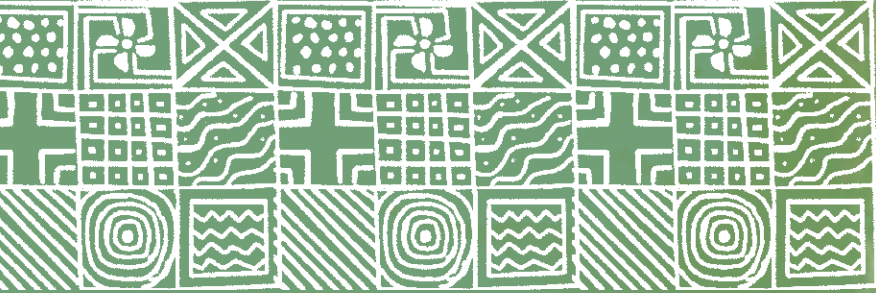
— **AZUCENA CABRERA** (MEXICO), *Farm School Director at Vía Orgánica*

“Regenerative agriculture is farming with natural ways that have no adverse environmental effects. It promotes soil enrichment and conservation with ecological balance and self-supportive farming systems.”

— **SUDARSHAN CHAUDHARY** (NEPAL),

Founder and Director of Spiral Farm House

Read more thoughts from the movement at FairWorldProject.org/Voices



Product Picks

Imagine an economy that rewarded small-scale producers for their hard work, fed us all healthy food, and clothed us sustainably. While that day can feel far away, there are people working to make that dream a reality.

From organic cotton farmers using low- to no-till methods in India to Ecuadorian farmers pairing agroforestry with cacao, and from farmers in Michoacán revolutionizing the corporate avocado supply chain to coffee farmers in Honduras brewing up new possibilities for organic, biodynamic farming, fair trade partnerships are supporting these planet-sustaining growing techniques and building a more just economy in the process.

We asked members of our staff and editorial board for some of their current favorite choices of products from companies committed to the principles of fair trade and regenerative organic farming. Find them online or at your favorite natural food store!



PEACE COFFEE ORGANIC TREE HUGGER BLEND

I love everything about this blend: it is well-roasted in that way that tastes caramelly yet still lets the best of the beans come through. The coffee comes from the COMSA cooperative in Honduras whose producers are doing some of the most amazing work advancing organic coffee production right now, from compost tea concoctions to organic diploma programs for farmers. And who could say no to a tribute to trees? - ANNA

peacecoffee.com/shop/tree-hugger-blend





MAGGIE'S ORGANICS CONVERTIBLE SKIRT DRESS

I love Maggie's Organics convertible skirt dress because it is so easy to wear, and the organic cotton is so soft, it feels like I am wearing pajamas yet still look pulled together. It is a good travel piece (and that is important, since I am always going somewhere) because it is so versatile: layered for cool weather, and dressed up or down in a minute. And did I mention that the organic cotton is from small-scale farmers in India? - DANA

maggiesorganics.com/organic-cotton-convertible-skirt-dress



ALTER ECO FAIR TRADE ORGANIC CHOCOLATE WITH QUINOA

What can I say, it is just so nice to have good chocolate with a crunch from a company that invests in small-scale farmers. The last time we had one of these bars in the house, my daughter asked for "the chocolate with chickpeas." She remembered that there was something healthy about it, just not all the details!

- KERSTIN

alterecofoods.com/product/dark-quinoa



DR. BRONNER'S FAIR TRADE ORGANIC COCONUT OIL

From beauty product to hair care to a tablespoon in a morning cup of coffee, everyone on our team has had their moment of raving about just how good this coconut oil is. Whole kernel is best if you want the coconut taste and aroma, but white kernel is perfect when you want a little more subtlety to your coconut oil fix. - STUART

shop.drbronner.com/food

EQUAL EXCHANGE FAIR TRADE ORGANIC AVOCADOS

Avocados are one of my favorite foods, but since I live in Washington, DC, I do not often buy them, knowing that the supply chain can be murky at best. Recently, though, I bought a glorious avocado carrying an Equal Exchange sticker. I had a rare moment of affirmation and delight, recognizing that I was supporting an ethical supply chain that I could trust and feel good about. That feeling was amplified 1000x when I tasted it. I looked up their avocado program and loved what I read, especially upon seeing the graphic at the link below. - FLETCHER

equalexchange.coop/avocados



Fair Trade As We Do It:

THE STORY OF JUMBO NUTS

WRITTEN BY TOMY MATHEW VADAKKANCHERIL

I come from the South Indian state of Kerala. Yes, Vasco da Gama of Portugal landed on our shores – in fact, on the shores of the very town in which I live – over 500 years ago and heralded the advent of colonialism. He came in search of spices, particularly Malabar pepper. But this might be news to you: from the 15th century through most of the 19th century, the Malabar region of India did not actually cultivate pepper. Our predecessors instead collected and gathered pepper. Pepper vines thrived wild in the homestead farms of the Malabar region, along with probably a hundred other crops which had nutritional, therapeutic and nutraceutical values.

A homestead farm in Kerala was a veritable forest farm. It would appear disorganized, not favoring assembly-line economies of scale and production, and not amenable to organized and efficient methods of fertilizing, irrigating and harvesting. The fact is, it was actually a nuanced, evolved and intricately engineered system whose nerve center was the family kitchen. And the matriarch, the woman, for the most part decided what grew on the farms, what was needed for the daily kitchen, what

was to be stored for the rainy days, what was to be shared with neighbors, what was to be fed to animals, and what, if anything remained, the men could take to the market and sell. This is what once characterized farming in Kerala, but it is now a thing of the past.

Biodiversity...is a food security issue as well as an issue of gender justice

The spoiler: the market! Actually, the modern market, as we know it today – that which demands quality and quantity not dictated by nutritional needs, environmental balance or the food security of families and communities. And so, suddenly, the power equations within the homestead changed completely. Now, the matriarch has little say in the affairs of the farm. The market dictates, and men mediate with the market.

Notions of value and usefulness have changed. Hundreds of trees, shrubs and medicinal plants that once thrived as wild growth are no longer valuable; instead, they have become a hindrance to an orderly, efficient farm that needs to cater to the market. The food basket has changed, too. Wild food has disappeared completely. Tubers have diminished. Fruit trees have dwindled.

Today, Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK), the small-farmer collective I work for, is involved in an effort to recapture the homestead farming traditions of Kerala. It is a small dream. Our goal is to grow to a collective of about 10,000 small-farmers over the next couple of years. Small-farmers in Kerala have really small holdings, about 3-4 acres on average. So that small dream means about 10,000 farming families stewarding about 40,000 acres of farmland, creating conditions that are akin to a tropical rainforest in crop diversity and biodiversity.

In the process, we are committed to becoming net food suppliers – and by “food” we mean not coffee, pepper or cashews that we grow for distant markets, but “food on the table,” such as



rice, fruits, vegetables and tubers for our own local families and communities.

And we expect that women will reassert their traditional role and space in the management of the homestead farming economy.

Biodiversity for us, therefore, is a food security issue as well as an issue of gender justice.

What role will the market and trade, particularly international commodity trade, play in this scenario that we strive to engender? Undoubtedly, the massive haulage of commodities across continents is unsustainable for a climate-challenged planet. Food miles and the ecological footprint of our consumption can be ignored only at our own peril. But trade is as much a cultural exchange as it is a commodity exchange, and, albeit in reduced volumes, it is here to stay and desirably so. There is thus the inevitable question: what type of trade must prevail when our planet is in peril?

Well, let me give you a glimpse of the beneficial effect the type of international commodity trade that we practice has on the most formidable challenge confronting humanity today. Our farmers reside in the Western Ghats region of India, and the United Nations recently declared it a World Heritage Site. The environmental sensitivity of farming operations here is critical, not just for us but for the whole world, given the climate-challenged times we live in. A significant portion of our farmlands adjoin tropical rainforests. With the stress that human development has brought on the forests, and with the size and productivity of those forests

shrinking rapidly, conflicts between man and animal have grown. What if a marauding troupe of wild elephants get to your farm and destroy what might be the result of thirty or forty years of toil? That is exactly what is happening in several of our farming communities, and yet we almost intrinsically know that farmers and wildlife have to coexist for our environmentally secure future.

Farmers and wildlife have to coexist for our environmentally secure future

FTAK was born in the midst of an unprecedented farming crisis in Kerala created by the plummeting prices of agricultural commodities. One of the first investments we made with the social premium funds secured by selling our products under the fair trade regime was in benign solar-powered fences installed between the forest and many of our farmlands. The fences act as a mild deterrent that keeps the animals within the forests.

The cashew industry refers to large cashew nuts as “jumbo nuts.” But the organic and fair trade cashews that Equal Exchange brings to U.S. consumers, sourced from FTAK, could also claim to be “jumbo nuts” – not based on their size, but instead because they are indeed “elephant-friendly” nuts. That bin of organically-grown and fairly-traded cashews that you come across in your local food cooperative is testimony that global commodity trade in a climate-challenged world can in fact chart a fair and sustainable course.





A SOIL-TO-SOIL

VISION FOR THE FASHION REVOLUTION

From conventional cotton production, which uses a staggering amount of pesticides, to petroleum-based toxic dyes, to exploited factory workers, there are many reasons that it is past time to transform the way we get our clothes.

From their origins in Northern California, Fibershed is trying to do just that. Their long-term vision is “an international system of regional textile communities that enliven connection and ownership of ‘soil-to-soil’ textile processes.” To get there, they are developing regional regenerative fiber systems and working with farmers, ranchers, natural dyers and mills to implement carbon farming, rebuild regional manufacturing and connect us all more closely with the landscape that grows what we wear.

Fair World Project’s Anna Canning sat down with founder Rebecca Burgess to talk a bit more about her vision for strong, local fibersheds all around the globe.

AT FIBERSHED, YOUR MISSION IS TO DEVELOP “REGENERATIVE FIBER SYSTEMS.” CAN YOU TALK A BIT JUST ABOUT WHAT REGENERATIVE FIBER IS, BEFORE WE EVEN GET TO THE SYSTEMS PART?

There are two ways that we work to develop regenerative fiber. One is to take a more traditional Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach, where you are tracking carbon literally on a molecular level through a cycle, focused mostly on above-ground emissions. But we have looked at that model, and we have identified that when you are looking at fiber – or food, or anything grown in the biosphere – there is a bigger carbon story than

just emissions. Instead, one ought to consider the relationship between the atmosphere and the pedosphere (the soil carbon pool) to really get an understanding of the net impact, from a carbon perspective, of a food or fiber product.

But for us, “regenerative” is not just about mapping the carbon molecules through all the carbon pools. When I consider regenerative fiber, I like to take a step back and look at a farm or a ranch or a shepherd/shepherdess grazing operation and ask “What are the opportunities for carbon capture that this land manager can operationalize, given the biological, social and economic environment in which they find themselves? What are the capabilities that we could inspire within this land manager, given all these conditions?”

Can we track the additional carbon that they are now drawing down from the atmosphere to the soil because they have made a change in land management, for example, or because they have put in a windbreak that they would not have put in if they were not thinking about carbon capture?

Maybe they start asking about where hedgerows come in, or silvopastures, where you put trees into the grazed landscape. Or cross-fencing, to help create smaller, more dense spaces for rotational grazing. Or maybe they put in water infrastructure to help animals get across the landscape and keep them hydrated, keep them moving.

My vision is that each of these systems builds truly from the grassroots up, based on soil, water and community

We are working off of about thirty-five practices like that, but there are so many, depending on your landscape. We track those practices, and then we are able to assign numbers to the carbon associated with them. For example, in the case of one ranch with whom we are working, we take the practices that they are implementing and then total up all the emissions from their operation – the sheep shearing, travel costs, electrical use for the equipment, etc. – and do a big subtraction so that, in the end, we can calculate that each pound of wool represents approximately 6-9 pounds of carbon in the soil.

We do not want to create a monolithic global statement, such as “this is how you create regenerative fiber.” Instead, what we want is to take a place-based approach. We really want to empower the land manager to explore carbon capture opportunities. That is really the only way we are going to solve this climate crisis and create regenerative fiber: through a paradigm shift in land management. And we do not really use that word “regenerative” – we call it “climate beneficial.” “Climate beneficial” is a term to describe land-managers that are on the path towards building agricultural systems that self-renew each year with ever greater levels of productivity. Every new practice that the land-manager implements that pulls more CO₂ out of the atmosphere than it emits is “climate beneficial.”

CAN ANY NATURAL FIBER BE REGENERATIVE?

Regenerative to me means that you are putting more into the system than you are taking out. I think cotton, hemp, flax, wool and alpaca all have the potential to be regenerative. I think it is possible to grow it, but we are going to have to factor in the true cost of the carbon capture, the water quality enhancement, and all the things that happen when someone is doing it right. That means that we are going to have to start paying a lot more for our clothing – and that is a whole bigger question of behavior shift that I do not think many people are ready for.

We can do all the work to grow it, but we really have to change our relationship with consuming these materials and start buying fewer better quality products. Clothing is great because it is non-perishable and can have longevity.

Our current economy is not incentivizing us to do any of that, however.

CAN YOU NOW TALK A BIT ABOUT THE “SYSTEMS” PART OF YOUR MISSION AND TELL US HOW THIS FIBER FITS INTO A LARGER VISION OF A FIBER/ CLOTHING SYSTEM THAT COMBATS CLIMATE CHANGE?

We envision a “soil-to-soil” model for our clothing (see diagram below). We are still working to build a supply chain that fully hits the mark, but we are getting there. Our Wool Mill Vision lays out what that could look like: to mill the fiber using living machines systems and constructive wetlands to return that water back to your mill, to use geothermal and wind energy to help power the machines, as a few examples.

We also focus on natural dyes, because they are not heavy metal- or coal tar-based, as well as just using wool and cotton that are the natural color of the plant or animal from which they came, and not even using dye at all.

We have focused so much on building regional fibersheds because transportation and distribution are really important. That has been one of the biggest challenges we face: how small can you build a mill and still be profitable? We are starting to see that it can be done on a regional basis, but it poses economic challenges, and the price point of the finished goods become a bit higher.



TELL ME A BIT ABOUT HOW YOU ENVISION THE LOCAL FIBERSHED CONCEPT SCALING UP OR SCALING OUT?

We have about thirty-eight national fibersheds established, and currently there is a total of about fifty-four around the world. My vision is that each of these communities understands what their working landscapes are most capable of producing in a climate-friendly way, starting from the soil up.

That means, for example, that the Pacific Northwest could become famed for their bast fiber production, as flax grows readily there and does not need to be irrigated in the summer. And Kentucky could become well-known again for hemp production, and the West could return to being a profitable wool producing region.

My vision is that each of these systems builds truly from the grassroots up, based on soil, water and community; and that they design their infrastructure around what is possible, given the attributes and constraints of their community.

THERE ARE SO MANY STEPS TO AN APPAREL SUPPLY CHAIN, AND SO MANY OF THEM ARE FULL OF EXPLOITATION ON A GLOBAL SCALE. HOW HAVE YOU ADDRESSED THAT WITHIN YOUR FIBERSHED MODEL?

Everyone we are working with utilizes domestic production, and we are working on such a small scale that we basically have 100% transparency with whomever we are working. We go into all the mills; we know the people who own them and the people who work in them – they are friends and comrades and colleagues. We do not really have a dividing line between white and blue collar – it is one fibershed. Within that colleague-oriented, transparent framework, we have never once run into a labor issue. I could have missed something, of course, but it would be really small.

DO YOU BELIEVE WE SHOULD CREATE A REGENERATIVE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR FIBER PRODUCTION?

I think we should set soil carbon goals for farms and ranches, and also boost the existing standards for organic to include soil carbon gains. Scientists are saying that we have 8-10 years to do most of the work needed to become carbon-neutral, which means that we are going to have to improve everything; the regional systems that Fibershed is growing, which have a lot of trust and relationships imbued within them, and the global supply chains that are reliant on labor in countries that do not have the same kinds of standards that the more developed nations have. So, standardization and certification will have to come into play. I am a bit nervous about how that will come to be, though, and how it will get overseen – but that is the same issue with all certification programs.

Personally, I am more comfortable with communities trying to own this work, because of the intimacy they have with their soil. We really want to change mindsets around growing fiber; we want them to come at it not because they are trying to meet a certification's goals, but because they are simply trying to do good work. And, in the end, we just need people to do good work on the land.

HOW DO YOU RECOMMEND THAT PEOPLE GET INVOLVED AND BRING MORE REGENERATIVE, CLIMATE-BENEFICIAL FIBERS INTO THEIR WARDROBES?

As a starting point, look for things that are made of 100% natural fibers: wool, cotton, hemp, linen or silk. That is important because you can technically compost a t-shirt or some underwear, for example, made from those fibers. 70% by weight of the clothing in our wardrobes has some form of nylon, polypropylene or other fossil fuel-derived substance in it. That means that a lot of us are wearing plastics, and plastics really do not fit into the soil-to soil model. In fact, they create a lot of problems for those of us who want to see our clothing return as nutrients and carbon back to the system.

100% organic cotton is important, too, because organic cotton has a 40%-lower carbon footprint than conventional GMO cotton, which has a lot to do with the amount of herbicides and pesticides used on a conventional field.¹ In addition, 97% of the cotton grown in the U.S. today is GMO-based, so if you do not want to support a GMO project, you have to choose certified organic cotton.

As far as other “natural” fibers go, I do not make a strong recommendation towards tree pulp or very high lignin fibers like bamboo or modal, as they are very, very chemically intensive to produce.

And, of course, you can look for your local Fibershed members in our online directory – we have a list of both local producers here in Northern California as well as affiliates across the U.S.

THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN LIGHTLY EDITED AND CONDENSED FOR CLARITY.

¹See the [Textile Exchange Life Cycle Assessment at
textileexchange.org/downloads/life-cycle-assessment-of-organic-cotton](https://textileexchange.org/downloads/life-cycle-assessment-of-organic-cotton).



Regeneterarians Unite!

How the Regenerative Agriculture and Animal Welfare Movements Can End Factory Farming, Restore Soil and Mitigate Climate Change

WRITTEN BY DAVID BRONNER

The whole world is a garden, and what a wonderful place it would be, if we each took care of our part of the Earth, our garden. - VOLTAIRE

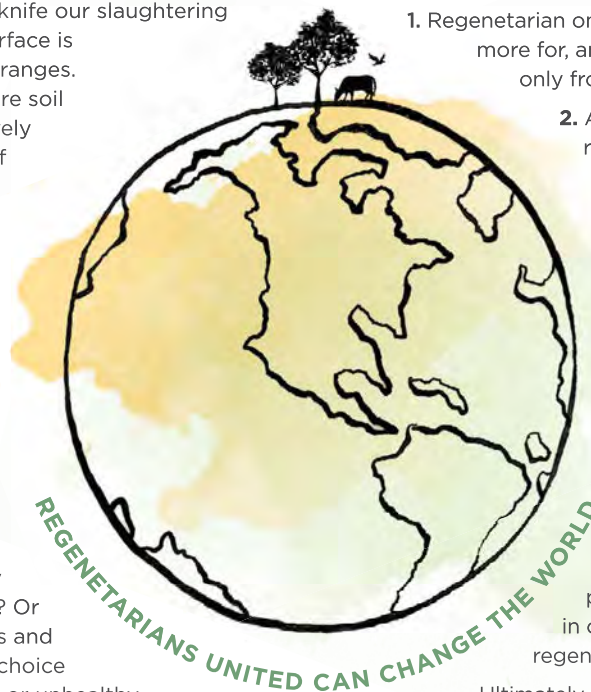
As eaters, we are all farmers deciding what kind of farming system exists in the world that feeds us: our plate is our farm, our fork our pitchfork, our knife our slaughtering knife. One-third of the Earth's surface is covered in arable farmlands and ranges. Regenerative practices can restore soil health and organic matter relatively quickly, within five to ten years. If we each take responsibility for our section of the garden as consumers, at a global scale we can make a significant impact on mitigating climate change, drawing back down atmospheric carbon previously lost from the soil, and sequestering it as stable organic matter.

Do we choose to buy from organic farms that grow our food regeneratively? Do we eat less and much better meat, dairy and eggs from pastured animals? Or do we default to the unconscious and unsustainable machine? Dietary choice can be healthy and regenerative, or unhealthy and degenerative, whether omnivore or vegan; the key is whether we eat less and better animal products, and whether our choice regenerates topsoil or not.

I believe it is imperative that all regeneterarians consider the following three principles:

1. Regeneterarian omnivores and vegetarians are willing to spend more for, and eat less of, meat, dairy and eggs, sourced only from correctly pastured and fed animals.
2. A boycott of "bad meat" is a hallmark of the regeneterarian ethos. Animals raised in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and fed conventional carbon- and water-intensive grains are an environmental and ethical disaster, inefficiently converting plant protein into animal protein and calories, especially in the case of feedlot (vs. grass-fed) beef.
3. Regeneterarian vegans are committed to eating regenerative organic grains, legumes and vegetables, and to modeling the discipline for their regeneterarian omnivore comrades to "just say no" to bad meat. The scale of death that attends the overuse of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers on non-target wildlife in conventional cropping systems makes eating regeneratively a vegan imperative.

Ultimately, we, the eaters, are the ones who feed the machine. We should take responsibility to rebalance the cycle of life and death in the natural world, to re-enter the natural rhythms and connection with the Earth, and to make sure our dietary choices are sustainable and build healthy soil.



See the full version of David Bronner's essay "Regeneterarians Unite!" at FairWorldProject.org/Voices



Reference Guide

FAIR TRADE, FAIR FARMER, AND WORKER JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Use this guide to differentiate program claims and help you match your purchasing practices to your values.

KEY **CREDIBLE PROGRAM** **NOT CREDIBLE PROGRAM** **APPROACH WITH CAUTION** **— NOT APPLICABLE**

Fair trade is intended to benefit small-scale farmers and ensure fairness for producers. The principles of fair trade include* :

- Economic opportunities for marginalized producer
- Emphasis on small-scale producers
- Payment of fair prices
- Workplace non-discrimination, gender equity and freedom of association.
- No child, forced or otherwise exploited labor
- Democratic and transparent organizations
- Safe working conditions and fair compensation
- Investment in community development projects

FAIR TRADE AND SOLIDARITY LABELS








LABEL	FAIR TRADE PROGRAM	GLOBAL NORTH SOLIDARITY PROGRAM	ANALYSIS
	—		The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the buyer/farmer relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmers to negotiate with buyers on fair terms.
	—		The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice.
			Fair for Life (FFL) is a fair trade labeling program developed by the Institute for Marketecology (IMO) and now held by Ecocert. The program has strong eligibility requirements, with a focus on marginalized producers.
		—	The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is a North America-based fair trade membership organization exclusively for brands and retailers dedicated to fair trade for all products and practices. Members may use the membership logo on products even though supply chains are not audited.
		—	Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) is a standard-setter that has attempted to expand the fair trade model into new areas (such as the U.S.) and new sectors (such as seafood).
		—	Fairtrade America is the U.S. fair trade labeling member of Fairtrade International (FTI), a strong standard-setter for organized small-scale producers in the Global South.
		—	The Small Producers' Symbol (SPS) is the only farmer-led fair trade certification. The program has strong requirements for eligibility and focuses on farmer empowerment.
		—	The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is a global fair trade membership organization requiring strong internal control systems, peer review and external audits to guarantee that members comply with fair trade standards. Members must be fully committed to fair trade principles in all of their trading practices and may use the “WFTO Guarantee” label.

* These fair trade principles apply to traditional South-to-North trading. A similar set of principles has been adopted for North-to-North trading in the U.S., and we refer to these North-to-North fair farmer programs as “Global North Solidarity Programs” in this guide.

Voluntary labor certifications allow companies to opt into following a set of standards to improve pay and working conditions for farm and factory workers. The principles of worker justice include:

- Inclusion of International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Improving wages with the goal of living wages
- No child, forced or otherwise exploited labor
- Workplace free of discrimination, abuse and harassment
- Safe and healthy workplace
- Reasonable working hours
- Clear and adequate grievance mechanisms with no retaliation
- No termination without just cause

Though Fairtrade America, Fair for Life and Fair Trade USA may have different levels of credible farmworker and factory worker justice programs, they are misleadingly labeling products complying with their programs as “fair trade.” This guide evaluates the standards used for these programs, but does not address the misuse and co-option of the term “fair trade.”

LABEL	FACTORY (APPAREL)	DOMESTIC FARMS	INTERNATIONAL FARMS	ANALYSIS
	—	✓	—	The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the farmer/farmworker relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmworkers to negotiate fair wages and employment conditions.
	—	✓	—	The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice.
	—	✓	⚠️*	The Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) sets standards for the “Responsibly Grown - Farmworker Assured” label for food safety and farmworker justice. There is a strong leadership development component, but democratic worker committees and collective bargaining are not required.
	—	✓	—	The Fair Food Program (FFP) sets and oversees a legally-binding code of conduct for employment conditions on farms and a direct economic transfer from end buyer to farmworkers as part of their “penny a pound” program. Starting with farmworkers on tomato fields in Florida, FFP has developed a successful monitoring and accountability program to address abuses and increase wages.
	—	⚠️	⚠️	Fair for Life (FFL) focuses its farmworker justice program on marginalized workers and includes living wages and democratically administered premiums. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.” FFL is neither farmworker-led, nor includes farmworker representatives in formal governance positions and should therefore be approached with caution.
	✗	⚠️	⚠️	Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) includes health and safety requirements and democratically administered premiums in its hired labor standards but lacks collective bargaining and living wage requirements. Its apparel standards do not include all steps of the supply chain. FTUSA is not a farmworker-led program and should therefore be approached with caution.
	✓	—	✓	Fairtrade America and its international umbrella organization Fairtrade International (FTI) include collective bargaining and benchmarks for living wages in their worker justice standards, applicable to apparel factories and a limited number of agricultural commodities. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.”

*EFI was started by domestic farmworker organizations and it is not yet clear whether its international expansion will include collaboration with local farmworker organizations.

HOW TO CHOOSE AUTHENTIC FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS

Five steps to choose fair trade products in line with your values.



EVALUATE. Look for full company commitment, membership organizations and strong fair trade certifications to distinguish products made by dedicated fair trade brands.



AVOID BAD ACTORS. Do not buy from corporate bad actors who happen to have a few fair trade products.



LOOK BEYOND CERTIFICATIONS. Learn which brands positively impact the communities where they operate and source from.



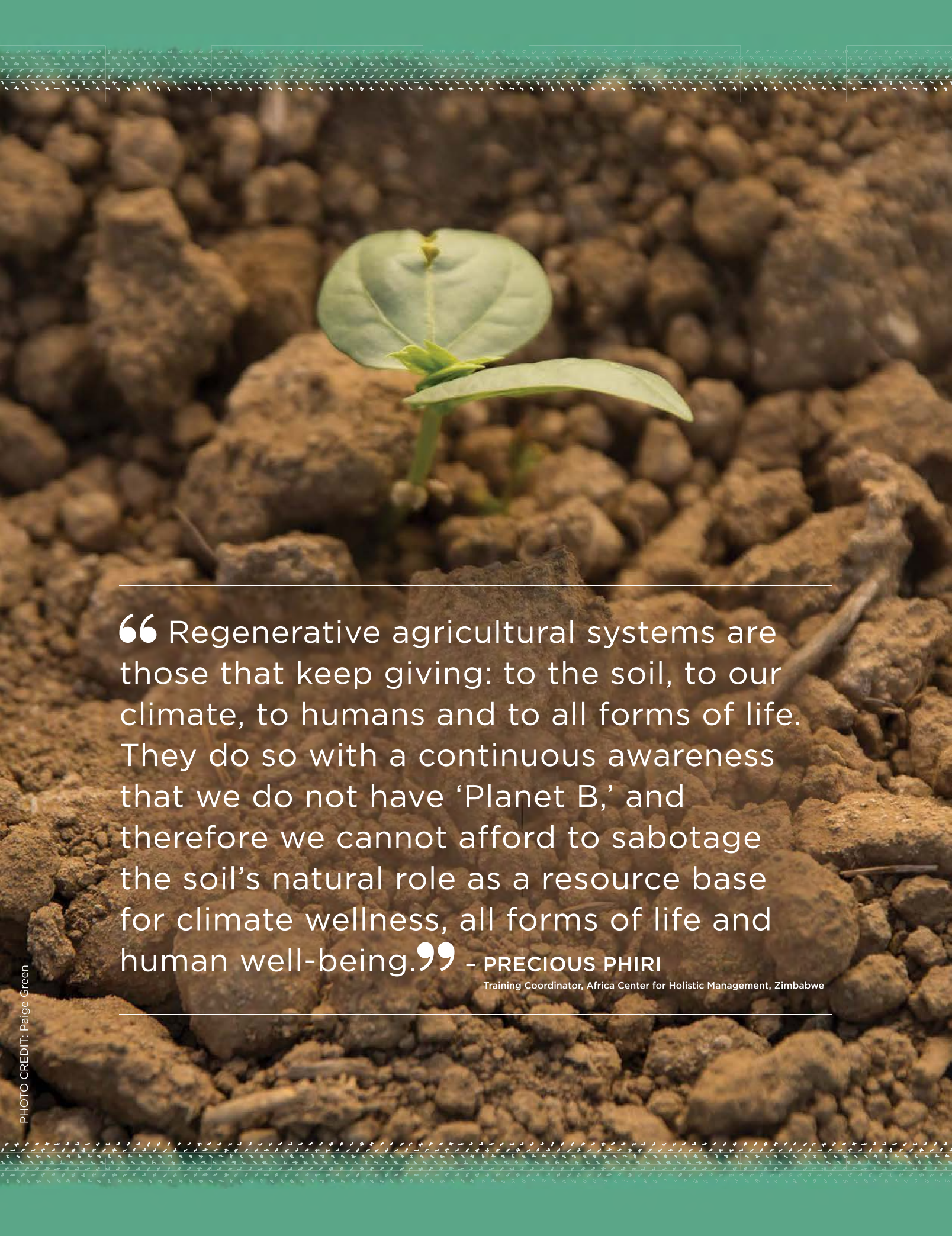
READ LABELS. Determine which ingredients (and what percentage of those ingredients) in the product are certified fair trade.



BE AN ACTIVIST. Ask your local grocer to carry more authentic fair trade products and get involved to change policy.



PHOTO CREDIT: Fair World Project



“ Regenerative agricultural systems are those that keep giving: to the soil, to our climate, to humans and to all forms of life. They do so with a continuous awareness that we do not have ‘Planet B,’ and therefore we cannot afford to sabotage the soil’s natural role as a resource base for climate wellness, all forms of life and human well-being.” - PRECIOUS PHIRI

Training Coordinator, Africa Center for Holistic Management, Zimbabwe