

Fair trade

Fair Trade works towards balance and equity in international trade. Trading fairly requires a huge international partnership. To accomplish this, open communication and respect is essential. Fair trade organizations are engaged in supporting producers, raising awareness worldwide and developing rules and trade practices that can support greater financial stability, safe working conditions, adequate wages and environmental sustainability.

Fair trade deals with the imbalances of markets by providing producers stable pricing for their crops, making business support available, bridging access to world markets and establishing improved trading conditions.

There are various organizations that have grown over the years to promote fair trade. Through its evolution, certifications have been established to guarantee fair prices and ethical purchasing. The principles that established certification include agreements that ban slave labor, forced child labor, safe working environments, and adherence to human rights.

On a side note, people in the shoe industry in the US would have welcomed Fair Trade in the 1990's as they watched most of the shoe manufacturing move to third world countries. This occurred while energy costs were growing, OSHA regulations were becoming more stringent and labor costs were rising. Importers were able to go to countries where there was little if any EPA or OSHA regulations to contend with, child labor laws were non-existent and social ethics were ignored. The result was that most of the US factories closed and today they are almost non-existent.

Fairtrade certification covers a range of product in the world market. They include:

- ^ Bananas, honey, coffee, oranges, cocoa, cotton
- ^ Dried and fresh fruits
- ^ Vegetables and flowers
- ^ Quinoa, rice, spices
- ^ Sugar, Tea and wine
- ^ Handicrafts

The founders of Fairtrade had a slogan which said "Trade not Aid". The idea was to even the playing field by making sure people were being paid a fair wage, safety and environmental issues were equally addressed worldwide and human rights were respected. By doing this other countries would have a fair chance at competing in the world markets without exploitation. By raising the social awareness in developed countries and marketing the Fairtrade mark, demand for products labeled so has increased over the years.

Of course there are those that criticize this work by saying that it attempts to set a price floor above the market price. The critics worry about the impacts on long run development and economic growth.

Most Fairtrade importers are part of a federation. The following are some of the largest:

- ^ The [Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International](#) (FLO), created in 1997 regularly inspecting and certifying producer organizations in more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[5]
- ^ The [World Fair Trade Organization](#) created in 1989 is a group of Fair trade producer cooperatives and associations, export marketing companies, importers, retailers, national, and regional fair trade networks and fair trade support organizations. In 2004 WFTO launched the FTO Mark which identifies registered Fair Trade Organizations (as opposed to the FLO system, which labels products).
- ^ The [Network of European Worldshops](#) (NEWS), created in 1994, is the umbrella network of 15 national Worldshop associations in 13 different countries all over Europe.
- ^ The [European Fair Trade Association](#) (EFTA), created in 1990, is a network of European

alternative trading organizations which import products from some 400 economically disadvantaged producer groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

- ⤴ In 1998, these four federations created together [FINE](#), whose goal is to harmonize fair trade standards, increase quality and efficiency and advocate fair trade politically.

Fair Trade principles include:

- ⤴ Fair price: Democratically organized farmer groups receive a guaranteed minimum floor price and an additional premium for certified organic products. Farmer organizations are also eligible for pre-harvest credit.
- ⤴ Fair labor conditions: Workers on Fair Trade farms enjoy freedom of association, safe working conditions, and living wages. Forced child labor is strictly prohibited.
- ⤴ Direct trade: With Fair Trade, importers purchase from Fair Trade producer groups as directly as possible, eliminating unnecessary middlemen and empowering farmers to develop the business capacity necessary to compete in the global marketplace.
- ⤴ Democratic and transparent organizations: Fair Trade farmers and farm workers decide democratically how to invest Fair Trade revenues.
- ⤴ Community development: Fair Trade farmers and farm workers invest Fair Trade premiums in social and business development projects like scholarship programs, quality improvement trainings, and organic certification.
- ⤴ Environmental sustainability: Harmful agrochemicals and GMOs are strictly prohibited in favor of environmentally sustainable farming methods that protect farmers' health and preserve valuable ecosystems for future generations.

Below are some links and further information to help you better understand Fair trade:

Fair Trade Federation

- ⤴ The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is the trade association that strengthens and promotes North American organizations fully committed to fair trade. The Federation is part of the global fair trade movement, building equitable and sustainable trading partnerships and creating opportunities to alleviate poverty. www.fairtradefederation.org

Fair Trade Certification

- ⤴ The Fair Trade Certified™ label guarantees consumers that strict economic, social and environmental criteria were met in the production and trade of an agricultural product. Fair Trade Certification is currently available in the U.S. for coffee, tea and herbs, cocoa and chocolate, fresh fruit, flowers, sugar, rice, and vanilla. TransFair USA licenses companies to display the Fair Trade Certified label on products that meet strict international Fair Trade standards. www.transfairusa.org
- ⤴ World Event Calendar for Fair Trade www.fairtraderesource.org/link-up/events-calendar/