

Fair Trade, Trade Unions and Female Involvement in the System



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Belfast, March 2015



What is Fair Trade

- Trade, not Aid
- Fair Trading Terms between producers in Developing World and businesses in Developed World (power imbalance)
 - Minimum guaranteed price
 - Premium (Social, Organic)
 - Standards
 - License Fee
- Poverty Eradication for small holder farmers and workers
- Maximum Impact (7 Core Commodities)
- Empowerment not Patronage

Quick Comparison

Fair Trade	Rainforest Alliance
Aim – Poverty Eradication	Aim – Forest Conservation
Minimum Guaranteed Price	No Minimum Price
Additional Social Premium	No Social Premium
Sustainable farming	Sustainable farming
High License Fee	Low License Fee
Audits (thorough)	Audits (cursory)
Producer Networks	-
Workers organise	ILO Conventions
WRAC	-
50% stakeholder ownership	Northern owned
For farmers and workers	For businesses in North

Workers in the Fair Trade System

- Why would Trade Unions support Fair Trade before another System / No System?

Workers in the Fair Trade System

- ILO conventions
- Child labour
- Trafficking
- Plantations
- Workers Rights Advisory Committee
- Hired Labour Standards
 - Union organising
 - Collective Bargaining
 - Living Wage
 - Use of Premium
- 1.2 million workers (5 million people affected inc/ dependants)

Field Trip to Central America

- January 2015 Irish Fair Trade Network Board Field trip to Nicaragua and Honduras
- Coffee farmers (Small holders)
- Cocoa
- Honey
- Communal farms
- Focus on Fair Trade premium and the community benefit and the role of women in the system

Field Trip Observations

- Quality and Productivity
 - Coops investment in quality tests, improvement plans, training to increase productivity
- Climate Change
 - Diversification, sustainable farming, organic farming premium, crop disease
- Community Benefits
 - Health centres, schools, roads, training courses and grants for children of farmers

Field Trip Observations

- Sustainable livelihoods
 - Fair Trade guaranteed price gives security of earnings
 - Alternative to emigration (4000 deaths a year)
 - Diversification
 - Female and youth involvement

Women in Fair Trade Coops

Women in the Fair Trade System

- **Equal harvest Report (March 2015)**
Removing the barriers to women's participation in smallholder agriculture
- Women comprise 43 % of the agricultural labour force in developing countries but own far less land and livestock than men, have less access to agricultural credit and are less involved in coops and decision making bodies

Barriers to Women's Participation

- **Coop rules, structures and practices:**
 - Membership linked to ownership
 - Leaders drawn from membership
- **Sociocultural norms and practices:**
 - Attitudes to role of men and women, especially women's expectation to perform unpaid care work
 - Time poverty
- **Women's individual circumstances and choices:**
 - Need benefits to outweigh difficulties

Gender and the Fair Trade Standards



- Producer Organisations must not discriminate on the basis of gender in relation to membership, recruitment, promotion, access to training, remuneration, allocation of work, termination of employment ...
- Within three years - identify disadvantaged or minority groups within their organisations
- By six years - develop programmes to improve their social and economic position, giving special attention to the participation of female members.

Implementing Gender Policies - Nicaragua



SOPPEXCCA

32 percent of members are women

Gender Policies contain strategic areas for mainstreaming gender and mandated the formation of gender committees in the organisation

Activities include facilitating women to obtain land and capital for coffee production, supporting women's education and skills development, and marketing coffee grown by women under the Las Hermanas brand

Some Examples of FT Supporting Female Empowerment and Participation - Nicaragua



- Gender Committees
- Gender awareness training
- Membership not limited to ownership
- Finance and support (training, quality)
- Diversification
- Crafts / Baking / Farmers Markets / Honey
- Leadership in decision making
- Use of premium to include creches, maternity support, cervical screening programmes, sexually health awareness
- Tackle machismo culture in coops

Should Unions see Fair Trade as a Trade Union Issue



- Imperfect system
- Workers prioritised more than other certification bodies but still lagging behind the employers
- Effort to promote the opportunities for millions of female farmers
- Ethical Trading / Ethical Consumerism relevant to Trade Unions?
- Messy – Fair Trade, Supporting Quality, Fair Shop etc

Conclusions

- The rights of workers in the FT system are light years ahead of the rights of workers in Ireland
- The rights of women in the FT system are a positive step in the direction of addressing historical and cultural disadvantages which exclude women from greater participation in the farm and the coop
- Fair Trade Fortnight and International Women's Day – Trade Union support
- Incorporate FT into the priorities of your union

Q & A / Discussion



**CHANGE
TODAY
CHOOSE
FAIRTRADE**

