Fairtrade

The Fairtrade Mark is the only independent customer guarantee of a fair deal for farmers in developing countries. More than five million people from 58 of the world’s poorest countries now benefit from selling their produce to Fairtrade markets. This includes farmers, workers and their families.

Origins

The idea of creating a Fairtrade label came from coffee farmers in Mexico who demanded more security than that allowed by the changing world price of coffee. They wanted to know for sure they would be able to sell their coffee for more than it cost to grow it. Together with a Dutch development organisation, they established the beginnings of the international Fairtrade system in 1988.

Around the world

Fairtrade products are available in 21 countries across Europe, the US, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico. The farmers in the system work within democratic organisations, usually co-operatives. Producer organisations receive an agreed and stable price for what they sell on Fairtrade terms. This covers the cost of production and a sustainable livelihood. The farming organisation also receives a Fairtrade premium, on top of the price they receive, to invest for the future. They decide together how to spend this, whether on a benefit for the community such as clean water supplies or improved education or healthcare, or on environmental benefits such as recycling their waste, or on their business to maintain and improve the standard of their crops.

As Merling Preza Ramos from the Prodecoop coffee growing cooperative in Nicaragua says, “Behind every cup of coffee there is a family.” Fairtrade is a simple way for consumers to help farmers escape from poverty and provide themselves and those around them with a decent standard of living.