Well, the idea behind Fairtrade is that it’s a way of trading, particularly with disadvantaged and marginalised producers in the developing world, in a way that enables them to secure a decent price for what they’re selling, that builds long term relationships with them, and that helps them strengthen their own businesses and put money back into their own communities. So it’s a way of tackling poverty through trade. A lot of the things that people grow in these countries – so tea, coffee, bananas, sugar, cotton, rice – a lot of those, what we call ‘commodities’, the prices of those on world markets have been falling systematically over the last twenty, thirty years. So, we’re getting cheaper and cheaper food by comparison with our wealth but those communities are struggling more and more to earn a decent price for selling those products. So what fair-trade is trying to do is to say actually, these guys deserve to get at least what it costs them to grow that crop and enough to put food on their table, put shoes on the feet of their kids and send them to school, and enough to maybe think about the future and what they’d like to invest in the future.

And I’ll give you an example. I was in the Dominican Republic recently, meeting banana farmers, and for every box of bananas that they sell – which they get about five or six dollars on the world market for ordinary bananas - they’ll get at least a dollar more for Fairtrade bananas. And if they’re selling organic Fairtrade bananas, they’ll get even more again. And that difference for them, for every box of bananas they sell, can be the difference between surviving in the market and being able to send their children to school or not. It might not seem much to us but it can be a lot for them, especially if they’re selling a thousand boxes of bananas. And when I was talking to the banana farmers, I asked one group of banana farmers what was the first thing they did with the money that they earned from Fairtrade. And they said the first thing they did was they bought a school bus which was to ferry children from remote communities to the nearest school, ‘cause a lot of them weren’t going because it was too far so they bought a school bus. But then they said, the second thing we did was we installed electricity into that school, and what installing electricity did was that it meant that the parents of the children could go and do night classes at the school because many of the parents of the children were illiterate and including many of the farmers themselves. And I said to them you know, ‘and did any of you go and do night classes?’ And the president of the cooperative whose name is Librado and Librado said to me, he said ‘Oh yes’ he said, ‘well actually, I’m doing Saturday classes now and I’ve just got to the grade now where I’ve got two more years and I could be eligible to apply to university.’ And I said ‘what will you study?’ and he said ‘business studies’ and I thought isn’t that fantastic that he’s not only, they’re educating their children but now, having run his cooperative for years and investing back in the community, he can actually go and extend his own education. And I think that is what Fairtrade is trying to do – it’s giving people hope and opportunities that they wouldn’t otherwise have had.