Keswick and District Fair Trade Campaign

Charity no. 1121690

Fairtrade Changes Lives

Newsletter No.15 November 2008

Fairtrade: the national picture

The sales of **Fairtrade** products have continued to expand significantly in the past six months, and the **Fairtrade Foundation** reckons there is no sign *yet* of a decline in sales. Over **4,000** products now carry the **FAIRTRADE Mark**. All the **Tate & Lyle sugar** you can buy will be **Fairtrade** by the end of this year. And look around and ask for the first **Fairtrade** smoothie which has been brought out by **AgroFair's OKE** brand and unofficially 'launched' in Keswick in June (see later).

Even healthier produce now on supermarket shelves are citrus fruits: **oranges**, **lemons** and **grapefruit**. Since autumn 2007, the **Fairtrade Foundation** has been working with **Sainsbury's** to increase the amount of **Fairtrade** citrus coming from South Africa.

One sector of **Fairtrade** which is growing fast, and is desperately needed, is **cotton**. There was an increase in the **Fairtrade** minimum price for cotton this summer. Cotton is often the only source of income for farmers in some of the poorest countries in the world, such as Burkina Faso and Mali. The prices that farmers get for their seed cotton in the non-Fairtrade market frequently do not cover the cost of production. By selling into the **Fairtrade** market, cotton farmers have the security of a minimum price which covers the cost of sustainable production, and the **Fairtrade** premium for investment in community development.

With all this good news there is a serious worry that the recession, which is now beginning to bite, *may* have harmful impacts on **Fairtrade sales** and therefore on **producers**. In October we asked Jim Taylor to use his skills to remind us that our excessive belt tightening could be at someone else's expense. (Right)

Times maybe getting tougher but don't forget Fairtrade!

From Ethiopia to Keswick

In early June we had a burst of activities with our **Choche** coffee farmer friends **Mekonen Aweke** and **Raya Abakoyas**, and with **Nekemte Melaku** from Addis, our translator. Much of what we did with them was social: playing putting and croquet; taking a launch on the Lake; seeing the Queen in Whitehaven; and having many meals together. But we also wanted them to learn – just as we do when we visit **Choche** – about our town, schools, landscape, history and economy. **Roger** and **Margaret Purkiss**, Mayor and Mayoress, welcomed them at a reception in the Town Hall. We took them to **Gordon** and **Alison Wilson's** farm at Caldbeck; to **Honister Slate Mine**; to **Braithwaite Primary School**; to **Buttermere**; and to the **Pencil Museum**. Everywhere we went people welcomed them as friends.

They also attended a talk at **Caldbeck** to hear how we use stories from **Choche** to illustrate **Fairtrade**. And on 4th June we welcomed them to our **AGM**, where they met over 50 of our members, to whom they showed pictures of and talked about **Choche**. Four days later we entertained them at our annual **Strawberry Tea** in **Grange**, where on yet another day of glorious weather we raised a record £1200 for our funds.

Perhaps the highlight of their visit was a day at **Taylors of Harrogate**, where **Mekonen**, **Raya** and **Nekemte**, met the coffee team, tasted ('cupped') coffees from all over the world, and were shown round the processing facility. About a third of **Taylors'** coffees are sourced from **Fairtrade** farmers. What made the day so special was first the 'bond' of coffee, which transcended culture and language, and second the commitment which **Taylors** made to visit **Choche** at the earliest opportunity.

All who met our visitors were in some way touched and enriched. We count ourselves most fortunate to have them as friends.

From Keswick to Ethiopia

By the time you receive this two of us, Jo Alberti and Joe Human, with Richard Human, will be back with our coffee farmer friends in **Choche**. While Richard will continue with his photo-documentation of life in the village during coffee harvesting, the main purpose of this visit is to hear from the farmers themselves what the impact was of the visit by **Mekonen** and **Raya** to Keswick. Communication between the village and the campaign is very difficult because of technical and language barriers, and we felt that a visit would be the best way of finding out what the people of **Choche** feel should be the next steps in the development of the link.

We also want to find out what the impact may have been on family budgets of rising **food prices**, and high **inflation** (which this year will average over 40%). Ethiopia is experiencing another serious food crisis because of drought. But this crisis, coupled with the global rise in food and energy costs, will have had some impact. We will take with us the best wishes of the campaign, both to the farmers and to **Nekemte** and her baby boy, **Yomiyu**, born in August. (The costs of this visit will not be borne by the campaign.)

AgroFair comes to Keswick

In June we welcomed to Keswick 28 **Fairtrade** fruit farmers from 8 Latin American and African countries who are the part owners of **AgroFair**. With them were **AgroFair** workers from their London and Dutch HQs. While here they visited **Gavin** and **Laura Fearon** at **Hollows Farm** in Borrowdale (right), and three **supermarkets** in West Cumbria; and celebrated with **Cumbrian campaigners** and the **Mayor** and **Mayoress** at a party at **Keswick School** where, through **Fairtrade**, we made many new friends and had a 'preview' (tasting!) of the new **AgroFair** 'smoothie'.

Farmer to farmer: Ghanaian banana farmer, Anthony Blay, and Chair of AgroFair UK, Robin Murray, talk to Gavin Fearon of Hollows Farm. Their conversation is being recorded for BBC *You and Yours* and *Farming Today.*

Since then ...

We played the ***Snakes and Ladders of International Trade*** at **Crosthwaite Parish Fete**; swallowed our disappointment at the cancellation, yet again, of **Keswick Agricultural Show**; and attended **Keswick Flood Action Fair** in September.

And we are now planning for ...

A stall at **Keswick Food Fair**, **28th November** and another at the **Christmas Fair**, **7th December**, while continuing the major task of revising our **Directory** (Edition 11), which will be published in early 2009.

Cumbria Fair Trade Network

The **Network** has been hugely important in spreading **Fairtrade** to all corners of the county, enabling more communities to gain **Fairtrade** status than any other county in the country – 17 to date. The **Network** is led by a steering group of representatives from many groups. Founded in 2004, it is continually working to support existing groups and to encourage new groups to form. It was through members of the **Network** that **Cumbria** achieved **Fairtrade County** status in 2006, since when **Cumbria** has become a beacon of **Fairtrade** recognised both nationally and internationally.

The steering group meets bi-monthly, and the **Network** holds two **Open Days** a year, to which all members of all groups and any other interested parties are invited. The **AGM** is usually held on one of these days, the next being on **17th January 2009**, at which **Tim Farron** MP will speak.

Trade Justice: Current issues

Meanwhile, Trade Justice concerns do not go away: those described in the last Newsletter are still dominating the world of international trade. Thus far the **Doha Round** of negotiations at the **WTO** (World Trade Organisation), whose explicit intention was to change trading rules in such a way as to benefit developing countries, has again failed to produce a concrete result. **Agriculture**, a key component of trade for many developing countries, has repeatedly caused the talks to stumble. For nearly seven years, trade officials at the **WTO** have been trying to hammer out an agreement on how to cut subsidies paid to farmers in richer countries, and to open markets in the agriculture sector. The recent food crisis has complicated matters. When the **Doha** trade talks were launched in 2001, many **WTO** members worried that a continued decline in the prices of farm goods would harm their domestic producers. But in the past year, an unprecedented increase in prices for internationally traded agricultural commodities has led to a crisis among the millions of poor people worldwide who buy more food than they grow. Yet some developing countries are agricultural exporters and their needs and interests are different. It is complicated.

The negotiations will stagger on, and the Group will continue to lobby where we can on behalf of those suffering most, for example the four cotton-producing African nations (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali) who have been pressing for years for cuts in **subsidies** to **US cotton** farmers. But the US offer to cap its overall agricultural subsidies at $14.4 billion would not require it to cut cotton subsidies by one single cent.

There is more hope that pressure from Trade Justice campaigners will help lead to changes in the **Economic Partnership Negotiations** between the EU and the developing countries in the group known as the **ACP** (African, Caribbean, Pacific).

Our concern for **Haiti** has been intensified by the terrible destruction caused by hurricanes. We continue to press for the total cancellation of Haiti's international debts, especially those incurred by the Duvalier regimes.

Beneath all our efforts lies the aim of trying to redress the imbalance between rich and poor nations. The current self-generated financial mess in the rich North may lead to a decrease in the already inadequate efforts to reach the **Millennium Development Goals** set out by the UN in 2000. We are therefore encouraging Gordon Brown in his recent efforts to chivvy other developed countries into keeping the promises they made.

To be a member of the **Trade Justice Group**, it is apparent that the most essential quality is perseverance!

Wishing you a very happy Fairtrade Christmas

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