

Yes! We have Fair-trade Bananas

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Abstract:

The concept of fair trade is introduced as a way to address the issue of social responsibility in the production and marketing of agri-food products. Fair trade is defined as a trade relationship built on social justice and sustainable development that helps disadvantaged producers. Fair trade is introduced by a short description of the fair-trade movement, a description of the fair-trade market in Europe and the United States, and company profiles. Potential research agendas in consumer behavior, agribusiness, and international development are articulated.

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Changes in consumer tastes and increasing social and environmental awareness have created a higher level of demand for products from around the world that benefit communities and the environment. Consumers are no longer satisfied with corporate social responsibility being equated with charitable giving. They want products that are produced and marketed in an ethical manner and environmentally friendly way. The literature on “green” marketing in the food and agriculture sector is vast ranging organic marketing to packaging. However, the issue of ethical production and marketing of food and agricultural products has not been completely addressed by agricultural economists. So how do we begin to address the issue of ethics in the agri-food sector? This paper seeks to begin a dialog on social responsibility by outlining the concept of fair trade.

There is no single definitive definition of fair trade. Brown states that the general aims of fair trade are social justice and sustainable development. Thompson defines fair trade as “an effort to help disadvantaged small producers, usually in the Third World, through better prices, credit at reasonable rates of interest, and longer term direct and stable trading relationships.” His definition can be interpreted to include relationships with community-based producers in both the South and North. This is the working definition that has been adopted by many socially responsible companies like The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry’s. However, many proponents of fair trade have a narrower definition of fair trade that only includes the purchase of raw materials in the South to be sold in the North (Waridel and Teitelbaum). This paper employs the broader definition of fair trade.

The concept of fair trade is introduced by first describing the fair-trade movement from its historical roots to the introduction of fair-trade labels. Next, a description of the fair-trade market in Europe and the United States is presented. Finally, two company profiles, The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry's, are used to illustrate the use of fair trade practices in large corporations.

The Fair-trade Movement

History

The fair-trade movement began in the 1960s with the establishment of Alternative Trading Organizations (ATOs). During this time the aim of the movement was to create a parallel trading system based on the tenets of equality, justice, and sustainable agriculture. International solidarity organizations such as the Netherlands' SOS and OXFAM UK initiated the first projects with the primary objective of opening markets in developed countries to disadvantaged Southern producers (Waridel and Teitelbaum).

The distribution networks for the products were mainly informal including craft fairs, church bazaars, and public markets. These networks soon evolved into small fair-trade shops and World Shops (Waridel and Teitelbaum). Initially, handicrafts and textiles were the mainstays of the fair-trade products. However, food products such as coffee and tea soon gained rapid growth and today food products are the highest volume fair-trade commodities (Zadek and Tiffen).

Fair-trade labeling (certification) was developed in the late 1980s as the fair-trade movement decided to move into mainstream retailing in order to make its products available in places where most of the population does its shopping. Fair-trade labels are licensed to products, brands, or companies, which meet the criteria and standards of an independent and credible fair trademark organization (Thompson). The first fair-trade label, Max Havelarr, was established for

coffee in the Netherlands in 1988. The Max Havelarr label is also now in Switzerland, Belgium, France, and Denmark. TransFair International was established in 1992 and has members in Germany, Austria, Luxemburg, Italy, Japan, Canada, and the United States. In the United Kingdom, the Fairtrade Foundation labels fairly traded products. Other labels cover the Swedish, Irish, Norwegian, and Finnish markets¹. In 1997, all of the above labeling organizations came together to form the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International² (FLO). The FLO has standardized the certification process of the national fair-trade labels. The main functions of the FLO are:

- The development of fair-trade criteria for new products and the control of the criteria for existent products.
- The management of the producers registers per product. All cooperatives and plantations that trade under the fair trade conditions are registered here.
- The coordination of monitoring activities.
- The development of a joint international lobby policy (Max Havelaar).

As stated earlier, coffee was the original fair-trade labeled goods. Other products available include honey, cocoa, sugar, tea, and bananas. The FLO is currently working on criteria for orange-juice concentrate.

Criteria for fair-trade labeling

Fair-trade criteria are set for each product individually because structural differences in different product markets makes the exact details of what constitutes fair trade different for each commodity. For example, the fair-trade criteria for coffee differ greatly from the criteria for tea or bananas because coffee is mainly grown by small growers, while tea and bananas are grown largely on plantations owned by private individuals who hire workers.

¹ There is only one fair trade labeling organization in each country. The only exception to this is Luxembourg where there are products labeled by Max Havlaar and Transfair.

The following criteria must be met in order to obtain a fair-trade certification label (Max Havelaar and Waridel and Teitelbaum):

1. *Direct purchase.* The products are purchased directly from small farmer organizations or from plantations. The organizations are registered in the Register of Producers of the FLO³.
2. *Guaranteed minimum price and price premiums.* To guarantee the farmers some income security, a minimum price is set for each commodity. For arabica coffee the minimum price is \$1.26/pound FOB; for robust coffee it is \$1.06/pound or \$1.10/pound FOB, depending on the quality. The minimum price for cocoa beans is \$1750/mt FOB; and for honey it is \$1550/mt. The minimum price for a box of bananas is \$6.00. There is no minimum price for tea, but the price must always cover production costs. These represent price floors for the commodities. If the world price is above the price floor, then the producers are paid a price premium above the world price. For coffee it is \$0.05/pound; for cocoa it is \$150/mt; for a box of bananas of 18.14 kilograms it is \$1.75 for investments in improving labor conditions and environmental measures; and for tea it is 1 or 2 DM per kilogram (\$0.54 to \$1.09/kilogram at current exchange rates) depending on the variety.
3. *Credit allowances.* At the producer's request, the importer must make available a line of credit up to 60 per cent of the original contract. This condition only applies for cooperatives, not for plantations.
4. *Long term relationships.* Producers and importers must agree to a long term and stable relationship in which the rights and interests of both parties are mutually respected. No agreement is permitted that describes a period less than one full harvest cycle. All agreements are confirmed by an exchange of "letters of intent" before the harvest begins. These letters are contracts, which state the volumes, qualities, method of determining the final price, and dates for sending the final product.

² Specifically, the FLO represents 17 fair trade initiatives.

³ The criteria for becoming a registered producer includes small-scale production, democratic management, transparency, values based on solidarity, political independence, and sustainable development. Special plantation criteria have been developed for tea and banana producers. These include the freedom of trade union membership, anti-discrimination and equal pay, no forced labor or child labor, minimum social conditions, and safe and healthy working conditions.

The Fair-trade Market

Europe

Fair trade is a well-known concept in almost all countries in Western Europe. A wide variety of fair-trade goods, including food products and arts and crafts, are available in fair-trade specialty shops, world markets, and through mail order catalogs. As stated earlier, the introduction of fair-trade labeling enabled fair-trade products to penetrate traditional retail outlets especially supermarkets. Internet retailing is also becoming an important distribution channel.

Today many fair-trade labeled food products can be found including coffee, chocolate (cocoa), honey, sugar, tea, and bananas. The market shares differ per country and per product, but on the whole they vary between one and five percent, with the European average market share for fair-trade coffee at 1.7 percent. In most European countries, fair trade is growing at a rate of 10 to 25 percent per year. The total European retail turnover is \$191 million. Fair-trade products usually carry a 5 to 20 percent price premium, differing from product to product. The extent and impact of fair trade differs per country depending on the “age” of the national movement rather than the size of the country meaning the older the movement, the greater the market penetration of fair-trade products (European Fair Trade Association). Table 1 identifies key fair trade market characteristics for nine European countries.

Table 1: Fair Trade Market Characteristics for Nine European Countries

	Austria	Belgium	Denmark	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	UK	Switzerland
Fair trade label	Transfair	Max Havelaar	Max Havelaar	Max Havelaar	Transfair	Transfair	Max Havelaar	Fairtrade Mark	Max Havelaar
Fair trade labeled products (market share)	Coffee (0.8%) Tea Chocolate	Coffee (1%) Bananas Chocolate	Coffee (2%) Bananas Tea	Coffee (0.1%)	Coffee (1%) Bananas Tea (2%) Chocolate Honey	Coffee (0.1%) Tea	Coffee (2.6%) Bananas (8%) Honey Chocolate (1%) Tea	Coffee (4%) Chocolate Tea Honey Bananas	Coffee (5%) Bananas (13%) Honey (6% of imports) Sugar (minimal) Chocolate Tea
No. of Supermarkets where fair trade products are sold	10 chains	8 chains (several hundred stores)	150	N/A	2400	N/A	7050	9 major chains	3000
Points of sale for fair trade products	2000 – 2500	2000 - 2500	200	300	31,000	1000	8300	3000	7000
Fair trade label turnover	\$3.2 million	\$1.8 million	\$957,000	N/A	\$23.9 million	N/A	\$31.6 million	\$7.7 million	\$18.2 million
Fair trade retail turnover ¹	\$9.6 million	\$9.6 million	\$3.8 million	\$3.6 million	\$76.6 million	\$12.4 million	\$47 million	\$27.1 million	\$26.2 million
Public awareness of fair trade products	70%	62%	30%	13%	40%	15%	15%	40%	36%
Public awareness of fair trade labels	20%	N/A	30%	N/A	17%	N/A	70%	11%	57%
Willingness to pay for fair trade goods	25%	17%	N/A	37%	37%	15%	15%	68%	N/A

Sources: European Fair Trade Association, Max Havelaar, Fairtrade Foundation, and Waridel and Teitelbaum

¹ This includes all fair trade goods.

United States

The establishment of fair-trade labels in the United States (US) has lagged behind the European market. Early efforts were hampered by the differences between environmentalists concerned chiefly with organic, shade-grown coffee and social activists concerned more with economic justice. While the proponents of social justice were willing to include environmental concerns in their agenda, environmentalists were not willing to champion social justice (Mitchell).

TransFair USA was established in 1996 as a non-profit monitoring organization, which certifies that participating traders are following fair-trade guidelines. TransFair USA has issued 31 coffee licenses and one tea license. Nine of the coffee licensees are importers, two are importers and roasters, and 18 are roasters. Fair-trade coffee in the US is sold through a number of specialty retail outlets including ATO shops, like Ten Thousand Villages, co-operative food stores, natural food stores, specialty coffee stores, and coffee cafes. Following a similar path of the European experience, fair-trade coffee is beginning to appear on supermarket shelves, particularly Safeway stores in California. Internet retailing is also becoming an important retail outlet for fair-trade coffee and tea.

In 1998, Steep and Brew, a Madison, Wisconsin based coffee roaster and retailer, launched a fair-trade brand, Café Fair, which carries the TransFair USA label. Café Fair is now available in 46 supermarkets in Madison and Chicago. Another brand that has begun to gain a presence on supermarket shelves is Equal Exchange, which can be found in 14 stores in Cleveland, Boston, and Madison and through the internet. Both brands plan to expand to other cities including Minneapolis and St. Paul and Portland (Mitchell).

There are two obstacles for the widespread adoption of the Transfair label: educating consumers to create demand for the label and the logistics of production and marketing fair-trade food items. The outlook for increasing consumer demand for fair-trade labeling, specifically the Transfair label, is good. The 1999 Cone/Roper Cause Related Trends Report found American consumers solidly and consistently support cause related activities. Consumer receptiveness of cause-related marketing increased over the five-year period from the benchmark survey in 1993 to 1998. The survey identified the following trends:

- Acceptability of cause programs as a business practice has increased 8 percentage points since 1993, from 66 percent in 1993 to 74 percent in 1998.
- Eight in ten Americans have a more positive image of companies who support a cause they care about (84 percent in 1993, 83 percent in 1998).
- Nearly two-thirds of Americans, approximately 130 million consumers, report they would be likely to switch brands or retailers to one associated with a good cause.
- Two-thirds of Americans report having greater trust in those companies aligned with a social issue.

Food companies and retailers can look to the recent explosion in the organic market concerning issues of the logistics of fair-trade labeled products. Many of the same issues, including identity preservation on the production side and gaining access to shelf space on the retail side, must be faced.

Company Profiles

Does fair trade fit into the mainstream corporate model? Is it just a practice for alternative-trade niche players? Is cause-related marketing, and thus fair trade, just a passing fad? What exactly would constitute fair-trade corporate practices?

According to the 1999 Cone/Roper Cause Related Trends Report, the cause field has evolved during the past five years and it is clear that cause related programs are not just a passing fad. In fact, the study reported that 87 percent of employees at companies with cause programs feel a strong sense of loyalty to their employer, versus 67 percent of those who do not have such a program. The report also indicates that cause programs affect a company's bottom line in direct ways such as increased sales, and in less tangible or measurable ways such as increased customer loyalty, improved employee pride and enhanced brand image.

In order to gain a perspective on actual fair-trade practices in the corporate world, this section will explore the fair-trade practices of two corporations, The Body Shop, a UK manufacturer and retailer of skin and hair products, and Ben and Jerry's Homemade, Inc., a US based ice-cream manufacturer. Both are well known for their corporate social responsibility.

The Body Shop

The Body Shop is a manufacturer and retailer of high quality skin and hair products operating in 47 countries with over 1500 stores. It is famous for creating the first line of naturally based hair and skincare products, which led to an entirely new "natural" market segment. The Body Shop is also famous for its innovative corporate structure and its commitment to social responsibility. One of the key departments of the company is the Values and Visioning Centre, which has the task of looking at questions of social responsibility. Within this department there

are five groups: an environmental group, an animal protection group, a Fair Trade section, a human rights group, and a campaign team (The Body Shop).

The Fair Trade Section is responsible for the administration of the Community Trade program. According to the company's web-site, "the goal of the Community Trade program is to help create livelihoods, and to explore a trade-based approach to supporting sustainable development by sourcing ingredients and accessories directly from socially and economically marginalised producer communities." While the program is primarily focused on producers in developing countries, the company does trade with certain groups in developed countries including Native Americans in the US. Tables 2 and 3 list The Body Shop's category A and category B Community Trade Suppliers. Category A suppliers have met the fair trade standards outlined by the company while category B suppliers require some further development to meet the standards.

Over the two-year period of 1995 to 1997, The Body Shop doubled the number of suppliers in the Community Trade program from 11 to 22. The total number of products containing Community Trade ingredients has increased from 16 in 1995 to 37 in 1997 (The Body Shop). Table 4 outlines the Community Trade purchases as a percent of total supply purchases over a five-year period.

The data suggest a downturn in the value of purchases from Community Trade suppliers. The Body Shop Values Report states this downturn in purchasing levels is due to temporary adjustments arising from changes in the company's approach to inventory management. Based on committed purchases for the 1997/98 year, the company is expecting to increase its Community Trade purchases.

Table 2: Category A Community Trade Suppliers

Country	Group	Product	Active 1994/5	Active 1995/6	Active 1996/7	No. of People in the Trade Link
Bangladesh	Brac/Aarong	Accessories – Bags	-	Yes	No	Almost 24,000 members
Bangladesh	CORR – The Jute Workers	Accessories – Jute/Terracotta products	Yes	Yes	Yes	6,500 producers
Bangladesh	Enfants du Monde	Accessories – Containers	Yes	Yes	Yes	1,500 families
Brazil	A-Ukre and Pukanuv Trading Co./Kayapo	Brazil Nut Oil	Yes	Yes	Yes	About 260 population
Brazil	Assema/Coppalj	Babussu Oil	-	Yes	Yes	117 members
Ghana	Kuapa Kokoo Ltd	Cocoa Butter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Over 9,000 farmers
Ghana	Mbanyilli and Dalung Women’s Shea Nut Co-op	Shea Butter	Yes	No	Yes	10 groups, about 350 Women
India	TARA Projects	Accessories – Hair	-	-	Yes	Over 500 families/individual members
India	Teddy Exports	Accessories – Cotton/Massage items	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nearly 300 employees
Kenya	Jacaranda	Accessories – Hair	-	-	Yes	60 employees
Kenya	Maridadi Fabrics	Accessories – Hair	-	Yes	No	Over 40 women
Mexico	Ya’Petheti/Nahnu	Accessories – Sisal products	Yes	Yes	Yes	221 partners
		Agave Fiber	No	Yes	Yes	
Nepal	General Paper Industries	Accessories – Paper products	Yes	Yes	Yes	116 employees
New Mexico	Santa Ana Pueblo	Blue Corn	Yes	Yes	Yes	About 650 population
Nicaragua	Juan Francisco Paz Silva Co-op	Sesame Oil	-	Yes	Yes	136 members
Philippines	Barcelona Multi Purpose Co-op Inc.	Accessories – Containers	-	Yes	Yes	50 family members
Philippines	SAFFY The Hemming Group	Accessories – Hair	-	Yes	Yes	20 employees
Philippines	St. Ann’s Family Co-op Inc.	Accessories – Containers	-	Yes	Yes	365 members
Zambia	North West Bee Products	Honey/Beeswax	Yes	Yes	Yes	About 3,500 registered members

Source: The Body Shop Values Report 1997

Table 3: Category B Community Trade Suppliers

Country	Group	Product	Active 1994/5	Active 1995/6	Active 1996/7	No. of People in the Trade Link
Australia	Guugu Yimithirr Warra Ltd	Tea Tree Oil	-	No	No	37 family groups
Canada	St Christopher's Hive	Accessories – Candles	-	-	No	2 full-time and about 40 part-time employees
Honduras	Poligono Foundation	Accessories – Loofah products	-	-	No	71 employees
India	SIPA/Pulicat	Accessories – Palm Leaf products	-	-	Yes	Pulicat: 283 members
Peru	Candela	Accessories – Brazil Nut Pods	-	Yes	No	62 employees Brazil Nut production/8 support staff
Philippines	BAHI	Brazil Nut Oil	-	No	Yes	
Philippines	Mauraro Handicraft Producers Association	Accessories – Hair Containers	-	-	Yes	55 women members
Philippines	Mauraro Handicraft Producers Association	Accessories – Containers	-	Yes	Yes	28 member families
Russia	Timber Products	Accessories – Wooden Products	Yes	Yes	Yes	Over 80 employees
Total A & B			11	19	22	24,351

Source: The Body Shop Values Report 1997

Table 4: Five Year Summary of Community Trade Purchasing

<i>Period</i>	<i>1992/3</i>	<i>1993/4</i>	<i>1994/5</i>	<i>1995/6</i>	<i>1996/7</i>
Accessory items	\$1,146,317	\$2,254,320	\$2,929,980	\$2,833,668	\$2,328,913
% of total accessories purchasing	N/A	N/A	17.8%	11.8%	11.25%
Raw materials	\$183,581	\$304,758	\$295,175	\$836,152	\$645,086
% of total raw materials purchasing	N/A	N/A	2.1%	3.7%	2.9%
Total value	\$1,329,222	\$2,559,079	\$3,225,157	\$3,669,819	\$2,973,999
% of total purchasing	N/A	N/A	15.69%	7.9%	7.0%

Source: The Body Shop Values Report 1997

Ben and Jerry's Homemade, Inc.

Another company famous for its commitment to social responsibility is Ben and Jerry's Homemade, Inc., a Vermont based manufacturer of super premium ice cream, frozen yogurt, and ice cream novelties. Ben and Jerry's "Statement of Mission" includes three parts, product, economic, and social. According to the company's webpage, the social aspect of the mission is "to operate the company in a way that actively recognizes the central role that business plays in the structure of society by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of life of a broad community – local, national, and international."

A Social Performance Report is an integral part of Ben and Jerry's annual report. Ben and Jerry's 1997 Social Report states that the social mission is an integral part of the company's distinct brand equity, and that it is also the single most often cited reason people work at the company. Based on its commitment to social responsibility, Ben and Jerry's seeks suppliers whose values are aligned with the company's. Most of Ben and Jerry's socially aligned suppliers⁴ are marginalized groups and thus, the company participates in fair trade. Table 5 lists Ben and Jerry's fair-trade suppliers.

⁴ However, not all of the suppliers are from marginalized groups. Ben and Jerry's milk and cream supplier is a Vermont dairy cooperative, St. Albans Cooperative. It is considered a socially aligned supplier because of environmental objectives, producing rBGH-free milk. This paper does not include St. Albans as a fair-trade supplier because the goals are environmental rather than issues of social justice.

Table 5: Ben and Jerry's Fair-trade Suppliers

Supplier and Location	Product	Purchases			
		1995	1996	1997	1998
Greyston Bakery Yonkers, New York: Owned by Greyston Foundation which provides employment, training, child care and other services in this low-income community	Brownies	\$2,277,000	\$2,363,000	\$2,705,000	\$2,828,000
Community Products Montpelier, Vermont Purchases sustainably harvested nuts from cooperatives in Amazon Rainforest	Nut brittle	\$1,272,000	\$1,040,000	\$774,000	0
Coffee Enterprises Burlington, Vermont Sources coffee from Aztec Harvests Cooperative, which works to raise income for growers and promote economic development in Oaxaca, Mexico. Ben and Jerry's pays fair-trade floor prices	Coffee extract	\$1,346,000	\$1,059,000	\$745,000	\$918,000
Cia. Agricola La Gabilana Savegre River, Costa Rica Agricultural and cultural practices certified by two nonprofit organization, the Rainforest Alliance and Earth College, to be better than norm	Vanilla	-	\$248,000	\$254,000	\$214,000
Total		\$4,895,000	\$4,710,000	\$4,478,000	\$3,960,000
Total percentage of purchases		N/A	N/A	5.9%	3.9%

Source: Ben and Jerry's Social Report, 1997 and 1998

The value of purchases from fair-trade suppliers exhibits a negative trend over the last four years. One explanation for this is the termination of purchases of nut brittle from Community Products due to the discontinuation of the Rainforest Crunch ice cream flavor. The 1998 Social Report states the company is currently looking for a fair-trade cocoa source that can

meet its specifications at an affordable price. If this objective is achieved the trend will likely move in a positive direction.

OK, So what?

As consumers demand more corporate social responsibility, how the production and marketing of agri-food products are organized will become increasingly important. Fair trade is one alternative that seeks to address issues of social responsibility. How do we as economists begin to include social accountability into our studies of markets? The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry's both express similar questions in their social auditing processes (The Body Shop and Ben and Jerry's Homemade, Inc.). They describe their fair-trade activities as basically "learning by doing" because there are no manuals and few guidelines to show companies how to ethically source their supplies. Both companies hire independent social auditors to provide "social accounting" for them. How do we perform this for a market, sub-sector, or the entire economy? How do we begin to develop metrics for social justice? Is it possible? I do not have an answer to these questions. However, further research on fair-trade practices could prove illuminating.

Future research on fair trade includes a variety of issues encompassing consumer research, agribusiness, and international development. Potential topics include:

Consumer Research

- Consumer studies on awareness of fair trade, potential acceptance, and willingness to pay.

Agribusiness

- Market feasibility studies of fair-trade labeled goods, especially those already successful in Europe.
- Feasibility studies on using fair-trade goods in food processing.
- Logistics of fair trade. This includes the distribution and marketing of fair-trade goods and the sourcing of fair-trade inputs.

International Development

- Case studies on partnership development and building relationships between producer groups and importers/agribusinesses.
- The effects of fair-trade relationships on producer groups' overall standard of living, especially income, education, and health care.

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