

Act Justly update 3

A taste for life!

International trade allows us to enjoy food from all over the world. But the farmers who produce this food don't always benefit.

In 1992 Christian Aid helped set up the Fairtrade Foundation, which exists to ensure a better deal for marginalised and disadvantaged producers in the developing world. This update celebrates Fairtrade and takes a look at the biblical principles it reflects.

Introduction

You could serve Fairtrade tea, coffee and biscuits, while attempting this Fairtrade quiz:

- 1 From memory draw the Fairtrade Mark (award points for accuracy).
- 2 In 2002 sales of products carrying the Fairtrade Mark reached:
 - a) £6.3 million
 - b) £63 million
 - c) £630 million
- 3 Which supermarket's own brand chocolate is entirely Fairtrade?
 - a) Co-op
 - b) Safeway
 - c) Waitrose
- 4 List as many different categories of products carrying the Fairtrade Mark as you can eg tea, coffee, chocolate (award one point for each category listed by no-one else).
- 5 Between 2000 and 2002 sales of Fairtrade products increased by:
 - a) 9%
 - b) 19%
 - c) 90%

See over for answers.

Worship

'Give us today our daily bread'

- Meditate on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)
- Sing or listen to
 - 'Give thanks' by Henry Smith (1978, Integrity's Hosanna! Music)
 - 'Soften my heart' by Graham Kendrick (1988, Make Way Music)
 - 'Over all the Earth' (Lord reign in me) by Brenton Brown (1998, Vineyard Songs UK/Eire).

Word

The long years of wandering in the desert are nearly over. As his people prepare to enter their new homeland, God gives them a framework for living to ensure that justice and provision for the poor are maintained.

Read Deuteronomy 24:6-7 and 10-22

- How do these laws safeguard people's basic needs?
- How would these laws have affected the community?
- Why do you think God twice reminds the people of their period of slavery in Egypt (vv 18, 22)? What does this say to us?

Read the following story.

- How do Fairtrade policies mirror the legislation in Deuteronomy?

Coffee is one of Nicaragua's most important exports and the coffee produced in the northern provinces of Estelí and Nueva Segovia is prized in the coffee world. But life is not easy for the producers whose livelihood depends on them getting a good price for their coffee. In recent years they have had to struggle through a devastating hurricane, floods, drought and a worldwide coffee crisis.

Prodecoop, a union of cooperatives, was set up in 1993 to bring people together for the common interest of selling coffee. Funded by Christian Aid since then, it has given its members technical support to maximise yields and has worked to secure them the best price for their coffee. One of the keys to their success has been to sell to Fairtrade



Teofilo Torres mends machinery in preparation for the coffee harvest

coffee companies. Prodecoop members produce one of the main kinds of beans used by Cafédirect.

Selling to a Fairtrade company means the price the farmers get is never less than an agreed minimum so that they are not at the mercy of market fluctuations. When the market price is above the agreed minimum Cafédirect pays an extra 10 per cent Fairtrade premium.

Teofilo César Torres Reyes, farmer and co-op president says: 'We get a fair price from Prodecoop, and that's a blessing. All the profits from selling the coffee go back into the community. Sometimes the coffee harvest is so low we make just enough to cover our costs and feed our families; but at other times we make a bit of money, then we have enough to buy clothes and medicines. If we make a profit the money is divided between each family and is also used for things like road maintenance, repair of machinery and paying for Christmas and Easter parties for the whole community. We aim to make enough each year so that we don't have to take out loans.'

Further study

Read Ezekiel 27:1 – 28:19

- What reasons are given for Tyre's downfall?
- What lessons can we draw from this story?

Alison Page from Stepping Stones, a New Church in Corbridge, Northumberland, believes that promoting Fairtrade products and campaigning for trade justice go hand in hand. As a Campaigns Organiser she encourages members of her church to take action to change unfair trade rules using Christian Aid's Action Requests. During Fairtrade Fortnight (the first two weeks of March) she organises activities to raise awareness about Fairtrade. Alison says: 'Buying Fairtrade products is a way of putting your money where your mouth is, and directly benefits the producers... But the Trade Justice Campaign is working towards a change in international trade rules which has massive potential to make a difference to many millions of the poorest people.'



Alison Page (left) and Monica Philbrick, members of Stepping Stones church, distribute samples of Fairtrade products in Corbridge Market Place.

Answers: 1 see photo above; 2 b; 3 a; 4 see product list on www.fairtrade.org.uk; 5 c.

Our response

1 Pray:

Use these points as well as your own ideas to pray for fairness and justice in trade.

- Pray for Teofilo and other coffee farmers in Nicaragua.
- Pray for the Fairtrade Foundation, for success in this year's Fairtrade Fortnight and growth in sales of Fairtrade products.
- Pray for the success of the Trade Justice Campaign in bringing change to the way all global trade operates.

2 Act:

Choose from the following:

- Pass around a list of Fairtrade products (visit www.fairtrade.org.uk in advance and print off a list of products from the Fairtrade Foundation website) and decide to replace one or more items on your weekly shopping list with a Fairtrade equivalent. Review how you did after one week and after one month.
- Organise a Traidcraft stall at church. Call Traidcraft on 0191 491 0591 to order a catalogue, make contact with your nearest Fair Trader, or to discuss opening a church account.
- Give out copies of *Buy into Trade Justice* that encourages people to buy Fairtrade products and to campaign for fairer rules for all international trade.

3 Give:

Plan a social event to promote Fairtrade and raise funds to help Christian Aid continue to support organisations like Prodecoop. Using the list from the Fairtrade Foundation, the Traidcraft catalogue, and the Fairtrade brochure from your local Co-op, choose one of the following options:

- Fairtrade tasting evening
- Fairtrade meal
- Fairtrade coffee morning

You can contact Christian Aid to:

- regularly receive further *Act Justly* updates like this one.
- order a free sample copy of the *Act Justly* booklet, a collection of six sessions for cells and small groups. You could also visit www.surefish.co.uk/actjustly
- order packs of the booklet for use with your group (four booklets for £5/8 euros).
- give to support the work of Christian Aid.
- order copies of *Buy into Trade Justice*
- ask to be taken off the *Act Justly* mailing list.

You can phone the Supporter Relations team on 020 7523 2225 or write to Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT. If you live in the Republic of Ireland contact the Dublin office on 01 6110801.