

EGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ, SUSTAINABILITÉ

**WHY THE CLIMATE REVOLUTION
MUST BE A FAIR REVOLUTION**

A Fairtrade Foundation Discussion Paper
October 2009



**FAIRTRADE
FOUNDATION**

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1.0. Introduction & context	3
1.1. The impacts of climate change on Fairtrade producers	4
1.2. The challenges for poor producers in adapting to climate change	6
2.0. Adaptation and social justice: How Fairtrade can support farmers in adapting to climate change	10
2.1. Paying the real costs	10
2.2. Access to credit	12
2.3. Social organisation	12
2.4. Helping to maintain the resilience of natural systems	13
2.5. Preparing for a low carbon economy	14
3.0. Looking ahead: The potential for Fairtrade to increase its effectiveness in supporting climate solutions	15
3.1. Learning and sharing action responses	15
3.2. New business partnerships	16
3.3. Spread the market, spread the risks	17
3.4. Credit and finance	17
3.5. Matching new products with new demand	18
3.6. Making consumption count	18
4.0. What next?	20
5.0. Annex 1: Fairtrade, food and carbon footprints	20
5.1. Myths and reality – an overview	21
What really matters?	22
References	24
Acknowledgements	

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SUMMARY

It is those at the heart of the Fairtrade movement, poor farmers and workers, in developing countries, that are at the very frontline of the climate crisis. These individuals and their families are already reporting to us the impact that climate change is having on their livelihoods and their wellbeing.

The Fairtrade movement has always fought to support small farmers and workers in their quest to find solutions to the challenges they face. As the climate crisis looms we will continue to do so, and this document outlines how we believe that our founding principles, experience, and the networks we have built up, mean that we are uniquely placed to play a specific role in the global response to climate change.

Whilst 'equity' is an acknowledged part of the climate change agenda, it is too often seen as a desirable aspect of the global response to climate change, rather than critical. A response to climate change that is not seen to be fair is not only morally inappropriate but is likely to prove politically unsustainable.

There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that Fairtrade provides a positive contribution to building up global equity and also has a role to play in directly supporting adaptation to climate change by small farmers in countries of the global South. We argue that supporting the development of the Fairtrade system is one way in which citizens and governments can support a fair global response to the challenges of climate change.

We also explore some ways in which the Fairtrade movement, both North and South, might build on its experience and networks in order to play as strong a role as possible in responding to climate change. This includes a re-framing of current debates on sustainable consumption, to include consideration of our 'positive' footprint and ensuring that purchasing on fair terms from developing countries through programmes such as Fairtrade remains a positive consumption choice by those seeking to live more 'sustainably'.

We invite feedback and comments on this discussion paper and ideas on how the Fairtrade movement should be continuing to respond to the threat of climate change.

‘CONFLICT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND POVERTY ARE THE THREE GLOBAL ISSUES OF OUR AGE. THEIR CHALLENGES ARE INTERLINKED, AND WE CANNOT ADDRESS ONE WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE OTHERS’

Harriet Lamb – Executive Director, Fairtrade Foundation¹

WHY CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CENTRAL ISSUE FOR THE FAIRTRADE MOVEMENT

1.0. INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

At the simplest, and most self evident level, climate change is not fair. The science tells us that climate change is already happening and that, whatever agreement is reached in Copenhagen, climate change will continue to happen, with increasingly severe impacts. One of the most striking aspects of climate change is the contrast between those who bear greatest responsibility and those who will bear the greatest cost. Climate change has highlighted an old issue, inequality, in a stark new way.

As the global climate negotiations move towards the critical conference in Copenhagen (December 2009), it is becoming increasingly clear that issues of equity, and perceptions of 'fairness' will be of central importance in achieving, and delivering, a globally acceptable deal to avoid catastrophic climate change. Rich countries need to adequately acknowledge their historic responsibility for their current per capita emissions and their consumption of embedded carbon in imports. They need to put sufficient resources on the table to ensure that the cost of low carbon development and adaptation is not carried by poor countries. They also need to demonstrate their investment in systems that are capable of delivering these resources in an appropriate, efficient and effective manner². The United Nations climate negotiations are an inclusive process and, if the deal is not considered to be fair by key players and groupings (such as China, India, Small Island States and African Nation groupings), it is unlikely to be signed or, ultimately, adhered to.

This document argues that Fairtrade's track record of empowering consumers to act positively in favour of fairer, more sustainable trade means that the movement can now play a key role of direct relevance to climate change, supporting adaptation and reducing inequality. As such, continuing to invest in the Fairtrade system is one way that developed country citizens and governments can demonstrate their commitment to a fair global response to climate change.

1.1. THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FAIRTRADE PRODUCERS

It is those at the heart of the Fairtrade movement, poor farmers and workers in developing countries (who have done least to cause the problem) that are at the very frontline of the climate crisis. Climate change will come to affect everyone on this planet, but it is these individuals, and their families, who are already reporting that climate change is having an impact on their livelihoods and their wellbeing. In this section we provide some specific examples, but there are many other similar stories emerging across the world.

Higher temperatures in Peru, and specifically higher night time temperatures, are disturbing the flowering process of the mango tree. As a result, mango production in the regions of Tambogrande and Chulucanas decreased by 70% in 2009, causing major problems for the second year in a row for the livelihoods of the 8,000 mango producers there. According to Manuel Leiva, a government agricultural expert,

‘The agricultural panorama of our country is continuously changing and the growing uncertainty doesn’t allow us to execute a working plan’.

The Peruvian government has tried to assist with artificial induction of the flowering. However, they admit that results are not guaranteed and that producers may, as a last resort, have to switch to producing organic bananas instead.



Harvesting mangoes, Ecuador



Tea pickers, Uganda

Similarly disruptive weather patterns are also being seen in the Latin American and African coffee and tea industries³. Across these continents changing weather patterns are resulting in a scarcity of drinking water and a great concentration of pests which threaten the health of crops and humans alike.

While drought periods have destroyed seedlings, more, and unexpected, rainfall at other times damages the crops themselves. The result of these combined problems has been a significant decline in crop yields. **Baluku Yofesi**, the Executive Director of the Karughe Farmers Partnership in Kasese district of Western Uganda says:

‘We used to have much more rainfall than we are having now, that’s one big change, and to me this area is hotter than 20 years ago. Until about 1988 the climate was okay, we had two rainy seasons and they were very reliable. Now the March to June season in particular isn’t reliable, which doesn’t favour the crops we grow. Rain might stop in April. Because of the shortened rains you have to go for early maturing varieties and now people are trying to select these. That’s why some local varieties of pumpkins and cassava that need a lot of rain, even varieties of beans, have disappeared. We need things that mature in two months – maize needs three months of rain to grow so two months is not enough’.



Willington Wamayeye, Uganda

Willington Wamayeye, Managing Director of Gumutindo Coffee Co-operative (a supplier to Fairtrade company, Cafédirect), says:

‘Rains now fall heavily for a short period and our dry season is much longer. The coffee plants are badly affected – flowering is stopping. Last year alone we lost about 40% of our production. As a result, people struggle for everything. Food is getting more expensive and key food crops like bananas are being threatened as well. Without work and opportunities young people are being forced to move to the cities’.

In the Caribbean, Windward Islands Fairtrade banana farmers have always had to cope with the threat of hurricanes, which can be hugely destructive. Assessments by WINFA, the Fairtrade banana producer group, estimated that in 2007 Hurricane Dean caused almost 100% destruction of the banana crop in Dominica, 75-80% damage in St Lucia and about 10% in St Vincent.



Hurricane damage, St Lucia

A number of scientists have suggested that climate change will lengthen the tropical cyclone season (seven of the 17 recorded 'out of season' December storms in the Caribbean have occurred since 1995) and climate change is also likely to result in increasing intensity of tropical hurricanes⁴. Dr Emma Tompkins, of the UK's Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research has stated:

'Climate change is likely to intensify these phenomena and has implications for everything that happens on these islands – not only existing buildings but future tourism, exports and imports, and transport links.'⁵



Coffee farmers, Uganda

While many such changes are already being seen, the longer term future of these agricultural communities is even more worrying. In 2008, Oxfam GB undertook a major study into the impacts of climate change on rural communities in Uganda. Findings indicated that coffee production, which currently supports some five million people and earns the country several hundred million dollars a year, could be wiped out almost entirely within 30 to 40 years if the current pattern of climate change continues⁶.

This means that while adaptation in the short term might allow for the continued production of some crops, the longer term strategy must include opportunities to move away from existing cropping patterns.

1.2. THE CHALLENGES FOR POOR PRODUCERS IN ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Fairtrade movement has always fought to support small farmers in their quest to find solutions for the challenges they face. As the climate crisis looms we will continue to do so. Our experience, and the networks that we have built up, mean that we are uniquely placed to play a specific role in the global response to climate change.

One area of concern is that farming communities in developing countries are notably undersupplied by insurance and credit services that could be used to help manage risk and fund adaptation⁷. Where credit is available, there is usually a high rate of interest which either excludes poor individuals or makes them poorer in the long run.

Where more formal institutions do not exist, poor producers will adopt a variety of strategies for managing risk and uncertainty. One of the most obvious and widely used strategies is to adapt farming practices, which could involve growing different crops, at different times or in different places.

All of these can reduce the risk that poor rainfall, mud slides and hurricanes will compromise the household's production⁸. Likewise, producers can spread risk by growing some crops for home consumption and others for sale in local and international markets, or they can seek work away from their farms for part of the season.

Yet while climate change will make the production of some crops difficult or impossible, it may also provide the opportunity for new crops to be grown for the first time. For example, in Latin America new areas will become suitable for coffee production and warmer temperatures may also allow farmers to diversify into other products, such as cocoa, passion fruit or bananas⁹.

However, even the most (seemingly) simple switches in production require new tools and equipment, as well as new social connections and new knowledge. There is always a cost! For example, neither the tools nor the knowledge needed to grow coffee are directly interchangeable with those needed to produce vegetables¹⁰, and thus diversifying from the former to the latter requires an investment of time and money which may be beyond the capability of already poor farmers¹¹.

Diversifying out of small scale farming altogether and into other forms of added value production, or alternative income generation, can be an even greater challenge, requiring dedicated resources, retraining opportunities, market knowledge or business support.

CASE STUDY 1, LOOKING AHEAD IN WEST AFRICA: CLIMATE CHANGE, SHEA PRODUCTION AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES, FAIRTRADE AND COMIC RELIEF FUNDED STUDY



Shea nut harvesting, Burkina Faso

Fifty million families across West and East Africa depend on the income from marketing the shea fruit (from the shea tree) to complement their diets, as well as to make their own cooking oil. However, the trees are increasingly under pressure from changes in the climate as well as being cut down to make way for expanding plantations for export, for example in Northern Ghana.

As a result, the livelihoods of millions of people are under threat and the Fairtrade Foundation has recently commissioned an in-depth research of the impact of climate change on shea production with the support of Comic Relief.

The full study is still in development, and should be available in the near future but the initial scoping research revealed that producers uniformly report declining production of the shea tree and concluded that it can be assumed that climatic changes will render the future annual harvest more uncertain.

People already are trying to adapt, by trying to find other crops to grow, or working for others, but they often are forced to accept that their future income will be lower. For example, in Tanzania, farmers have switched to traditionally safer but less lucrative crops which are less sensitive to such increases in variability but give lower returns, such as cassava, sweet potato and millet.

The study documents how small scale farmers often aim to maintain a high level of plant biodiversity within farm boundaries through simultaneous growing, mixing or intercropping as part of a food security strategy, as well as practising a variety of other techniques that serve to maintain environmental resilience.

The study recommends that information exchange and networks between rural producers and a range of key technical institutions will be central in supporting farmers to make the right adaptation choices and investments.

The Fairtrade co-operatives therefore form a very important starting point to help farmers network with each other as well as with formalised local and national climate institutions.

Switching from what you know is inherently risky as there is no guarantee that a decision to diversify will be successful. Such losses can be borne more easily by the (relatively) wealthy. But for those already on the poverty line, already struggling to provide their families with enough food or keep their children in school, these risks are often viewed as too great considering the potential cost of failure¹².

This is why poor farmers consistently adapt to environmental adversity by adopting less costly and less risky, but less profitable activities. This is an entirely rational response, spreading risk and seeking the safest options in the face of uncertainty. However, just like with any other form of investment, safer options in agriculture tend to be less profitable. Playing safe can mean staying poor. This means that seeking to adapt to wide scale and increasingly erratic climatic conditions can act as a 'poverty trap'¹³ forcing poor farmers to concentrate on making do, as opposed to following their aspirations and improving their lives¹⁴. So strategies to support producers in adapting to climate change must also avoid reinforcing this 'poverty trap'.

In Uganda, **Florence Madamu**, from Bulirehe village in Bundibugyo district says:

'We've stopped even adopting seasonal planting, because it's so useless. Now we just try all the time. We used to plant in March and that'd be it. Now we plant and plant again. We waste a lot of seeds that way, and our time and energy.

We regret it so often, why we planted. Then we have to plan to acquire other seeds, and the seeds here are very costly. Sometimes you feel like crying. Sometimes you've hired labour and you end up losing all that money for preparing your land'¹⁵



School built using Fairtrade premium funds, Mali

2.0. ADAPTATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: HOW FAIRTRADE CAN SUPPORT FARMERS IN ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

We know that, for poor farmers in the developing world, the necessity to manage hostile climatic conditions is nothing new. Poor farmers are renowned for their adaptability and resilience in the face of adverse weather and other challenging conditions. However, as climate change produces ever more erratic and less predictable weather patterns, farmers will find their accumulated experience a less reliable guide to the future than it has been in the past¹⁶.

Fairtrade provides one means by which we in the richer world can help support poor producers. This is because the standards behind the FAIRTRADE Mark offer a targeted response to stabilising producers' lives and providing resources that build their capacity to adapt to their changing context in ways that do not necessarily perpetuate the 'poverty trap'¹⁷ outlined above. In this chapter, we outline some of the ways in which the Fairtrade system already provides positive support to adaptation.

2.1. PAYING THE REAL COSTS

While Fairtrade prices cover the sustainable cost of production, an emphasis on longer-term trading relationships provides information about future demand, and affords producers the opportunity to plan. Indeed, many producers see involvement in Fairtrade as an opportunity to 'learn by doing' how to gain from the wider economy, but with the guarantee that basic livelihoods are secure¹⁸. This is very important as it provides farmers with the security to carry out more risky strategies which both adapt to the changing climate while having the potential to improve incomes.

The payment of an agreed floor price and the additional Fairtrade premium in the Fairtrade system has already allowed producers to invest in their business capability through technology (to increase efficiency and productivity), by building storage facilities (to improve the longevity and quality of products), by installing infrastructure (like roads and bridges), and by developing quality control mechanisms (such as cupping facilities for coffee)¹⁹.

Cotton farmers in Mali have described how the better price they receive for their cotton has enabled women to buy vegetable seeds to feed their families. They have also used the Fairtrade premium to build a warehouse to store not just cotton but also maize and sorghum seeds for their own consumption and sale to local markets.

The warehouse also acts as a food bank for families between harvest times when cash income is scarce to mitigate food security worries.

‘Fairtrade has put money into the hands of women to meet our children’s needs. We can buy pens and notebooks so they can go to school. We have bought seeds and fertiliser to grow vegetables and improve our family’s diet.’

Sira Souko, Batimakana, Mali

In some cases, Fairtrade producers have invested in activities that directly help to mitigate the effects of climate change. For example, the Gumutindo Coffee Co-operative in Uganda has invested in measures to reduce the stress on coffee bushes caused by higher temperatures by growing more trees around them to provide shade; conserving soil moisture by mulching, and conserving and reusing water²⁰. Producers often choose to invest their Fairtrade premium in community education projects²¹.

This in itself is a form of diversification, as education brings opportunities for younger people to gain salaried employment and contribute financially to the future development of their communities.



Mamouna Keita, Mali

2.2. ACCESS TO CREDIT

In some cases, Fairtrade has begun to help alleviate the problem of limited credit availability through the option of setting up micro finance schemes using the Fairtrade premium. For example, the Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union (KKFU) expanded the membership of the Kuapa Kokoo Credit Union from 33% in 2001 to 46% of Kuapa farmers in 2003²². This expanded availability of credit has then aided the development of other income generating schemes such as soap making²³.

2.3. SOCIAL ORGANISATION



Fairtrade co-operative meeting, Bolivia

Fairtrade is not just about ensuring social justice in the relationship between producer groups and buyers, but also maintaining such standards within producer organisations. This is mainly reflected in the need for small holder farmers to organise in democratic co-operatives within which all profits are distributed equally and transparently²⁴. In many cases this has resulted in the empowerment of women who have become full and active members of co-operatives and this is likely to reduce the pressure to shoulder a disproportionate burden under the pressures of climate change²⁵.

Whitney Kakos, the Cafédirect project officer for AdapCC (see Case Study 2 on page 16), suggests that the organisational strength of the co-operative is a key asset in helping communities to adapt to climate change. The farming co-operatives provide a central unit of information where news about predicted weather changes or government programmes for adaptation can be shared. They also provide a support network for farmers to jointly undertake adaptation activities. Also, because Fairtrade organisations are linked into national and regional networks (for example, the African Fairtrade Network), they have the ability to both receive information coming from those levels as well as to attempt to influence mitigation and adaptation programmes that are being developed.

Baini Diakite of Banfara Village Cotton producers' union of Sebekoro, Mali talks about the support that she and others are receiving through the co-operative system:

'We're trained in each co-operative in how to improve the production in the context of low rainfall and to work with the FLO environmental standard. We've already designated people to be trained.'

2.4. HELPING TO MAINTAIN THE RESILIENCE OF NATURAL SYSTEMS



Water cleaning facilities, Costa Rica

Climate change is not the only environmental pressure facing small farmers. Soil erosion, freshwater shortages, biodiversity loss and other factors are concerns in themselves, but may also be accelerated by the effects of climate change.

Fairtrade standards²⁶ have always embodied principles to ensure that environmentally unsustainable practices are avoided and they require producers to ensure that they protect the natural environment and make environmental protection a part of farm management. This has meant that, in many cases, Fairtrade farmers start with an advantage when it comes to developing systems of production that are more robust in the face of environmental stress.

For example, COOCAFE, a coffee co-operative in Costa Rica, has used its Fairtrade premium to reduce, by ten times, the amount of water used to wash the beans. The premium has also allowed other growers to plant trees around their crop as shade, which is good for the quality of their crop and water retention and land integrity. **Gerardo Arias Camacho**, a coffee farmer and member of the Llano Bonito (COOCAFE) co-operative says:

‘We have planted trees and reduced the amount of pesticides we use by 80% in the last ten years. We’ve used the Fairtrade premium to buy environmentally friendly ovens to dry our coffee. These are powered by coffee skins and macadamia nut shells, which mean we no longer need to cut up to 50 acres of forest every year.’

In many situations, small scale farmers in developing countries act as guardians of biodiversity and other key ‘ecosystem services’. Investing in these farmers through the Fairtrade system provides an opportunity to invest in sustaining the wider ecosystem services on which everybody on the planet will ultimately depend.

2.5. PREPARING FOR A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

While an equitable approach to global emission reduction would allow poor countries to increase their emissions in principle, there are a number of reasons why poor and emerging economies could benefit from developing in a low carbon way. This is too complex an issue to discuss at length in this document. But it is worth noting that, in the Fairtrade system, producers are encouraged to minimise the use of energy, especially energy from non-renewable sources. For instance, tea workers in India have invested some of their Fairtrade premium in replacing the traditional wood-burning heating with a solar-panelled system²⁷ and numerous Fairtrade producers are using hydroelectricity to power their processes.

Some producers are already using hydropower to power their processing. Producers such as the Pussimbing Tea Estate in India, and COOCAFE Coffee growers of Costa Rica have taken on projects to convert their energy supplies to hydroelectricity by tapping into local water bodies in ways that are considerate of others dependant upon them²⁸.

Finally, many Fairtrade producer groups have reported that the Fairtrade premium has subsidised families in the purchase of equipment such as fuel efficient stoves and pressure cookers²⁹. This shows that when consumers in richer countries choose Fairtrade they can consider that they are acting as part of global solidarity effort to mitigate the effects of climate change and contribute to social justice and environmentally sustainable development.

Baini Diakite of Banfara Village Cotton producers' union of Sebekoro, in Mali has already noticed the impact of climate change on cotton production, and expresses her concerns for the future of her family. But she has a simple message to consumers:

'Simply implement what has been already agreed: buy our cotton in the Fairtrade market and we'll face our own problems, climate change consequences included.'

3.0. LOOKING AHEAD: THE POTENTIAL FOR FAIRTRADE TO INCREASE ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN SUPPORTING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Previous sections of this document have explained the challenges of climate change for small scale farmers and explored some of the ways in which Fairtrade may already be playing a small part in helping poor farmers and workers to adapt to the impact of climate change. Given the scale of the global challenge, there is clearly a need to consider how the potential of the Fairtrade system, in this regard, can be maximised.

Listening to the voices of producers and producer representatives and considering the evidence that we have collected, it is clear that there are ways in which the Fairtrade movement may be able to build on its strengths and play an increased role in the global response to climate change. In this section we discuss some possibilities for how to move ahead.

We stress that these are simply areas for discussion and future consideration. Climate change is an unpredictable process and responses need to be developed quickly and flexibly, with regular re-assessment and willingness to adapt and change over time.

3.1. LEARNING AND SHARING ACTION RESPONSES



Local AdapCC workshop, Faique, Peru

Fairtrade is a global citizens' movement, linking farmers and workers in poor countries with consumers and businesses all over the world. We believe that there is enormous scope to develop the potential of our movement to gather and share information on the effects of climate change and to support a co-ordinated process of learning and sharing on adaptation approaches.

Perhaps more importantly we believe that responding to climate change is something that is best achieved through joint efforts and collaboration. The Fairtrade movement already helps to link people at every level, and increasingly this could become a mechanism by which co-ordinated responses on climate change can be planned and undertaken.

Based on further research on the real impact of climate change, we can see huge potential for Fairtrade co-operatives and networks to co-ordinate with other parts of civil society and with government to plan and act on climate change.

3.2. NEW BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The Cafédirect experience (see Case Study 2 below) provides an example of how a dedicated Fairtrade business is building a powerful public/private partnership to support vulnerable communities to adapt to a changing climate.

Such groundbreaking approaches could act as a model for deeper business engagement on adaptation across the Fairtrade movement. Public/private partnerships such as this, featuring progressive businesses, could also be a highly effective mechanism to channel adaptation funding directly to vulnerable communities.

CASE STUDY 2, FAIRTRADE AND PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



AdapCC workshop Michimikuru Tea Factory, Kenya

AdapCC is a collaboration between Cafédirect and the German Development Cooperation GTZ that started in 2007, and runs until March 2010. It is a groundbreaking initiative that aims to develop new methods of supporting Fairtrade farmers to deal with the impacts of climate change and help them adapt to future changes. AdapCC starts with micro-level research in specific regions into existing and predicted weather changes; then works with farmers to identify potential strategies, and finally focuses on implementation of adaptation approaches.

The Cafédirect/GTZ AdapCC project has been warmly welcomed by Fairtrade co-operatives, and there is a huge demand to do more. Because of the public/private structure of the project, where a governmental actor (in this case a donor), joins hands with business structures (Cafédirect and its co-operative partners), there is an enormous potential for the project to have many ripple effects. For example, in Kenya, the Ministry of Agriculture has recently become involved, and in Latin America, the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture has also joined the project.

There is the potential for these organisations to develop knowledge and practices on small scale farming and adaptation which, if replicated, will benefit many farmers beyond the Fairtrade co-operatives currently involved.

3.3. SPREAD THE MARKET, SPREAD THE RISKS

The Fairtrade movement is already investing in the development of local and regional Fairtrade markets (eg South Africa, India and Brazil). Increasing investment, and accelerating these processes, could help Fairtrade farmers diversify out of reliance on single commodities or Northern markets, which in turn may help to spread risk without reducing profits.

This supports farmers to adapt without falling into the 'poverty trap'. In addition, increasing the range of rich country markets for existing products and extending the range of Fairtrade products in those marketplaces all add to the opportunities for farmers in the Fairtrade system to diversify as part of their adaptation strategies.

3.4. CREDIT AND FINANCE

As detailed above, access to appropriate credit and finance, at a local level, is critical to allowing small scale producers to adapt to climate change without risking too much.

The Fairtrade network is already exploring the development of a new global credit mechanism to support producers. Credit may play a role of course, but a fair response to climate change should include making a substantial amount of grants available to small farmers to help them adapt.

A specific fund (or regional funds) could provide additional support for producers affected by climate change. The Fairtrade Foundation has recently established a technical assistance fund for African producers, with support from Comic Relief. This model could be the basis for a larger, global fund, linked to other donors and networks for supporting adaptation.

3.5. MATCHING NEW PRODUCTS WITH NEW DEMAND



The Fairtrade movement has already proved that it can be part of creating demand, eg for new Fairtrade products, through its campaigning network. A good example is quinoa. Fairtrade has played a significant role in building up awareness and availability of a product relatively new to the UK market. This offers the intriguing possibility to co-ordinate consumer-focused campaigns and producer support to facilitate specific adaptation processes.

For instance, a number of commentators have suggested that, in drought-affected areas, a rational response to climate change would be to switch from maize to sorghum production, sorghum being a more drought resistant crop. A big challenge here would be developing a robust market for sorghum. A co-ordinated campaign could involve supporting a shift in production from maize to sorghum in drought-affected areas while at the same time working to help develop a global demand for sorghum.

3.6. MAKING CONSUMPTION COUNT

We know that the success of Fairtrade has been achieved on the back of one of the most widespread and effective public campaigns relating to international development. We are in a unique position to contribute to a discussion on sustainable consumption and climate change, especially with regard to impact on poor communities and the need to consider equity as a component of the debate on sustainable consumption. The Fairtrade Foundation will seek to develop the public debate on sustainable consumption beyond the issue of food miles, to a more holistic discussion about increasing our 'positive footprint' to promote equity and support adaptation.

The environmental cost of the excessive consumption that has fuelled growth in rich countries, and emerging economies, is now starkly apparent. Reckless consumption is depleting the world's resources to a point where we are endangering our future prosperity³⁰. Simultaneously, the direct correlation between increasing per capita wealth and increasing health, happiness and wellbeing is increasingly coming under question. It seems that rich countries may be approaching the end of the real social benefits of economic growth.

To deal with climate change, consumption patterns in the UK and other rich nations, must change. We know we need to



Fairtrade products

reduce the carbon footprint associated with items we consume, but if we are to meet the challenge of climate change, we must find ways to consume less, and consume better. We need to become better at translating our consumer behaviour into social benefit, not just reducing our negative footprint, but also maximising our positive footprint. We need to not just reduce consumption, but make every bit of consumption count.

What might be involved in 'consuming better'? We suggest that this means consuming more fairly and more sustainably and, in this context, Fairtrade should be considered as key contribution to any plan for sustainable consumption.

We believe that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is of paramount importance. But the climate challenge extends beyond a simple emissions reduction formula. We already know that the poorest and most vulnerable will suffer the greatest consequences of climate change and we work on the understanding that the poor should not lose out yet further in a low carbon economy³¹.

Annual carbon emissions per person are 200kg in Kenya and 172kg in Bangladesh compared to 21,000kg in the US and 9,000kg in the UK. Under these circumstances, to deny poorer countries and people the opportunity to develop when their overall carbon footprint is so low is morally unfair and politically unsustainable³². In addition, the carbon impact of Fairtrade is far less than is often assumed. Annex 1 examines some of the myths regarding food miles and other aspects of Fairtrade, and demonstrates that people will often be making a poorer environmental choice if they choose products solely on the basis of their place of origin.

Since adaptation to environmental change often comes at the cost of perpetuating poverty we further assume an overwhelming need for the poor to be properly supported in their efforts to adapt. A fair response to climate change requires that the responsibility for ensuring such support must lie with those most culpable for causing the problem.

These assumptions imply that equity and fairness must be a core part of the discussion on climate change, consumption and sustainability. Our efforts to tackle climate change, and its impacts, are likely to fail unless we succeed in reversing patterns of national and global inequality. The concept of equity within the climate change agenda is not new but finding practical approaches to tackling climate change in a fair way will be a major challenge. It will be important to build on existing and proven approaches.

By choosing products, such as Fairtrade, where economic benefits have been distributed more fairly, we contribute, in a small way, to a fairer world. In addition, as we have explored in this document, Fairtrade could play an important role in directly supporting small farmers in adapting to climate change.

4.0. WHAT NEXT?

We hope that this discussion paper has offered some new perspectives on the role of Fairtrade in the global response to climate change. We are interested to hear your responses and would welcome any feedback on the content of this paper or ideas as to how the Fairtrade movement could be responding to climate change, working with others or helping to re-frame the debate. You can contact us by emailing climatechange@fairtrade.org.uk

5.0. ANNEX 1: FAIRTRADE, FOOD AND CARBON FOOTPRINTS A FALSE DILEMMA

As popular understanding of climate change grows, so people understandably seek ways in which they can take action to reduce the negative impact of their behaviour on the environment. The magnitude of the problem can feel overwhelming so taking individual action, even at a relatively minor level, may help us feel in some kind of control.

Increased media coverage and campaigning on climate change have given consumers an interest in food miles (how far a product has travelled before it reaches the consumer) and air miles (whether and how far a product has been air freighted).

Many ethical consumers have faced the dilemma of whether to buy Fairtrade or local. Some have thought twice about buying Fairtrade, as these products are inevitably imported from some distance, and therefore deemed to have a negative impact on the environment.

But the reality is not that simple³³. Increasing evidence shows that it is simply wrong to assume that products from developing countries automatically have a worse impact on the climate and the environment than products grown in the UK, or Europe. Indeed, Fairtrade can actually have a positive impact on the environment, as Fairtrade co-operatives prioritise environmental sustainability, as well as on strengthening communities so that they in turn can tackle their own social, economic and environmental problems.

5.1. MYTHS AND REALITY – AN OVERVIEW



Banana boat, St Lucia

Myth: Most Fairtrade products enter the UK by plane.

Reality: The vast majority of Fairtrade products are transported into the UK by ship. In 2005, Fairtrade roses were the only certified product to be regularly flown into the UK and they accounted for just 0.8% (by weight) of all Fairtrade products³⁴. Of all Africa's export of fruit and vegetables, 90% travels by ship, which has the lowest per tonne impacts of any transport mode.

Myth: Fruit and vegetables grown locally have a smaller carbon footprint than Fairtrade products sourced from abroad.

Reality: The distance a product has travelled is often not significant in terms of a product's total life-cycle emissions. A recent analysis of food products in the United States showed that 89% of total emissions were associated with production, and only 11% with transport. Studies have shown that flowers grown in Europe can use far more energy than flowers grown in developing countries with a more suitable climate³⁵. One study showed that this could be the case even after taking air freight into account³⁶.

More relevant than worrying about 'food miles' is calculating the total carbon footprint of a product. This means capturing the full impact of a product, including inputs, production, and transportation. A study commissioned by Swiss supermarkets found that organic Fairtrade cane sugar from Paraguay has a 40% smaller carbon footprint than sugar made from sugar beet in Switzerland itself³⁷. Paraguayan sugar is cultivated without artificial fertilisers and pesticide, and without heavily polluting machines. Furthermore, the sugarcane waste can also be re-used to generate energy.



Myth: Stopping all air freighted food imports is required to help the UK move towards a low carbon society.

Reality: Air freight accounts for only 0.3% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions against the 8% associated with meat and dairy production³⁸. Of all UK food mile emissions, freight transport on UK roads makes up 85%, and exploring ways to reduce this could be a much more significant contribution to emissions reduction, without harming poor country interests. With regards to Fairtrade alone, the Foundation estimated that in 2005, the international transportation of all Fairtrade products to the UK was responsible for just 0.03% of UK food mile emissions, and 0.001% of total UK emissions.

Myth: Farmers in developing countries would be better off only growing food for their own people and stop growing crops for export to rich countries.

Reality: Food sovereignty, the right of people to define and control their own food systems (agriculture, livestock and fisheries), is an important part of genuinely sustainable development. This does not mean, however, that food exports cannot be part of a positive system. Under the right conditions, agricultural exports can help reduce poverty, providing small farmers with opportunities to generate income, diversify their livelihoods, provide work for others in the community and reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Agricultural exports are often the only option available to many countries in Africa for acquiring the foreign currency necessary to support their development³⁹.

Research has shown that export agriculture is critical in reducing rural poverty in Uganda and Vietnam. Far from displacing food production, export success in both countries has gone hand in hand with an increase in output of basic food staples⁴⁰. This doesn't mean that agricultural trade automatically generates poverty reduction benefits, as farmers often lack access to the right assets to take advantage of export opportunities. This is where Fairtrade can provide a vital lifeline for marginalised farmers and their families.

Once they are selling to Fairtrade markets, the increased stability, better price and support to farmers' organisations means they can implement their own projects to improve food security and nutrition for their own families and the wider community. The key objective is always to diversify the range of opportunities available to poor farmers and workers.

WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

As we have demonstrated, extensive research has shown that people will often be making a poorer environmental choice if they choose products solely on the basis of their place of origin. It is not just the source of the food that matters in terms of its climate impact, but it is the kind of food you eat, how it has been produced, packaged, sold, prepared and even how much of what we purchase simply goes to waste. We must put our consumer choices and behaviour into a wider context.

As we outlined in the first section of this document, our response to the climate crisis, from the individual to the global level, should not only be environmentally effective, but should also have justice and equity at its heart. Locking poor farmers out of the climate equation only means postponing and even worsening the problem. It also fails to recognise the UK and

European commitments made to the concept of global sustainable development whereby economic, environmental, and social gains are treated as equally important⁴¹.

If we really want to make a substantial reduction in food related carbon emissions, there are many choices we can make as individual consumers that can have a significant impact on carbon emissions, without compromising opportunities for producers in developing countries. Many environment and development groups argue that changing our diets, for instance, with a switch away from reliance on cheap meat and dairy products that have much heavier carbon footprints, is a key element in any food consumption response to climate change.

We also need to remind ourselves that our food consumption is just one part of our individual carbon footprint. Ways to do this include switching to an energy saving boiler, using public transport instead of cars, taking the train instead of short haul flights, ensuring our pension funds invest in low carbon technologies and switching to a green electricity supplier.



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