



Global Voices: Celebrating International Development Week 2008

This Valentine's Day, Try Fair Trade

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By now so many of us have gotten the memo on Fair Trade coffee - we know what a difference it makes in the lives of farmers, how it supports democratic cooperatives of small farmers, and how the certification and the additional price paid allow communities to develop and fund their own community development projects. We wouldn't dream of buying coffee that wasn't grown under conditions that respect human rights and community development, foster safe and healthy working conditions, and that protect the environment. But that doesn't get us off the hook.

It's great that so many of us are on board with Fair Trade coffee, but there's so much more to be done. Fair Trade is a broad movement based on values, and there are a lot of ways to be involved. With Valentine's Day coming up and Easter soon thereafter, a lot of us will be buying chocolate - why not buy Fair Trade Certified chocolate?

The cocoa industry is historically one of the worst in terms of exploitation. According to Global Exchange, in countries like Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana on the west coast of Africa, for example, the cocoa industry employs about 284,000 children. While some of these kids work on their family farms because their parents are not able to enrol them in school, or there is no school in their area, the most conservative estimates - which come from multinational chocolate corporations themselves - tell us that at least 15,000 of these children work under the worst forms of child slavery - saying "child labour" does not capture the reality of these 15,000 kids. Most of these 15,000 children are victims of kidnapping or human trafficking. In some cases, the kids are sold by their impoverished parents who are lied to by human traffickers and told that their children will have a better life in their new situation.

In the cocoa industry, children and adults work in dangerous conditions, are exposed to pesticides, extreme heat, and untenable hours, and are grossly underpaid. For these workers, Fair Trade is a real alternative that ensures there is no forced child labour (i.e. slavery), basic labour standards are met, and the worst pesticides and herbicides are not used. The vast majority of Fair Trade Certified chocolate is also organic certified.

Organic certification alone does not guarantee better working conditions for farmers or the abolition of child labour and slavery. Fair Trade chocolate pays a set price to cooperatives, ensuring that producers earn a cost-covering price and that cooperatives are able to invest in their communities and the land. Let's take our commitment to Fair Trade and sustainable sourcing to the next level.

According to the recent book by Canadian investigative reporter Carol Off, *Bitter Chocolate: Investigating the Dark Side of the World's Most Seductive Sweet* (2006), some multinational chocolate corporations have known about labour abuses and slavery on cocoa farms in western areas of Africa for over a century. She includes internal documents of these corporations in her evidence of these facts. It is truly amazing how exploitation knows no limits for some corporations, and the people and politicians that allow these atrocities to continue. Once you know, there is no excuse. For those of us who have come to these facts more recently, we now know, now what are we going to do about it?



Lucky for us and cocoa farm workers and their families, Fair Trade chocolate is sourced ethically and is increasingly available. Check out 100% Fair Trade chocolate companies like La Siembra Cooperative who sell Cocoa Camino branded chocolates, Equita, Divine, and Just Us.

Surf to www.transfair.ca to learn more about Fair Trade Certified products in Canada. The Fair Trade label ensures that we can eat as many chocolate bars as we like, knowing that our purchases are contributing to sustainable development in cocoa communities around the world.

For Fair Trade lovers, here's a helpful guide:

If you're hoping for...	Give...
A swift kick in the pants	Conventional chocolate – low quality chocolate picked by children is NOT hot!
Peck on the cheek	Cut flowers – a nice gesture, but flower factories are known for their terrible working conditions. Fair Trade is changing this. If Fair Trade flowers aren't available in your area yet, then work to bring them there.
Goodnight Kiss	Divine Chocolate's mint bar... so good, rad company...and with minty fresh breathe who could resist a little kiss?
Good Morning Kiss	La Siembra's chili and spice bar... sweet and spicy... can't help but get hot and bothered.
Til Death Do Us Part	No one can resist passionate people who live their values.... Check out all the Fair Trade and ethically sourced stuff available on your local store's shelves and online, and get involved in the Fair Trade movement!

Need advice from your Fair Trade friends? Contact the Canadian Student Fair Trade Network at csftn-recce@care2.com / www.csftn.org