

Fair Trade Fortnight: *Community Involvement in Promoting Fair Trade Consumption*

During Fair Trade Fortnight the UK will witness the activities of a well oiled yet organic PR machine organised by the community members and aimed at educating citizens of the United Kingdom about the complex benefits of purchasing fair trade products. Across the UK, cities, towns and villages will be involved in a variety of unique community driven marketing events, organised by a diverse cross section of members composed of local councils, NGO's, public organisations, private enterprises, consumers and students. All of these stakeholders have joined forces and dedicated time and resources to educating their community as to the systemic social, political and economic benefits that result from purchasing fair trade products. Many of these community groups will voluntarily manage and orchestrate complex events across the UK allowing organisations and individuals to come together and witness the benefits of fair trade at first hand. Over Fair Trade Fortnight the following community activities and events will take place:

- Fair trade commodity growers from developing nations will tour the UK, presenting real life stories about how their communities have become sustainable and have ecologically improved as a result of what we consume. This is aimed at presenting the consumer with a unique opportunity to meet people who have benefited dramatically from western consumerism, helping generate a better understanding of the impacts of their consumption habits. For the first time in most consumers' lives these events will introduce them to 'real life' people in the supply chain, giving them access to direct information that for most products is usually unavailable or cunningly hidden.
- Fair trade suppliers and connected organisations ranging from Christian Aid and Oxfam to The Cooperative and Café Direct will offer the public a chance to sample and view the diversity of fair trade products available. Community groups will also produce cakes and other foods from fair trade commodities and offer samples and recipes to the visiting public, allowing potential new consumers to fully engage with products they previously had no understanding of.

- Various members of schools, colleges, universities, community groups, churches, town and community councils and businesses will participate in discussion led groups focusing on the best way forward for their organisation to fully embrace the ethos of fair trade.

Although the idea is simple these activities are profoundly unique and sophisticated consumer lead marketing techniques that most companies would be deeply envious of and unable to recreate or model. These events around the UK will be a real testament to how fair trade will use domestic social capital to create consumer champions and provide them with a credible platform to deliver the fair trade message. These champions have already fully embraced the emotive ethos behind fair trade and will credibly promote the understanding of how western consumers can build social capital and sustainability in remote parts of the developing world through their consumption habits. All this suggests that the fair trade movement both appreciates and understands the economic and social benefits of marketing via product endorsement through friends, family and colleges - a marketing method and model ultimately far more sustainable and influential than any mass media marketing campaign.