



F A I R T R A D E



Turn social hour into social action

Join UUSC in promoting human rights through fair trade

When you and your congregation participate in the UUSC Coffee Project, you join about 500 Unitarian Universalist congregations across the country enjoying more than just great coffee, tea and cocoa. You are also putting your faith into action by making responsible economic choices that promote the human rights of thousands of small farmers and their families around the world.



Through the UUSC Coffee Project, farmers earn a fair price for their products, have access to affordable credit and gain a long-term trading partner they can trust, a fair trade company called Equal Exchange. In addition, a small portion of the proceeds of the sales returns to UUSC to support human rights work in the coffee-growing regions.

Fair trade allows small farmers to compete in a just economic system, an alternative to the current international system of trade that is inherently unjust to small producers in developing countries. By making the choice to purchase and promote fairly traded products, you can live out your UU values “to respect the interdependent web of all existence” as well as “to affirm the inherent human dignity” and to practice “justice, equity and compassion in human relations.”



Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

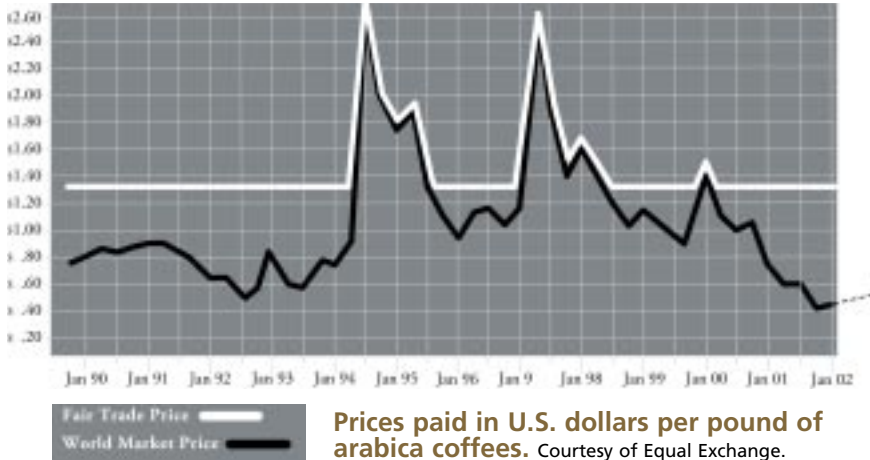
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Equal Exchange, UUSC's partner in the Coffee Project, is a worker-owned cooperative founded in 1986. The organization chose to incorporate as a for-profit business specifically to promote a different model of commerce, one that promotes fair trade, economic democracy, and worker ownership and participation. Equal Exchange was the first company in the United States to adopt international fair trade standards and is committed to these principles on 100 percent of their coffee, tea and cocoa products.

Workers' rights

In Latin America, it costs about 80 to 90 cents to produce one pound of coffee. By comparison, recent prices on the conventional market have been as low as 50 cents per pound. Small farmers therefore often receive a price that does not even cover their production costs. As a result, farming families often go hungry, go into debt and eventually lose their land. Fair trade ensures that farmers receive \$1.26 per pound and \$1.41 per pound for organic coffee, which is a fair, guaranteed minimum price and above the cost of production.



When you purchase a certified fairly traded product, you know that it was produced under humane, equitable conditions. Small farmer cooperatives that wish to have their coffee certified as fair trade must provide healthy and safe working conditions. No such internationally enforced criteria exist for big plantations or other producers of coffee, tea and cocoa.

Children's rights

In many developing countries, school fees and the cost of school supplies can be prohibitively expensive. Fair trade income can often mean the crucial difference between sending a child to school, a health clinic when ill or keeping them home to work. In addition, many small farmer cooperatives have been able to fund health clinics and local schools with income from fair trade. Community efforts such as these that promote the right of children to education and health services become necessary when the government does not provide these social services, as is the case in many developing countries.

The cocoa industry has been found to use a high level of forced child labor in countries such as the Ivory Coast. This high number of child laborers includes children who have been

Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, [and] to just and favourable conditions of work.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, A.23

The right of the child [is] to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, A.32.1

trafficked as slaves. By purchasing certified fairly traded cocoa and chocolate products, you ensure that the products were not produced with forced child labor and you promote better working standards in the cocoa industry.

Environmental rights

Approximately 85 percent of certified fairly traded coffee sold in the United States is also certified organic. The guaranteed higher price of fairly traded organic coffee encourages small farmers to engage in the environmentally sustainable practice of organic farming and to provide safe, chemical-free working conditions for farming communities.

Fair trade cooperatives also receive technical assistance enabling them to utilize better environmental practices, including composting, rotating crops and growing shade crops. Conventionally grown coffee requires cutting down canopy trees to grow coffee plants under the full sun, whereas shade grown coffee helps preserve bird habitats and produces a higher quality coffee bean.

States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation.

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Principle 12



Women's rights

When a woman is well-educated, healthy and productive, the entire society benefits. They are less likely to be battered, more likely to learn to read and send their girl children to school, and more likely to use their money for the health and welfare of the entire family.

In many parts of the world, women may help prepare fields, and weed and harvest cash crops, but they rarely benefit from the meager profits. In the fair trade system, coops must reveal the number of female members and show that women have equal rights and responsibilities. Coops must also show how many women hold leadership roles, and how many own and/or co-own the land. The social status associated with earning wages empowers women to make decisions that affect their lives, families and communities. In addition, many cooperatives have specific programs that promote women's participation in the cooperative and community.

State Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families [including] the right to organize cooperatives to obtain equal access to economic opportunities.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, A.14.1, 2.e



"We do not want people to buy our coffee because we are poor. We want you to buy our coffee because of its quality. And this quality in your cup translates into many other qualities: Our quality of life, the quality of education for our children, the quality of our environment. It is total quality."

Blanca Rosa Molina, president of the CECOCAFEN cooperative, Nicaragua



“Not only is it incumbent upon me to participate in a system that respects the inherent worth and dignity of the people who provide me with coffee, but that system allows them to experience their own self-respect, dignity and worth.”

*Al Benford,
UU Society East,
Manchester, Conn.*

The right to organize

Equal Exchange, a worker cooperative, and UUSC, a unionized organization, stand together in solidarity with farmer cooperatives and partners in the developing world. Under fair trade and through democratically organized coops, farmers are able to avoid middlemen who previously controlled access to international buyers, credit and materials for coffee production. The cooperative facilitates access to buyers, provides pre-harvest credit, and offers training and technical assistance to its members. Supporting these democratically organized cooperatives also promotes the Unitarian Universalist principle of promoting “the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.”



Fairly traded coffee chain. Courtesy of Equal Exchange.

Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization.

Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, A.2.



Indigenous rights

In many parts of the world, notably in Latin America, small farms are owned by indigenous people who face multiple forms of discrimination based on language, culture, religion and ethnicity. In Mexico and Guatemala, the very people with whom UUSC works to promote and protect human rights through partnerships with local human rights organizations face additional pressures due to the coffee crisis, including the possible loss of their land and way of life. Fair trade is one response to indigenous rights struggles. With a fair return on their labor, not only can these indigenous farmers keep their land, but their cooperatives may serve as a means to address the political, cultural and military assaults to their way of life.

Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.

Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, A.2.2

To learn more

For more information, visit www.equalexchange.com/interfaith or www.uusc.org/coffeeproject



To order certified fairly traded coffee, tea or cocoa from Equal Exchange through the UUSC Coffee Project, call 781.830.0303, ext. 228, to order over the phone or to request an order form. To order online, see <http://store.yahoo.com/equalexchange>.



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