

Fair Trade and the UUSC Coffee Project



Unitarian Universalists respect the interdependent web of all existence and know that the choices we make in our daily lives affect thousands of other people all over the world. In this spirit, UUSC created the Coffee Project, teaming up with Equal Exchange, a worker-owned company in West Bridgewater, Mass., which buys products like coffee and tea directly from small farmers around the globe and sells them through a system called fair trade.

With fair trade, farmers get a fair price for their coffee, tea, cocoa, pecans, cranberries, and other goods. This means that small farmers can earn a decent living, which is an important step towards lifting thousands of farming families out of poverty. By buying fair trade products, we can ensure that there is economic justice for the small farmers who help to grow our food.

Coffee: From bean to cup

A lot of time and effort goes into producing a cup of coffee.

A coffee farmer's day starts very early in the morning, when farmers go into the field to check on their coffee trees. Because coffee is grown in hot climates, like Africa, Asia, and South America, coffee trees need lots of shade and water to help them produce bright-red coffee berries, with delicious coffee beans inside.

When September rolls around, it will be harvesting time. And farmers will go out into the fields to pick the round coffee berries off the trees by hand. This takes time and patience, but there is no better way of harvesting coffee berries. After harvesting, the berries will be pulped, fermented, washed, sun dried, and roasted to turn them into tasty, brown coffee beans.

But when farmers bring their beans to market, in most cases they won't be paid a fair price. Usually, they must sell to a local middleman, who wants to pay the lowest price – usually about 30 cents per pound – which is barely enough money to raise a family. Those coffee beans will go through a lot of hands before reaching a grocery store or coffee shop, where they will be sold by a big coffee company for more than \$10 per pound, a huge profit.

But isn't it only fair that more of that money should go to the farmers who put so much time and effort into growing good beans rather than the big coffee companies?

This is why UUSC supports **fair trade** and **small farmer cooperatives**.



"Buying fair trade products directly supports the rights and leadership of women small farmers and producers."

—Johanna Chao Kreilick, Manager of UUSC's Economic Justice Program

Fair Trade Business Standards

- ▶ Pay fair wages to growers and producers.
- ▶ Give workers the chance to advance in their jobs.
- ▶ Use farming methods that respect and nurture the environment.
- ▶ Provide equal employment opportunities to all workers, particularly the most disadvantaged.
- ▶ Provide healthy and safe working conditions.
- ▶ Provide assistance to growers and producers whenever possible.
- ▶ Build long-term business relationships.

the Mexican state of Chiapas run by women farmers from 18 indigenous communities. CESMACH members learn leadership and management skills and gain strength and confidence from their new business associates. Together, they are finding new ways to support their communities.

Join UUSC and UUs around the nation!

UUs across the country — from Massachusetts to Florida to California — are using **fair trade** as their springboard to **economic justice**. In congregational coffee hours, religious education classes, and at UUSC JustWorks Camps in Guatemala's coffee lands, UUSC is dedicated to working with you to bring **fair trade** and economic justice alive. For inspirational stories, tools, and ways to get involved, visit www.uusc.org/coffee_project_actions.

UUSC's Small Farmer Fund Partners

For every pound of **fair trade** products sold through the UUSC Coffee Project, a contribution is made to UUSC's Small Farmer Fund, earning about \$17,000 per year.

Through the Small Farmer Fund, you support UUSC's work with **small farmer cooperatives** that grow, produce, and sell goods for fair trade. Cooperatives are owned and managed by the farmers, themselves! This way, farmers gain more control of their economic future. They also improve their lives as they work with other farmers and producers to develop business skills and economic self-sufficiency — and make investments in their land, education, and local communities. **Worker cooperatives** are a powerful way to advance human rights and support the environment.

One of UUSC's partners is the **Southern Alternatives Agricultural Cooperative (SAAC)**, a pecan cooperative in southwest Georgia that produces shelled pecans and pecan candies for sale through **fair trade**. SAAC is the only African American-owned pecan shelling facility in the United States — and it is run by women.

The women who lead this **cooperative** are lifelong advocates who are determined to run a pecan-processing plant in a way that creates new business and career opportunities for workers and strengthens local economies in southwest Georgia.

Another partner is the **Ecological Farmers from the Sierra Madre of Chiapas (CESMACH)**, a coffee cooperative in

Advocate — *a person who acts, speaks, or writes in support of a person, cause, or idea.*

Cooperative — *a group of people who have joined together to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.*

Economic Justice — *as interpreted by UUSC, the right to a living wage and the right of workers to organize.*

Fair Trade — *a set of principles and practices that more equitably distributes wealth and provides producers and farmers with a living wage.*

Profit — *the monetary surplus left to a producer or employer after deducting wages, rent, cost of raw materials, etc.*

Self-Sufficiency — *the ability to supply one's own needs without external assistance; independence.*

Sustainability — *using the earth's resources and/or living in a way that can be carried on forever without permanent damage or depletion.*