

FAIR TRADE *fact sheet*

What is Fair Trade?

Fair Trade in Europe started as a grassroots movement about 40 years ago. The aim was to alleviate poverty in the 'South' – Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean – by building direct, sustainable relationships with disadvantaged producers and providing fair access to markets in the 'North'. The aims are the same now, but Fair Trade has developed into a powerful force, symbolised by a high level of European co-operation. Because different countries have different ways of working in this movement, there is no one definition of Fair Trade, but all in the field would agree with the following statement.

Fair Trade is an alternative approach to conventional international trade. It is a trading partnership which aims at sustainable development for excluded and disadvantaged producers. It seeks to do this by providing better trading conditions, by awareness raising and by campaigning.

Similarly, there are no absolutely agreed goals, but all involved in Fair Trade would accept that it has to include:

- paying fair prices to producers which reflect the true cost of production... world market prices often do not cover even the costs of the raw materials (see Fair Price fact sheet)
- supporting producer organisations in their social and environmental projects, such as developing health facilities and tree planting
- promoting gender equality in pay and working conditions to change the traditional low position of women in society
- advising on product development to increase access to markets
- committing to long term relationships to provide stability and security
- campaigning to highlight the unequal system of world trade which places profit above human rights and threatens our environment.

Fair Trade is not just about trading, but is also about changing the unfair structure of world trade and so building a fairer society.

trading for justice

people behind the products

There are Fair Trade Shops (World Shops) throughout Europe, selling jewellery, clothing, food, crafts, and even furniture. These products can all compete in design and quality with the best in the market... and demonstrate the skills, creativity and dedication of the producers. A survey in July 2000 indicated that the annual retail value of sales from these shops was over £60 million... that's a lot of work for the producers.

Panmai in the NE of Thailand was set up in 1985 to try to halt the migration to the towns, as this area is one of the poorest in the country. About 500 women in 24 villages sell their woven silk products through **Panmai** (which means "many trees"). The group promotes the use of natural dyes and traditional hand weaving techniques. Management training is also given, and it is hoped that the women will eventually take over the management. Weaving does not happen when it is rice planting or cultivation time, ensuring the traditional life of the villagers is not disrupted.

“ We use natural dyes because we want to preserve our heritage. Natural dye is something close to us, from our environment. The trees, the leaves are abundantly available to make the dyes... when the chemical dyes are disposed as waste water into the pond, it pollutes the environment. ”

Pi Moon
member of **Panmai** in Songhong village

For further information about Fair Trade and the *people behind the products* project contact:
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