

Think Fairtrade and change the world

MILTON Keynes Peace & Justice Network writes exclusively for Citizen First:

IN 2000 leaders from around the world came together to look at 'Global Issues.' The result of their discussion was the Millennium Development Goals, a key aim of which was to cut global poverty by 2015.

In the same year, Garstang in Lancashire became the world's first Fairtrade Town. This inspired towns around the country to follow their lead and in October 2004 Milton Keynes was awarded Fairtrade Borough status.

Ten years on there are now more than 400 Fairtrade Towns. In order for Milton Keynes to achieve this status, we pledged to do what we could as a community to support fairtrade in our workplaces, homes and communities.

So why did we do this and what has it got to do with helping to cut global poverty?

When we buy a fairtrade product it has a significant effect on the life of the producer who made it.

Unlike a charitable donation, Fairtrade is about giving producers the means to make decisions about their own lives and futures.

It's a very simple, but clever, system of trade. For example, to help fairtrade farmers in developing countries sustain their businesses, they are paid up front, to cover their costs and raw materials. When the work is completed, the farmer is paid the 'fairtrade premium', an additional sum generated from sales of the product, which goes straight back to the farmer's community to spend as they wish.

Invariably it is put towards something important for the whole community. At the Fairtrade Foundation Business Conference last year a banana producer from the Windward Isles told us how the lives of the farmers on St Lucia had been transformed since becoming fairtrade growers. An elected committee of farmers and locals

make decisions on how to spend the premium. It has included over the years new life-saving equipment for their small hospital and, more recently, canning machinery, which will provide jobs where they are scarce and will enable them to export more of the fruit they grow.

Fairtrade Fortnight 2011 will focus on cotton. Some of the poorest people around the world are cotton farmers.

Cotton Roots is a local business supplying fairtrade corporate clothing. MD, Susan Waters travelled to India to visit the people on her supply chain and see the impact fairtrade was having on the cotton farmers and manufacturers.

Before the farmers had signed up to follow Fairtrade terms, which includes eradicating the use of pesticides on crops, they had widely used chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Not only was this extremely costly sending them into greater poverty, the water running off their crops was poisoning their river, killing wildlife and seriously affecting the health of the people.

As they live, play and work on the very edge of the cotton fields, it was easy to see how farming with traditional organic methods has led to significant improvements to the health of farmers.

Fairtrade is good news, but if it's going to continue growing it will need everyone's support. You don't have to march or protest, just shop.

If you change just one thing in your shopping basket to fairtrade you will be making a difference. Every first and third Saturday of the month, you'll find a dedicated fairtrade stall called eye2eye at Wolverton Farmers' Market.

For unusual, original and beautifully made gifts for Christmas, come along to The Guild Hall in Christ Cornerstone Church on October 30 between 11am and 3pm where you'll find the One World Fair. Come and take a look, you'll be amazed at the range of things you can buy that are Fairtrade, and they don't cost the earth.



ENSURING FAIRTRADE: Cotton Roots managing director Susan Waters meets farmers and their families in India

Denbigh School Open Evening

Tuesday 19th October at 6.30pm



Denbigh School is an established, popular and successful Specialist Technology College, graded "Outstanding" by Ofsted.

We are opening our doors to parents and prospective students for the 2011 Year 7 intake where you will have two opportunities to hear about Denbigh in a presentation by the Headteacher.

We invite you to come and view our excellent facilities, meet the staff and students and get a real flavour of the ethos, values and vitality of the School.

The evening starts at 6.30pm and a programme of activities throughout the School will run until 9.00pm.

We look forward to welcoming you.

"Creating a culture of success to extend lifetime opportunities for young people"



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