LEISA

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Magazine on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture

Towards fairer trade

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Cover photo
A member of the *Union Provinciale des Producteurs de Fruits et Légumes* (UPPFL) in Burkina Faso with her fair trade and organic certified mangoes. Part of the harvest is exported to Europe, and part is sold in the local markets. Photo: Joe Sheehan/AgroFair.

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LEISA is about Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. It is about the technical and social options open to farmers who seek to improve productivity and income in an ecologically sound way. LEISA is about the optimal use of local resources and natural processes and, if necessary, the safe and efficient use of external inputs. It is about the empowerment of male and female farmers and the communities who seek to build their future on the basis of their own knowledge, skills, values, culture and institutions. LEISA is also about participatory methodologies to strengthen the capacity of farmers and other actors to improve agriculture and adapt it to changing needs and conditions. LEISA seeks to combine indigenous and scientific knowledge, and to influence policy formulation to create an environment conducive for its further development. LEISA is a concept, an approach and a political message.

ILEIA is the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. ILEIA seeks to promote the adoption of LEISA through the LEISA magazines and other publications. It also maintains a specialised information database and an informative and interactive website on LEISA (**www.leisa.info**). The website provides access to many other sources of information on the development of sustainable agriculture.

8 Meeting the challenges of exporting mangoes from Burkina Faso

Hans-Willem van der Waal

Many small scale farmers in Burkina Faso own mango trees, while European consumers increasingly like fresh mangoes. How can they be linked? This has been tried in different ways for almost a decade. In 2000, Burkinabe farmers' organisations were encouraged to form a co-operative, and sell to AgroFair, a fair trade fruit importer in the Netherlands. This experience failed for different reasons, so AgroFair decided to help establish a local company, Fruiteq. This company provides an export service to farmers, dealing directly with various farmers' organisations. This article describes the model built around Fruiteq, highlighting the importance of considering all stakeholders involved in the mango trade - in particular, including fair conditions for the contracted fruit harvesters.

24 Growing a local organic movement: The Mexican Network of Organic Markets

Erin Nelson, Rita Schwentesius Rindermann, Laura Gómez Tovar and Manuel Ángel Gómez Cruz

Although 85 percent of all organic goods produced in Mexico are sent abroad, the interest in organic products within the country has grown considerably. Many Mexican grocery stores now carry organic goods, and many organic speciality shops and cafés have opened. Recently, a number of local organic markets have emerged which, since 2004, have joined together to form the Mexican Network of Organic Markets. All these markets face different challenges, such as securing the necessary physical and human resources required in order to function. The Network is developing various training and education programmes for both consumers and producers, and all markets are actively searching for new products to expand the supply and to satisfy demand. One of the major difficulties relates to the process and costs of official organic certification. In response to this, the Network has established a Participatory Guarantee System, which is a local alternative standard-setting body that minimises bureaucratic procedures and reduces costs.

DEAR READERS

ILEIA is pleased to announce that as from the first week of this year, our team has grown considerably. In January we were joined by Frank van Schoubroeck and Mundie Salm, and from February Petra Rooijakkers also joined the team. They all come with new ideas to expand and improve our work, all of which will be reflected in the magazine, on our website and in our coming activities. In addition to other functions, Frank and Mundie join the editorial team. Frank and Petra are filling completely new functions at ILEIA – respectively, seeking ways to strengthen our impact in the policy arena, and taking a fresh look at our communications activities. Mundie will also co-ordinate the production of the Farming Matters series. We wish them a fruitful and enjoyable time at ILEIA.

We would like to thank all those readers and friends who wrote to us commenting on our latest issue and asking for additional copies (not to mention additional copies of the 2008 calendar). It is always interesting to hear from you! We would also like to thank all readers again who answered our 2007 survey. You can read some of the findings on the back cover and you can already see that we are following some of your suggestions in this and upcoming issues of the magazine. We look forward to your comments, opinions and ideas regarding (fair and green) trade and the importance of commercialisation within LEISA.

The Editors

Towards fairer trade

Editorial

Trading is part of life for most farmers, with markets being the hub of the community. Farmers who depend on local, regional or global markets for the sale of their produce are always looking for ways to increase incomes through trade, and overcome many of the obstacles this brings. Small scale farmers are mostly subject to the terms and conditions of market transactions, especially when selling in the global market. The realisation, some 30 years ago, that small coffee producers in Mexico were completely dependent on the different actors in the chain (e.g. transporters, traders, roasters) led to setting up the first fair trade label for coffee (Max Havelaar). The label still gives a guarantee to consumers that small scale producers get a fair price. In this initiative, a direct link was established between coffee roasters and retailers in the Netherlands, and coffee producers' co-operatives in Mexico. An important idea behind the initiative was that if farmers are given a fair price for their products, they do not need aid at all.

The growth of fair and green trade

From this beginning, the fair trade movement grew to become a trading partnership that promotes standards that seek greater equity and transparency in international trade. In practice, fair trade certification means that producers can sell their products at pre-defined and guaranteed prices, while receiving an additional premium over and above this price. This premium is paid to the group of producers and can be used for community development purposes. Additionally, a pre-finance mechanism makes importers responsible for timely payments to producers for deliveries.

Since the mid 1980s, fair trade has grown significantly. Fairly traded products are no longer only sold in special shops but they have reached supermarket shelves as well. Today a large assortment of fair trade products is available, varying from coffee, tea and chocolate to all sorts of tropical fruits, handicrafts, and cotton materials. In the same period, the market for organic products has also steadily grown. Though the demand for organically branded products was initially greater in industrialised countries, today we see many local and regional organic marketing initiatives all over the world.

In 1997, the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) was established for worldwide standard setting and certification purposes. In December 2007, FLO certification covered 632 certified producer organisations in 58 developing countries, representing more than 1.4 million producers. Global sales of Fairtrade labelled goods reached approximately €1.6 billion in 2006. In addition, the global market for certified organic products reached € 38.6 billion in 2006.

Reflecting experiences and debates

The articles in this issue of the *LEISA Magazine* were chosen to show current practical experiences with fair and green trade, reflecting the variety of initiatives that have taken shape in recent years. These include efforts to influence mainstream global trading chains as well as efforts to set up alternative trade relationships. We have also included articles which explore the impact of fair trade initiatives on small scale producers, as well as the problems and issues that arise during the complex process of putting fair trade ideas into practice. By presenting some of the current debates around this topic, we hope to provoke further discussion.

Rapid market expansion

On the face of it, the growth of markets, together with increased demand for fairly traded and organic products is positive, as it provides opportunities. But as the market moves beyond "niche" markets, how will small scale farmers be able to seize these opportunities? Some of the articles we present clearly show the dilemmas that the success of the fair trade concept brings. Several articles lament the "mainstreaming" of organic and fair trade. In particular, Holt-Gimenéz *et al*. (p. 19), provide a critique of the increasing corporatisation of fair trade. They ask whether the goal is to help as many farmers as possible by selling as many fairly traded products as possible, or to transform market structures in general, to become more fair.

With expansion of markets, farmers and their organisations often face new difficulties: having to professionalise their work to be able to meet demand within strict deadlines, control for quality standards, the need to keep up with marketing trends, and to keep costs low. Until now, alternative trading organisations and NGOs assist farmers' organisations in management skill development, but in the long term they will need to take on these responsibilities themselves.

Fair trade for whom?

The question of fairness within the fair trading system relates directly to the rules behind the game as well as to the context. There are many examples of how farmers' livelihoods have improved through global fair and organic trade possibilities – see D'Auteuil (p. 12) or Lima (p. 14). Yet, farmers and workers must meet many requirements to be eligible for FLO's Fairtrade certification, there are several instances of situations where requirements are imposed that do not take local realities into account. Requirements may lead to exclusion of specific categories of producers or other stakeholders from the social or economic benefits of fair trade. For example, Van der Waal (p. 8) describes how mango harvesters and packing house workers in Burkina Faso are not entitled to the Fairtrade premium. There may be hidden forms of discrimination – how far are women, for example, actively filling decision making positions in farmers' organisations? Who takes the decisions on the allocation of the fair trade premium? FLO rules aim to safeguard the participation of "small farmers" by stating that the majority of members in organisations must be small scale farmers. Boselie (p. 6) presents this as a dilemma: does this refer to farm size or family income? This strict rule means that smallholder producers are not encouraged to grow if it means they lose their special status.

Certification – costs and benefits

For many small organisations, the costs of certification according to international standards are prohibitive. Indeed, in most cases presented here, farmers' organisations were only able to get international certification because NGOs or, as in one case, the government, paid the annual fees. Also, the bureaucracy involved in following and understanding the rules of export

Clarification of terms

There are many different certifying bodies for the various fair trade and organic products and organisations. The websites of some of these are referred to in our Networking section on p.38. These bodies have slightly different definitions and ways of using the words and term "fair trade". For clarity, throughout this issue we use the term "Fairtrade" when referring only to FLO certification. In all other cases, we use the words "fair trade" when discussing the concept and practices in more general terms.

The weekly organic market, Bio Feria, in Lima, Peru. Local organic markets such as this, around the world, provide producers an outlet for their goods, while consumers know where they can buy a range of healthy and organic produce.

means that local organisations often rely on highly-trained people to assist in these matters. In direct response to the problem of the bureaucracy and expense involved in the attainment of international standards, several local alternatives have evolved; Participatory Guarantee Systems for organic farmers are one example. Nelson *et al.*, (p. 24) explain this system in detail in the case of Mexican organic farmers, while Renner (p. 26) gives a broader overview of these systems which have by now been recognised by IFOAM as alternative national or local systems of organic certification.

Certification systems give greater transparency and a guarantee to consumers, as well as increasing accessibility to global markets. Fair trade and organic certification mainly focus on export relationships between producers in developing countries and consumers in more developed regions. Certain products, however, are not yet included in FLO's Fairtrade certification list because of their "uniqueness" and high variability, and therefore the impossible task of setting prices. This includes handicrafts, making it more difficult for farmers to market such products internationally – see Arts (p. 16). Relationships need to be found with specific buyers who believe in the social and environmental benefits of the production process.

With the many types of certification possible, it can be difficult for a producer organisation to obtain and manage the requirements of the different certification programmes (and associated markets) it may want to participate in. Recognising this, the ISEAL Alliance is working on improving smallholder access to multiple certifications to allow simpler and more harmonised procedures, as well as supporting its members in improving group certification for smallholders in developing countries.

Different types of chains/alternative relationships

Going one step further, some argue for a wholly different trading system, a fundamental change to the structure of trade, and have successfully shown how this can be done. For example, instead of depending on certification bodies for marketing products, Jaffe *et al.*, (p. 28) argue for developing direct, long-term and transparent relationships between producers and consumers. They, and Just Change India (p. 22) show how this can be done.

More and more local food systems are springing up around the world, where a greater number of more environmentally and socially conscious, often urban-based middle or upper class consumers are seeking greater control over their food. In Mexico, for example, 17 organic markets have emerged in recent years, and joined together to form the Mexican Network of Organic Markets. In Europe and North America, the concept of Community Supported Agriculture is becoming more widespread. This is an alternative farmer-consumer relationship, in which a group of consumers become members of an organic farm.

For any type of fair trade relationship to exist, the consumer is vital. No demand, or no consumers, means no trade. While some consumers are happy to pay a premium, others need to be convinced. All consumers need to have trust in the goods that they are purchasing, and in the claims made on the packaging. Effective campaigning and good marketing can bring much-needed publicity, but this often depends on support networks such as NGOs, students or volunteers. As such, trade relationships become much more personalised as the producer becomes closer to the consumer.

Contradictory trends

While the trend now is that fair and green international trade will keep growing and enter into the "mainstream", a contradictory issue arising in the debate is that of "localisation". The environmental sustainability of having fresh goods flown around the world is under question now that we see the impacts of using fossil fuels on global warming. Some argue for buying more locally produced goods. This could threaten the livelihoods of farmers in developing countries who make a living from growing and packing fresh goods for global markets. In other cases it may well be a complementary strategy, with consumers in Europe and North America buying products as much as possible from their own regions, while continuing to depend on imported fair trade coffee and bananas. These consumers are now looking closely at concepts such as "food miles" (how far does food travel from farm to plate) and "carbon footprints" (the amount of greenhouse gases produced in an activity as a measure of our impact on the environment). As they grapple with these difficult choices, producers will need to be aware of their potential impact on global demand.

Green and fair trade provides opportunities for farmers to reach consumers who are willing to pay a better price for their goods, in spite of the fact that the process can be long and complicated. For LEISA farmers, entering the global fair trade market presents an exciting opportunity. Nevertheless, farmers should continue to see this market as only one of various livelihood strategies. Local, alternative marketing initiatives can offer chances to many more farmers. Farmers and their organisations will need to assess which option, or mix of options, are within their reach. They will need to use all their skills of adaptability and flexibility to keep on top of current trends and changes in the market structures, and benefit from the opportunities presented. Farmer organisation is critical to the success and sustainability of such ventures, as only organised small scale farmers will be able to reach the scale required and build up the necessary confidence to become players, not just end receivers, in these newly emerging markets. ■

Fairtrade fruit: Successes, challenges and dilemmas

Dave Boselie

Introducing organic certification and fair trade standards has helped increase small scale farmers' access to the rapidly expanding supermarket segment in many European countries. Besides creating better conditions for production and trade, the fair trade movement has mobilised substantial technical and financial support to allow small producers to build up their capacities. One core principle of the fair trade standard –a minimum price guarantee– has helped producers' organisations comply with basic standards that respect social criteria like minimum wages and the rights of workers to organise themselves.

Originally, fair trade attracted only the attention of smallholder producer organisations that operated in a niche market. During the past few years, however, big fruit operators have become interested in serving the "mainstream" market – which includes multinational food retail companies. Criticism about this development aside, the fact that fair trade is now attracting such interest underlines the growing importance of ethical concerns to consumers. In numerical terms, the market may still be classified as niche, but the days of fair trade being limited to marginal producers and alternative trade organisations are long gone. The arrival of multinational companies to the fair trade arena threatens to push smallholders out of the international retail market once again. Lower prices will be the inevitable result when these companies offer large quantities of fair trade products, and inevitably economies of scale will favour larger producers. This raises the question as to what the unique selling point of smallholder producer organisations will be when the Fairtrade label on their product is no longer unique.

This article presents the challenges that come with growth, and the dilemmas regarding the expansion of the organic and fair trade export markets, based on the experiences of Europe's foremost Fairtrade fruit importer, distributor and marketing agent: AgroFair Ltd. AgroFair was established by a Dutch NGO in 1996, and was the first company in the world to apply FLO's Fairtrade standards to the fruit export industry. By its nature, it is a service-providing company that co-ordinates and facilitates the logistical flow and processing of products without actually owning a fleet of trucks or ripening facilities. The company represents the interests of producers from developing countries in the European market. It is based in Barendrecht, the Netherlands, and has subsidiaries in Italy, the U.K., France, the United States and Finland.

From "niche" to "mainstream"

The greatest victory of the fair trade and "green" movements is probably the acceptance of their products by supermarket chains throughout Europe and North America. These retail chains serve an increasing share of the total population, and this demand has helped the turnover of import and distribution companies like AgroFair grow by more than 30 percent per year for the last four years. From a producer's perspective, however, this rapid growth of demand for high quality products poses various challenges.

Escalation of food safety and quality standards
In recent years, we have witnessed an escalation of food quality standards and market requirements which continuously force producers to upgrade their technical facilities and management capacities. Food safety standards like GlobalGap and HACCP force producers to invest substantial amounts of resources in pre-harvest and post-harvest handling infrastructure; however, small scale producers have difficulties in complying with these requirements. For this reason, AgroFair created the AgroFair Assistance & Development Foundation (AFAD) in 2002, to complement its work and to deal specifically with these issues. AFAD's quality and certification experts coach the quality managers of producers' organisations, and link them to local and regional experts to help improve their quality management skills.

Rising economies of scale and competitiveness
Besides creating opportunities, the current success of the fair trade and organic markets also represents an enormous threat to the small and medium scale businesses involved. The "mainstreaming" of both product categories asks for economies of scale which cannot be achieved easily by the individual producers' organisations. It is no exaggeration to state that supermarkets are screaming for a rapid diversification of the product portfolio, but at the same time wish to lower the number of suppliers. Furthermore, import companies are expanding the geographic range of their product sources. This leads to a situation of greater competition between producers.

Photo: R. van den Bergh

Increasing demand for bananas in Europe can bring benefits, and also challenges, for fruit producers in El Guabo, Ecuador.

AgroFair has tried to deal with this issue in a number of ways. For example, it links import and distribution companies directly with producers, cutting out intermediaries who do not add value in the production and export process. At the same time, AgroFair has started to organise its global sourcing programme by building strategic alliances with regional hubs, export companies or service providers, all of whom are able to link up with a broad portfolio of products and producers from the same region. Examples of such regional strategic hubs are WAFF Ltd. (based in Ghana), Cauquen (based in Argentina) and FruitOne (based in South Africa).

Organisation and leadership development
It has become clear that for producers to be committed to fair trade and organic standards, AgroFair needs to invest in strengthening capacities of individual leaders and organisations in the production and trade process. To this end, AgroFair's business model is based on co-ownership and participatory governance structures. Fifty percent of the shares of the company are in the hands of the international producer co-operative CPAF ("Co-operative Producers AgroFair"), while the other fifty percent is in the hands of European NGOs and sustainable venture capitalists.

New non-tariff and technical barriers to trade
Long distance trade is currently hotly debated in terms of "food miles" and "carbon footprints". While academics and policy makers are still focusing on the best methodologies for measuring impact, many retailers have started including the origin of their products on their labels. Producers' organisations are worried that this type of labelling may turn out to be a new barrier to trade, hampering the introduction of products from developing countries. At the moment, AFAD is collaborating with the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, in The Hague, in order to get insights into the "carbon footprint" of a few fruit categories. Focusing on bananas and pineapples imported from Ecuador and Costa Rica, these studies consider the "carbon footprint" from a handling perspective.

Equally important is the growing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) as part of international trade. These include technologies which help track and trace products, or which can help sell specific products (through, for example, "virtual portals"). In general, these technologies require high skills and big financial investments. Supermarkets promote the use of ICT tools because they lead to higher efficiency and transparency, but many producers feel this adds to the list of requirements with which they must comply. The GET Support Foundation, an initiative also based in the Netherlands, recently launched an internet based portal to link up food producers with retailers in a more transparent way. Such initiatives give producer organisations a broader set of options to sell their products. As of this year, AFAD partners in Morocco, Ghana, South Africa and Argentina are participating in pilot projects to test new opportunities for market access through this portal.

Further dilemmas for Fairtrade

Aside from the challenges that come with growth, there are other dilemmas that will need to be considered as fair trade develops.

Minimum price guarantee
Providing agricultural producers and workers with a guaranteed minimum price has been the central pillar of the fair trade concept. However, day-to-day business practices show some shortcomings. Producers' organisations, for example, are never able to sell all of their products under Fairtrade conditions. The benefits of having a Fairtrade certification are thereby reduced, as trade organisations that import Fairtrade food products tend to perform very weakly in the conventional markets. For example, fresh fruit imports are generally sold on consignment basis, which means that the producer receives a price that depends on the day-to-day fluctuations in the market, and may result in an actual loss. Secondly, the minimum price strategy does not always reflect market dynamics: rapidly changing exchange rates and the (increasing) costs of agricultural inputs have made most minimum price-setting useless. Many argue that the system has become so bureaucratic that the Fairtrade price-setting committee cannot cope with revisions of minimum prices, let alone define prices for new products.

"National Initiative" barrier
Each country has a "National Initiative", which determines whether a company can have access to its markets. In many cases, this follows arbitrary policies. AgroFair, for example, is not allowed to sell its Fairtrade citrus products in Switzerland, even though these are sold in the European Union. Linked to this is the fact that the Fairtrade premium and fee structure seems to be more and more unbalanced in favour of the northern side of the value chain: AgroFair currently pays a higher fee for National Initiatives per kilogramme of Fairtrade pineapple than for the premium fee to producers.

Ideal "Fairtrade producer" profile
A final dilemma regards the definition of the ideal Fairtrade producer. Does the ideal refer to farm size or family income? Different examples show that instead of using compliance to the social code of conduct (degree of control and co-ownership) as basic criteria for a Fairtrade certificate, the main indicator for deciding whether or not a farm can be certified has been its small size. Setting a maximum farm size conflicts with the original objective of giving smallholder producers access to export markets: how can we allow them to grow if we set maximum farm sizes? It is likely that elements such as co-ownership and joint decision making will become more important criteria to distinguish oneself from the traditional fruit companies which are increasingly embracing Fairtrade.

From "mainstreaming" to "broadstreaming"

Rather than limiting itself to "mainstreaming", the coming phase of the fair trade market development will shift to "broadstreaming". Broadly speaking, this refers to an increasing diversification, adding new product categories, and increasing market shares. From a sourcing perspective, the African continent will further expand its role as the horticultural garden for Europe and Asia. This will have a profound impact in terms of greater employment opportunities, trade volumes and incomes, which will necessitate greater attention to producer development programmes. Strategic alliances are therefore needed to cope with the challenges and capture the opportunities before the big market players do.

■

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Meeting the challenges of exporting mangoes from Burkina Faso

Hans-Willem van der Waal

Consumers in Europe like fresh mangoes. Demand is growing, but supply is difficult to boost as mango trees need decades to mature. In Burkina Faso, as in other countries, many small farmers own mango trees. Since 2000, a European fair trade company has been trying to link these farmers with clients in Europe. Not an easy task: farmers and mango harvesters were not always paid for their work, and a co-operative went bankrupt. Now, the company tries to engage traditional traders, but fair trade regulations do not allow the full use of their potential. This is a story of trial-and-error, and success.

Traditional mango growing in Burkina Faso

All over West Africa, farmers manage staple and cash crops, as well as non-farm activities. Mango trees are a part of local farming systems. There are more than 160 mango varieties of differing quality; two or three kinds are suitable for export, and others are better for drying and selling in the local market. The most complicated issue perhaps refers to the ownership of trees and land. As long as land is fallow, the village chief (generally an elder belonging to the first settlers in the region) can allot it to anybody who needs land for annual cash crops. Early settlers can claim land by planting citrus, mango or cashew trees, all of which are also used for fuel, erosion control and, in times of hunger, for food. Early settlers can claim land if they have planted trees; newcomers therefore face more difficulties. Most farming households in this area have an orchard, but fruit production does not always receive top priority. Few or no inputs are used, some farmers add compost, and pruning is rare.

The growing demand for mangoes in Europe and elsewhere means that farmers who have a good mango orchard can sell well, especially if they are not too far from harbours and trading centres. However, mixed farming systems like those found in Burkina Faso face many difficulties in achieving the quality needed for export. Besides the long period between planting and fruit-bearing, there is the challenge to produce regularly and according to minimum quality standards. Fair trade exporters and development organisations have therefore introduced many training programmes on organic farming, pruning, organic pest control (using weaver ants), irrigation, and other aspects related to organic mango production. However, the effect of these courses in terms of quality and/or quantity seems to be minor.

Contractors and the mango trade chain

Farmers in Burkina Faso live far away from export centres, so until recently, mangoes were not marketed in large quantities. A small amount was exported through companies in neighbouring Ivory Coast, which used the production coming from Burkina Faso to supplement their local supply (until the recent political crisis in Ivory Coast led to a temporary closure of the border). Another peculiarity is that farmers rarely harvest the fruit themselves. Contractors come and pick whatever they think can be sold, and the farmer is paid accordingly. The contractor transports the fruit to the exporter's packing house, sometimes hundreds of kilometres away, where the fruit is graded. The exporter only pays for fruit accepted for export. Contractors therefore take over an important risk from farmers, as they face losses when pests such as fruit flies are found in their fruit. However, contractors sometimes buy mangoes on credit, which means that farmers and other workers do not get paid for low quality fruit. Contractors in turn are pre-financed by the exporter.

Fresh fruit is also sold through (small) producer organisations to contractors or exporters. The latter often take care of quality control, washing, grading, packing and looking after the logistics. Due to the fluctuating nature of volumes and quality levels, importers in Europe do not generally commit to fixed volumes and prices, but agree to sell fruit on a commission basis. This means that they receive the fruit and sell it to supermarkets and retailers, deducting a 6-10 percent commission fee from what is paid to the exporter. Importers in Europe, however, may claim that the fruit received did not meet quality standards – which, after the fact, is difficult to disprove. In such a situation, how can an exporter in Africa prove that a European importer is cheating?

European supermarkets are a large outlet for fresh mangoes. Supermarkets require good and constant quality, a reliable supply on a weekly basis, and increasingly seek guarantees of basic organic and social standards. As mangoes are seasonal, they need to be sourced from different countries to guarantee a year-round supply. The selling price varies considerably: in times of abundance, prices can drop sharply and buyers can afford to be very particular about quality standards. The opposite is true in times of scarcity.

Setting up a local institution to meet supply needs

For some time, farmers in Burkina Faso complained about the low prices and erratic demand imposed by contractors who sold their mangoes to exporters in neighbouring Ivory Coast. In 2000, a Dutch NGO therefore tried to facilitate direct export of fresh mangoes from Burkina Faso to Europe. It offered credit and encouraged farmers' organisations to form a co-operative union that could sell directly to AgroFair, a Fairtrade-certified fruit importer based in the Netherlands. Between 2001 and 2005, the co-operative exported several hundred tonnes of organic and Fairtrade certified mangoes. However, establishing a union was a new experience, and the co-operative ran into many difficulties. Transport complications occurred when the border with Ivory Coast was closed. Also, the international fresh fruit export business turned out to be too complicated to manage or control for a group of farmers; for example, no financial

The mango journey

Mangoes are harvested at an early level of maturity when the fruit flesh just starts to turn yellow. The harvesters perform a first grading in the field, and transport fruit carefully wrapped in paper or leaves in crates to the packing station. The distance between orchard and packing station is 80-400 km. As the fruit starts to ripen after harvest, it is essential that the transit time is short. In the packing house, the fruit is washed, quality graded and sorted by size. The fruit is packed in 4 kg cardboard boxes. 240 boxes form a pallet. The pallets are refrigerated in cold storage at 10°C. Twenty pallets are loaded in a refrigerated container, which keeps the fruit cold throughout the journey. A diesel generator provides power to the container during the land transport by rail. Once loaded on a fruit boat, the containers are kept refrigerated during the 10-12 day sea journey to Europe. Upon arrival, an independent surveyor makes a quality report and this serves as the basis for the final payment to the exporter.

Photo: Author

On the way to the market. After a careful selection process, part of the harvest will reach the supermarkets in Europe.

incentives were given to harvesters or farmers to ensure that export quality standards were upheld. Finally, the co-operative ran into losses, and it had to give up its export activities.

The failure to get a co-operative running accelerated the plans to start a new export company. AgroFair decided to finance such an initiative, and helped establish a local company, Fruiteq. Between 2002 and 2004, AgroFair made considerable effort to market mangoes from Burkina Faso to its clients, and managed to get them into European supermarkets during its high mango season. AgroFair was keen to make this supply succeed as it was only one of four different mango supply sources needed to be able to meet the full-year's supply demanded by supermarkets. If one source failed, the whole mango market could be lost, to the detriment of the other three mango suppliers.

Fruiteq is a commercial company which provides an export service to farmers. In order to create a financially sustainable business, it has re-incorporated the contractors (as harvesters) into the system. Just like in the co-operative model, Fruiteq deals directly with the farmers' organisations, and it is these organisations that hire the services of the contractors. In this way, the farmers have more bargaining power, while the system is equally interesting for the contractors because they have fewer searching and contracting costs. They do not need to go from farmer to farmer searching for mangoes, discussing prices individually, competing with other contractors, or searching for exporters willing to take their fruit. The origin of the mangoes is traceable, as all mangoes come from the farmer group. This means that it is far easier to obtain quality certifications that require clear traceability of the fruit (such as a certificate of organic production). Involving contractors in the system and working with farmers' organisations at the same time helped Fruiteq and its partners obtain this additional certification, on top of the Fairtrade certificate.

Fruiteq is already making a profit, proving the sustainability of the model. Sales rose from € 180 000 in 2005 to more than € 900 000 in 2007, corresponding to about 1200 tonnes of fresh mangoes. In 2007, more than € 200 000 was paid directly to farmers on a farm-gate basis. More than 400 farmer households have benefited, together with a large number of contractors, transporters and packing station employees.

Not all is fair in Fairtrade

Fairtrade rules prescribe the provision of a premium to farmers for social projects. Since 2005, more than € 100 000 has been paid as Fairtrade premium. The farmers' organisations have used this money to build a village pharmacy and a library, they have set up a school fund, and they are now considering drilling wells to provide drinking water and irrigation water to their orchards.

Fairtrade regulations, however, do not allow some key actors to benefit from its advantages: harvesters and packing house workers are not entitled to the premium. In the field, this does not always seem to be fair. After all, contractors, packers and traders are part of the Fairtrade value chain, and it would be better if every chain actor benefits similarly. In regions such as Latin America, exporting co-operatives seem to work well, while in other places, a chain model with specialised harvesting and transporting organisations may be more appropriate and sustainable. Regulations are therefore needed to make all stakeholders in the chain benefit from Fairtrade, and not just the producers. After all, contractors and their personnel take risks and work hard. Including them in the Fairtrade model would help reduce poverty, and develop the agricultural economy in western Africa. ■

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The Fair Trade Platform: Bolivian producers lobby for change

Jean-Sébastien Lévesque and Christina Keys

In the sprawling city of El Alto, Bolivia, stands the El Ceibo chocolate factory. Through the deafening noise and chaotic traffic, the unmistakeable smell of chocolate cannot go unnoticed. El Ceibo has been growing, processing and exporting Bolivian cacao beans for the last 30 years. As Vicente Fernández, one of its directors, explains, El Ceibo is a "co-operative of co-operatives", consisting of 1000 families spread across El Beni's forests, a tropical region to the north of the country. It currently groups 40 co-operatives of varied size. The members of each co-operative form the basis of El Ceibo's operations: the farmers provide the raw material of organic cacao beans while many sons and daughters of the farmers work in the factories, in El Ceibo's own extension offices, and in the administration offices. Each co-operative manages the local resources and produces and harvests cacao, while El Ceibo, as a production unit, works on processing and marketing.

According to Vicente Fernández, the cacao plantations from the air look no different than a pristine jungle. The cacao trees are shade-grown, with species that protect the plants from the sun and heavy rains. This technique also protects wildlife habitats and ensures a more sustainable use of the soil's resources. Sowing, weeding and harvesting is done by hand, without the use of tractors or other mechanical devices. Harvested between March and September, the beans are then taken to the factory in El Alto, where they are separated from their shells, roasted and ground in a process similar to the one followed for coffee.

Production capacity reaches 1000 metric tonnes of organic cacao each year; processed products include cocoa powder and chocolate bars. Approximately 70 percent of the final products are exported, and 30 percent is sold on the national market. Production is now certified as organic and Fairtrade: El Ceibo is considered to be a clear example of how associations of small scale farmers have addressed the problems associated with these certifications. However, it still faces many challenges, including local competition from corporations, and the costs associated with the Fairtrade and organic certifications. Most important, El Ceibo is interested in creating national political support for a fairer trade.

Lobbying for nationwide regulations

El Ceibo was one of the founding members of the Association of Organic Producers Organisations of Bolivia (AOPEB). El Ceibo farmers are nowadays certified organic through Bolicert, a national agency created under the sponsorship of AOPEB. But AOPEB does more than just promote certification processes that benefit small farmers and that are financially accessible. Together with a coalition of industries and co-operatives, it has actively lobbied for a law to protect consumers from fraud and enable Bolivian farmers to have better access to international markets for organic products. As a result, the national government passed a law that will regulate organic agriculture by establishing a national organic standard. El Ceibo feels that organic producers will benefit directly from these national standards, for until now nothing has been preventing people from labelling non-certified organic products as organic, leading to much confusion on the expanding national market. The law is presently in the process of being implemented, and certification agencies, such as Bolicert, are being assessed by the government for their abidance to the new standards.

Similarly, since 1995, El Ceibo co-operatives are Fairtrade certified by FLO International, following the standards regulating fair trade around the world. At the moment, El Ceibo is the only FLO recognised cacao producer in Bolivia. This Fairtrade certificate allows it to fetch a more just and stable price for its products on the international market. Looking at the successes had in terms of organic production regulation, El Ceibo is now interested in following a similar process, actively involving the national and local authorities. This process is still in its first steps, and, high in the Andes, the road is littered with difficulties.

The Fair Trade and "Solidarity Economy" Platform

El Ceibo is an active member of the Fair Trade Platform, a national initiative that groups 18 producers' associations and lobbies the government to meet the needs of small producers. The Platform was founded in March 2007, following the initiative of the National Network for Community Commercialisation (RENACC) of Bolivia. The Platform's main objective is to create mechanisms to open a national dialogue specifically related to fair trade policy. Participants include such important players as the National Union of Popular Art and the National Confederation of Quinoa Production Co-operatives. It is estimated that the Platform represents close to 80 000 producers.

The Platform initiative is central to what El Ceibo is interested in doing right now in terms of advocacy on behalf of its members. El Ceibo is lending its weight and experience to the Platform cause, a process in which other members see an unselfish and community-responsible attitude. According to RENACC, most producers in Bolivia face many difficulties in the trade and commercialisation of their products. More than 60 percent of all agricultural producers are so small that they are not even registered with the government. They are therefore marginalised, left out of any public initiative. The Platform seeks to involve them and strengthen their capacities for marketing, as well as getting the government to create a basic framework which can offer opportunities to these small producers and to eventually reduce poverty.

Following the success in lobbying for a law on organics, the Platform is lobbying the national government to adopt policies that will help producers get access to the fair trade market. It is thought that the government could help producers get

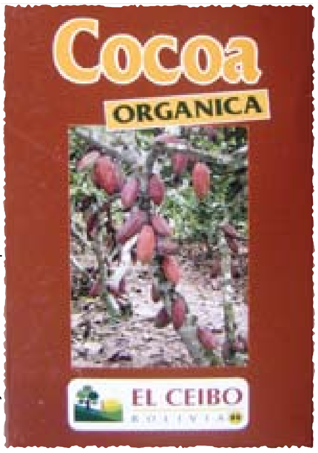

Photo: Jean-Sébastien Lévesque

Organic cocoa, one of the many products from El Ceibo, is exported to many countries and increasingly consumed in Bolivia as well.

Photo: Jean-Sébastien Lévesque

Vicente Fernández and Andrés Choque Bernabé, members of the El Ceibo directorate. Both played a key role in the establishment of the Fair Trade Platform.

the Fairtrade label, while at the same time help them develop knowledge and facilitate access to markets they are not able to reach otherwise. On a more concrete basis, the Platform would like to see the creation of a vice-Ministry of Fair Trade and "Solidarity Economy".

Among others, one of the reasons that Bolivian producers have difficulty accessing markets is due to illegal cross-border trade: small producers simply cannot compete with cheaper products from Peru or Brazil. All members of the Platform agree that Bolivia has a huge capacity for agricultural production, but what is lacking is a set of governmental initiatives to strengthen the capacities of small producers. There is currently a continued reliance on NGOs, which by definition cannot replace the scale and importance of a national plan.

The Platform is still very new, and it has been hard for its members to develop a coherent message with which to lobby effectively. They have yet to transform their general objectives for fair trade policies into precise, applicable proposals to address the government. However, this does not mean that they are inactive. The Platform has organised workshops on fair trade and solidarity economy with the Bolivian Ministry of Production and Micro-Businesses. At the same time, the Platform has become an active player with other South American initiatives that exchange knowledge on fair trade. Some of the Platform's representatives have participated as delegates at a regional forum for articulating Latin Americans' expectations on fair trade, exchanging experiences and learning from the work carried out in Brazil, Ecuador or Mexico (countries which have government agencies dedicated to fair trade). Nominally more inclined toward community initiatives, the current government of Bolivia is expected to be more open to listening and satisfying the Platform's demands.

A global trend and a local growing market

The support and expertise of El Ceibo might prove to be key to the success of the Platform, with its tradition for solidarity and willingness to transfer information and develop knowledge with others. In addition, it has gained experience from its participation in the processes that led to the law of organic national standards. Yet it is facing a whole range of difficulties stemming from the nature of fair trade certification, and having a hard time with what appears to be the reaction of conventional cacao producers to their successes.

One of the main issues facing El Ceibo is making the message of fair trade understandable to the producers. The company, in accordance with its co-operatives, developed precise plans for investing their premiums from Fairtrade exchanges (US$ 200 per metric tonne for organic cacao), spending on a whole range of social initiatives, education and health in small communities. Yet the investment of this premium is often against the expectations of the smallholders. These farmers often have survival-economy reflexes and want cash in exchange for their hard work for their families. Vicente Fernández admits this is a great challenge, and provides an anecdote about a farmer who recently responded "what's that?" to an FLO delegation asking him whether he profited from the premium. A lot of effort thus needs to go into informing producers about fair trade.

The expectations for immediate subsidies to the farmers instead of communal investments seem to serve the purposes of marauding competitors of the conventional industry. Recently, El Ceibo lost some of its member-producers to competition that offered sums of money to farmers in exchange for their certified production and know-how, thus hurting El Ceibo's immediate plans for production and development. According to its directors, the competition has tried to discredit El Ceibo in the eyes of the farmers, trying to divide the group while taking advantage of the high quality control mechanisms developed because these are now highly valued by industry.

It is therefore remarkable that despite the costly process of certifications, difficult pest and disease management, and the arm-twisting methods of competitors, El Ceibo continues to produce and export cacao – and that the future looks bright. The picture looks even brighter as the national market continues to develop. In the past few years, AOPEB has opened a chain of organic grocery stores called *Super Ecológico*, located in the main cities and regional capitals of Bolivia, to meet the local demand and to help educate consumers about organic and fair trade products. Only AOPEB members' products are offered at *Super Ecológicos*, making them guaranteed organic products, while a few other chains, such as *Irupana*, offer certified organic as well as simply "natural" products. This, and El Ceibo's lack of immediate plans for further market expansion abroad, proves that organic and fair trade certifications are not simply consumer trends for the developed world; they are also providing sustainable and attractive alternatives for consumers and small farmers in developing countries. Further involvement of the Bolivian authorities will only consolidate this trend. ■

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Photo: CECI

Extracting the fat from the nuts is one of the most important tasks in producing shea butter.

Improved shea butter trading through certification

Cindy D'Auteuil

The Union of Women Producers of Shea Products of Sissili and Ziro (UGPPK-S/Z) counts members from 53 clusters of 38 villages in the provinces of Sissili and Ziro, in Burkina Faso. It is commonly known as the "Léo Union", as its headquarters is found in Léo, 165 km from Ouagadougou, the capital. The Union is proud to have recently gained organic certification, in addition to the Fairtrade certificate they obtained in 2006. This dual certification gives this organisation a definite advantage to penetrate the international market. The labels and the quality of their products justify a higher price. This higher price, together with increasing volumes being sold, will allow 2300 women members to increase their income, their standard of living and that of their families.

Shea butter and the global cosmetics market

The shea nut or *karité* tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa* or *Butyrospermum parkii*, fam. Sapotaceae) grows in the Sahel region in North Africa. It produces a yellow-green fruit containing a nut with fat used in the manufacture of shea butter. The production of shea butter is an activity traditionally reserved for women, who shell the nuts and manually churn the fat into butter. In Africa, this product has been used in enormous quantities for thousands of years, both for personal care as well as for cooking. There is now also a large global demand for shea butter. The food industry (for chocolate, margarine, confectioneries) uses approximately 95 percent of the international supply, while the rest is absorbed by the cosmetics industry. Large multinationals presently buy the nuts (or shea butter) at a low price from intermediaries, from which the oil is extracted through chemical solvents in the importing country.

The cosmetics industry is increasingly demanding more and more of it, as its benefits for personal care are increasingly recognised in many industrialised countries. Unlike the food industry, which buys shea butter for its high efficiency and low price, the cosmetics industry is interested in the product for its exceptional quality and characteristics. Due to growing demand for cosmetics made from natural and certified organic inputs, the cosmetics industry is particularly interested in shea butter produced using methods which are not harmful to the environment, and which preserve the intrinsic properties of the nuts. This represents a real opportunity for an organisation such as the Léo Union to increase its revenues. In addition, many of those buying cosmetics in Europe or the United States are willing to pay more for a product if they know that additional fair trade revenues are distributed to producers.

Support from foreign NGOs

Recognising the potential of the shea butter industry for increasing the standard of living of African women, the Centre for International Studies and Co-operation (CECI), a Canadian NGO, has for over ten years been supporting a number of organisations in West Africa, including the Léo Union. CECI's objective has been to stimulate companies to purchase directly from the producers' organisations. The processing of shea butter on the spot creates added value locally and increases the income of the local producers. Since 2001, the Léo Union has been exporting its products to France, and to Canada since 2004. The producers receive approximately 500 to 700 CFA francs (US$ 1.50-2.10) per kilogramme of shea butter on the conventional market.

In 2004, a consortium of NGOs was able to mobilise additional funds to support the Léo Union in their production and marketing activities and to obtain fair trade and organic certification, considering they could aim at a more lucrative market. The financial and technical support provided by NGOs helped establish the Centre for Shea Production and Marketing (CPCK), the first of its kind in the region, which since then constitutes a platform for export. CPCK is equipped with the necessary tools for producing shea butter, with storage rooms (for nuts and butter), a packing room and a loading dock. The butter from different villages is standardised here, filtered and stabilised.

Organic and fair trade certification

Producers' organisations need to follow some well-defined principles in order to benefit from a fair trade certificate: they must be organised under a co-operative model, and must follow a democratic and transparent management structure. They must also determine a fair and equitable price for all members. As the Léo Union was the first organisation to obtain this certificate for the production and marketing of shea butter, the first step in the process meant setting a guaranteed minimum price for this product.

This was done in collaboration with the Fairtrade Labelling Organization International (FLO), an international body with a mandate to develop standards and principles of fair trade. A representative of Max Havelaar, one of the major fair trade organisations, visited Léo in June 2005, met with union leaders, exchanged ideas with producers, and looked at the management, production and living conditions of the population. One month later, the union welcomed a group of students to determine all production costs and the minimum possible price for "fair" shea butter. This was the basis of the standards which FLO adopted in February 2006, fixing the guaranteed minimum price at 1198 CFA francs (US$ 2.75) per kilogramme, and a premium of 121 CFA francs (US$ 0.28) per kilogramme, to be invested in the community (in projects related to health and education). Complying with all the standards set, the union was awarded a Fairtrade certificate in July 2006.

Later on, the members of the union were encouraged to certify their production as organic, and thus demonstrate the efforts taken in favour of the conservation of the local natural resources. As in the case of the Fairtrade certificate, many steps were needed before their production process was certified as organic. These included the establishment of shea nut tree parks in protected areas and the organisation of a nut collection process. These parks were inspected after the union applied for a certificate, together with the storage infrastructure, the production equipment and all management tools. The certificate was given in December 2007. In addition to the positive impacts which producing organically has on the environment, the actual certificate is very beneficial to the producers. At the moment, members of the union receive 2400 CFA francs for a kilogramme of organic shea butter, almost five times more than a kilogramme of butter at the conventional price!

Impacts and challenges

Both certificates give the Léo Union a commercial advantage over its competitors, as it can now offer a wider range of products (conventional, organic and also Fairtrade shea butter), and they are widely recognised as the only organisation which holds both labels. One of the direct impacts which members experience now is a higher income as a result of the higher selling prices. Moreover, even though the volumes sold as Fairtrade only represented 11.6 percent of total exports in 2006 (8 tonnes from a total of 69), the Léo Union has considerably increased its turnover, which has doubled the income of medium producers (rising from 26 000 CFA francs in 2005 to about 52 000 CFA francs in 2006). The outlook for the 2007-2008 campaign is also very good because the orders confirmed so far reach 95 tonnes, of which 30 tonnes (32 percent) are to be sold as organic or Fairtrade. Given the growing international attention to this product, the organic certification will have long term impacts on the resources from which it is produced. The Fairtrade certification, in turn, guarantees a minimum price to all producers, reduces the number of intermediaries and thus favours direct relationships between producers and consumers.

Photo: Ginette Primi

Members of the Léo Union look forward to a bright future.

But while the benefits of dual certification for producing members of the Léo Union are many, the challenges are equally pressing. First, the organisation needs to increase its sales by attracting new customers, while respecting its overall production capacity (estimated at around 200 tonnes annually). The Léo Union furthermore needs to become a financially independent and viable organisation, not having to rely on the support of foreign NGOs to pay, for example, the costs associated with annual certification or those related to the search for new markets. Although the members of the Léo Union produce shea butter of the highest quality, they still need to hire people familiar with the export procedures, who can communicate easily with their foreign contacts and who can help them consolidate their production and sales.

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Agroecological cotton and fair trade make the difference

Pedro Jorge B.F. Lima

Brazil started producing organic cotton in 1993, when a group of small scale farmers in Tauá, in the semi-arid regions of the state of Ceará, decided to include it in their farming systems. This cotton was bought by *Filobel Indústrias Têxteis do Brasil*, a textile company in Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, to make t-shirts for Greenpeace. This pioneering example was supported by ESPLAR, an NGO based in Ceará, and organised by ADEC, an association of rural farmers following agroecological practices.

For the ensuing ten years, different textile companies tried to buy agroecological cotton (in this area, referred to as cotton produced to organic standards but not necessarily certified as organic), produced in Ceará but none showed interest in setting up a permanent contract as the volumes the farmers could offer were too low, at less than five tonnes per year. Farmers therefore made an effort to establish contact with smaller businesses or those which for various reasons only needed small volumes, but this was difficult. Despite these challenges, farmers were able to sell their produce in the small Brazilian organic market at prices up to 30 percent higher than for conventionally produced cotton.

Fair trade – making the difference

Three years ago, *Veja Fair Trade*, a French company, went to Brazil in search of organic cotton to make sports shoes for the European fair trade market. Visiting the ESPLAR website, they found information about the agroecological cotton produced in Ceará. One of its directors immediately went there, agreeing to buy three tonnes of cotton from ADEC. A new contract was eventually signed for the following three years, and negotiations are currently under way to renew this contract for another three years.

Simultaneously, a sewing co-operative in Porto Alegre, in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, organised a network of co-operatives and associations of workers, eager to make clothing according to fair trade norms. One of the co-operatives, *Cooperativa Nova Esperança*, decided to produce organic cotton thread, with between three and five tonnes of organic cotton per year. The brand *Justa Trama* was launched in 2005.

With different stakeholders involved, the most important discussions turned out to be those relating to price. Negotiations took place between ADEC, *Veja*, *Justa Trama* and ESPLAR, taking different issues into consideration. One of these, for example, was the average yields achieved and the fact that farm families need to be stimulated to keep producing cotton following agroecological methods. Equally important was the need to consider the processing costs, and thus assure the sustainability of ADEC. *Veja* and *Justa Trama* expressed the need to cover the costs of setting up the production chain and still make a profit, while at the same time aiming for a competitive price of their products in the market. *Veja* and *Justa Trama* agreed to buy the cotton at US$ 3.30/kg. This allowed ADEC to pay the farmers more than double the prices offered on the conventional market.

This is very different from the conditions under which the farm families of Ceará used to work. The majority did not own their own land, but had to rent it from large landowners. The rent was paid through handing over half of their cotton harvest to the landowners. Farmers also tended to simply sell the other half to the landowners

as well, at a lower price than on the local market. The farmers never knew where their cotton was ultimately sold. Today, the farmers not only get a better price, but they also know their cotton goes towards producing sports shoes for *Veja*, and clothes for *Justa Trama*. They know the owners of *Veja* and those who make up the *Justa Trama* co-operatives. This brings a qualitative change into the relationship between producer and buyer.

Broadening opportunities

With prices, volumes and other conditions already established through the contract signed with ADEC, it was possible for ESPLAR to stimulate the expansion of cotton production to seven other municipalities in Ceará, through the respective unions, thereby trying to respond to the increasing demand for organic cotton. The number of farm families participating in this project has increased considerably: back in 2003, there were 97 families involved, producing a total of 7100 kilogrammes. Production rose to 43 000 kilogrammes in 2007, involving 245 families. In 2008, we hope that the total number of farm families engaged will reach 500, and that production will reach a total of 85 tonnes.

These results have also influenced other groups of farming families in the neighbouring states of Rio Grande do Norte and Pernambuco. After three years of producing agroecological cotton, the farmers there have finally managed to sell it at a price higher than for conventional cotton, having negotiated contracts with two other French fair trade companies. In Paraíba, another state in northeast Brazil, farmer groups have also started producing agroecological cotton, selling it on the national organic market. This last group includes *Copnatural*, a large co-operative which produces clothes made of coloured cotton. All of these different initiatives –covering four different states– work together at the regional level through joint meetings, exchange visits, and the sharing of information and experiences about production techniques, processing and marketing. This is due to a scheme of co-operation which involves farmers' organisations, NGOs, the Brazilian agricultural research organisation, the University of Ceará and various fair trade companies. Co-operation has resulted, for example, in the organisation of regional seminars in 2006 and 2007, discussing the impact of fair trade and organic production in the region.

Challenges coming from growth

Cotton is commonly grown intercropped with maize, cowpea, or sesame, following a method adopted to minimise the risks of yield losses in a region of extremely irregular rainfall. In these adverse conditions, yields in agroecological plots vary between 400 and 800 kg/ha of grain, and between 100 and 200 kg/ha of cotton. Such volumes will generally satisfy the demand for beans, maize and sesame for domestic consumption, while the production of cotton results in an income of between US$ 85 and 175 per hectare. The frequent infestations of the boll weevil (*Anthonomus grandis*) limit the average yield of cotton to less than 200 kg/ha, indicating the need for research and development of clean technologies for managing this pest in mixed agroecosystems. To respond to the rising demand, a higher supply of cotton has been achieved by increasing the area under cultivation, and by bringing new families into the fold.

As a result of this expansion, ADEC is facing new challenges. Having new producers involved means extra costs in terms of capacity building and technical support. At the same time, as production has increased in other municipalities, the costs of transporting the cotton to ADEC's processing plant have also risen. In addition, new machinery is needed in order to process the increasing quantities of cotton. Another challenge is the capital that ADEC requires to pay the farmers in instalments. During the last three years, this was solved as *Veja* and *Justa Trama* paid them in advance, together with help from ESPLAR. Although farmers were satisfied, it shows that ADEC is not completely autonomous and able to operate independently.

Veja and *Justa Trama* have until now bought the cotton without needing organic certification. This is due to the credibility acquired by ADEC and ESPLAR over ten years of working in the organic cotton market. They have always been able to take responsibility themselves for the quality of the agroecologically grown cotton, in a context when the supply in Brazil was minimal. However, now that the supply is coming from broader groups of producers, companies in the organic and fair trade market have begun to be more attentive, and *Veja* has already expressed the need to buy cotton that is certified. The farmers and stakeholders in the project have therefore undertaken the certification application processes, taking advantage of the offer put forward by the Ministry of Agrarian Development, to pay the certification costs for 2007. For its part, *Veja* offered to pay ADEC's costs for Fairtrade certification with FLO. In this way, the production of cotton in Ceará and its manufacturing process will be doubly certified in 2008.

Special attention will need to be given to the introduction of transgenic cotton in the region. The Brazilian government has recently relaxed the regulations limiting the cultivation of genetically modified crops: the presence of transgenic cotton plantations in the region is a real and worrying threat. All the stakeholders involved have started to confront this threat by mobilising farmers and their organisations, NGOs and related entities, and by lobbying the government to declare Brazil's semi-arid region as a transgenic-free zone.

Shared management

Following the growth of agroecological cotton production in Ceará, ESPLAR invited the directors of ADEC and the representatives of the farmers' unions to discuss and look collectively at the main questions related to cultivation, marketing and manufacturing processes. This led to the formation of the *Grupo Agroecologia e Mercado* (GAM), a group of stakeholders that meets between four and six times per year to plan the harvest, define the basic issues related to agroecological production, share information, and negotiate the sale of local production to *Veja* and *Justa Trama*. GAM carries out the important role of political and organisational networking regarding the access of family agriculture to fair trade, and the opportunities for sharing the experiences and information which help the farmers as well as the organisations they represent. ■

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Photo: Pedro Jorge Lima / ESPLAR

Gerardo Germano da Silva harvesting agroecological cotton in Assentamento Tiracanga, Canindé, in Ceará.

Filipino handicrafts provide income and protect the forests

Michelle Arts

The Philippines has a long and rich tradition of producing handicrafts made from natural materials. Many items now sold as handicrafts have traditionally been an important part of the culture for some communities and tribes. As such, the Philippines is one of the world's major producers of handicrafts. Nevertheless, only two percent of all handicrafts imported by the European Union from developing countries come from the Philippines. This presents an interesting marketing opportunity, and with it, some challenges.

Through the Crafts Programme of the Non-Timber Forest Products Task Force (NTFP-TF), handicrafts from indigenous communities in the Philippines are made available to both the local and global markets. The Task Force is the Philippine partner of the NTFP Exchange Programme for South and Southeast Asia, which is a collaborative network of NGOs and community based organisations. Their shared goal is to empower forest based communities to make use of and manage their forest resources in a sustainable manner. ProFound, a founding member of the NTFP Exchange Programme, is a consultancy organisation that advises exporters in developing countries on product development and marketing for export. Within the Crafts Programme, ProFound facilitates market linkages to the European Union and gives professional support, capacity building, relevant market information, contacts and the facilitation of trainings.

The Crafts Programme

The Crafts Programme has been running for five years. Its aim is poverty alleviation and sustainable use of non-timber forest resources by providing an income from marketing handmade products. The project also fosters the participation of both men and women. Next to a sustainable income, the communities get training to improve their products and to match them with the demands of the European market. Communities in six of the poorest provinces in the Philippines participate in the project: Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Negros Occidental, Bukidnon, South Cotabato and Maguindanao. Five of these communities were selected as they were already network partners of the NTFP Task Force. They traditionally produced indigenous crafts, but lacked a link to the market. The sixth group of communities, from Maguindanao, was chosen because its principles matched the programme's: marketing of products without sacrificing the communities' culture, environment or traditions.

The CustomMade Crafts Center (CMCC) was established as part of this programme to act as an intermediary between the communities and the market. This is a non-profit organisation based in Manila. The CMCC sells the products on the local market, where its brands (such as "CustomMade" and "MODI") are established and known. The products are presented as traditional indigenous Filipino craftsmanship, though combined with a modern design. They can be divided into two groups: homeware and fashion, including jewellery and accessories. Examples of products include lamps, office accessories, postcards, shawls, pillow covers and necklaces. The products are made of natural materials such as grass, abaca (*Musa textilis*), rattan, pandan, vine stems and handmade paper.

Overcoming difficulties

The communities undergo capacity building in enterprise management given by the NTFP Task Force. The artisans are mainly indigenous people who were already producing handicrafts as part of their livelihood activities. The CMCC decides which of those products are suitable to sell in the local and global markets. They advise what aspects need to be adjusted before commercialising the product, depending on the export market requirements. Whenever there is a need for changes in the existing products or the development of new products, producers are trained and guided by CMCC in the process of product development. In addition, there is a yearly meeting between the CMCC and the communities to develop new collections and product designs.

During the five years that the programme has been running, the communities have experienced several difficulties. In particular, the artisans had problems in meeting the volume that was demanded – and within the allotted deadlines. These problems are being solved by expanding the number of producers and upgrading their equipment and skills, as well as by introducing systems in the CMCC that allow for appropriate time-scales. Systems are also introduced into the communities to ensure smoother operations and production without delays.

Handicraft production promotes sustainable use of natural resources

One of the participating communities is the T'boli tribe of Lake Sebu, Mindanao. They are known for weaving traditional textiles inspired by women's dreams, called the *T'nalak*. They go into the forests to gather the abaca trunks, from which they extract fibres with a knife. They connect the fibres, which can be two metres long, to make thread. From this thread they weave the fabrics. New designs (like stripes and flowers) and colours have also been introduced.

Now that the artisans have discovered that the abaca plants are a valuable resource for income, they have started to plant abaca themselves. Abaca needs some shade to grow well, so the artisans have planted shading trees as well. Previously, trees were regularly cut to make room for growing rice, but now that abaca plants can be used for crafts, the artisans are keen to invest in biodiversity and use their forests more sustainably. Furthermore, as logging appears to increase the effect of diseases on abaca plants, they are trying to avoid this practice.

Artisans use natural dyes for many products. They ensure that the wood they use for dyeing is waste wood, *buyo-buyo* (a woody plant) or bamboo. *Buyo-buyo* is pruned, and the cutting is controlled in order to ensure the growth of other species in the area. In addition, the weavers have been trained to harvest the bark used for dyeing in a sustainable way, by using the bark from only one side of the tree to prevent it from dying. The artisans also grow new trees that can be used as dyes, and have started a nursery. Finally, a system of wastewater disposal is to be installed in the near future.

The CMCC meets with all the communities regularly, and asks them directly about the sustainable use of the environment. Moreover, CMCC staff visit the communities to monitor the sustainable use of the forests and materials, and prepare an annual "impact monitoring report".

Photo: Mong Tam Le

Stripping abaca bark for fibres is a traditional skill. Marketing products made from abaca helps communities manage their forest resources in a sustainable manner.

Furthermore, the artisans experienced difficulties in adjusting their product to the demands of the European market. They had been making their products according to certain methods and using particular designs. They found this difficult to change, especially at first. The artisans could not grasp changes requested by the CMCC and did not even believe they were able to change their product. However, when they were shown new products and techniques during training sessions given by the CMCC, they could see for themselves that it could in fact work. Now, the artisans are continually involved in product development and are becoming more open to new designs and specifications.

The final problem was that the prices of the products were initially too high for the European market, as labour and transportation costs are high. The problem has been tackled by streamlining and upgrading the production process, though this takes time since the artisans need to get used to new ways of producing their crafts. The most effective solution, according to the CMCC, is to target the middle/upper and fair trade markets, where the consumers want to pay a fair price that reflects the labour that was put into the production. However, as the products have not yet reached the European market, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve success.

International strategy

Certification, though expensive, could be important to prove that the products are fairly traded and environmentally friendly. However, there is currently no FLO Fairtrade certification for handicrafts and clothing. In order to prove compliance with social issues, there are management systems such as SA8000 and OHSAS 18000, but these do not cover environmental issues. There are however some other fair trade initiatives concerning sustainable production.

Handicrafts made of abaca fibre are especially interesting for the European market. Abaca is still new in this market, few consumers know about it and there are hardly any abaca products for sale there. Abaca is native to the Philippines, which currently has a monopoly on abaca production. In this respect, the use of abaca can convince consumers that the product is special and unique, and reflects the traditions of the Filipino culture.

To enter the European market, CMCC will target two market segments, namely the already mentioned upper/middle segment as well as the market for fairly traded goods. These consumers have more purchasing power and are normally willing to pay the higher price involved in fairly traded and labour intensive products. Also, the number of conventional retailers that sell fair trade products is increasing, which would combine the two market segments. The only problem is that the products are still not of the quality that is expected by the upper/middle market segments. For example, the colours of some products fade when they are exposed to sunlight.

Benefits and future expectations

The communities are benefiting from having better skills and knowledge about running an enterprise. Furthermore, local sales are growing, and producers are able to deal with the markets directly. The money they earn from selling their crafts is one of their main sources of income. As the CMCC continuously purchases their products, this income is stable. The CMCC indicates which products are needed and how many, and purchases these items when ready. In a sense, it is the CMCC which needs guarantees from the artisans, as trade between the two parties is mainly limited due to production issues.

The CMCC hopes that there will soon be an established market in Europe for some of the communities' products. The communities in turn expect that they will become entrepreneurs with skills and confidence so that they can continue their business even after the project ends. Demand for ethical products is increasing, which offers an opportunity for indigenous products from the Philippines to be sold on the fair trade market. Furthermore, the market for homeware is expected to grow in the coming years. Fairly traded products are increasingly being sold at "regular" shops and stores, making them more available to a variety of consumers.

Currently, the Crafts Programme is still at the stage of adapting the products for the global market. In the coming period, the products will be prepared for the export market, and contacts with importers and outlet stores are already taking place. It is expected that in a couple of years it will be possible to find some products from the MODI brand in Europe. When the project finishes in two and a half years' time, the CMCC will continue to exist as an independent organisation and will hopefully be successful in selling handicrafts sustainably produced by Filipino communities. ■

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Organic and fair trade products attract new customers

A three minute walk from the ILEIA office in Amersfoort is a big supermarket called PLUS. In November 2007, two renowned Dutch NGOs, *Milieudefensie* and *Solidaridad*, awarded the manager a prize for the best range of organic and fairly traded goods. We wanted to know what drives a European manager to sell these products in his supermarket, so went along to talk to him.

Krijn Vermeulen comes from a family of supermarket owners. Both his father and grandfather owned a supermarket. He never thought he would end up going into this business, but while studying economics at Rotterdam University, he decided to move away from theory and follow his roots to become a supermarket manager.

Photo: Frank van Schoubroeck

Krijn Vermeulen, with some of the organic and fair trade products sold in his supermarket.

Running a supermarket can be simple and boring, but Mr. Vermeulen's philosophy is that if you want to have an interesting life, you need to do something special. One detail he explains is that he keeps in touch with customer desires through electronic interviews. In this way, he has opened different sections in the supermarket for requested items, such as home tools, and more recently, for organic products. The PLUS company, which has 250 supermarkets in the Netherlands, has been selling a small selection of organic products for a decade or so, but apparently Amersfoort clients wanted even more. This led him to think that he could attract more clients if he offered both organic and fair trade certified products. He points out that he does not do this by conviction, but that "as an entrepreneur I sell what the clients want".

Getting started

It turned out that it was not an easy task to get access to a wide assortment of fairly traded and organic products. According to Mr. Vermeulen, most organic product wholesalers in the Netherlands only wanted to supply organic shops, because of fear of competition between supermarkets and shops specialised in organics. This had already happened before when specialised butcheries and vegetable shops were forced out of business because of the same items being available at cheaper prices in the supermarkets. Another problem was that the PLUS mother company first wanted to do some feasibility studies on the selling organic and fair trade products, which Mr. Vermeulen did not want to wait for.

In 2005, he met up with an old friend, who at the time was working with a specialised organic shop. They decided to co-operate as fellow businessmen, to get specialised products onto the shelves. Soon, the Amersfoort PLUS supermarket had one section with a small selection of fair trade and organic products (such as coffee and chocolate). Within two years, they managed to put a fairly complete "shop" within the larger supermarket. Recently, they decided to spread the specialised products throughout the supermarket, rather than keeping them in a separate area. This had two effects: consumers could compare prices more easily, which meant that some people may opt for the cheaper conventional products. At the same time, more general clients came across fair trade and organic products throughout the supermarket, and then picked out an occasional special product. Presently, the turnover from organic and fair trade products adds up to 25 or 30 thousand euros a week – about eight percent of the total turnover. He does not increase much on the fair trade product margins as they are already quite expensive, and he thinks they would not sell if he increased the price. However, Mr. Vermeulen finds organic products to be very profitable, as there is less competition and people who buy organic tend to have enough money to buy extra quality products.

The future is green and fair

Because of his success, Mr. Vermeulen is meeting more people and he now attends events such as fair trade fairs. He thinks that the demand for fair trade or organic labels in the Netherlands and elsewhere will keep increasing. For example, Dutch authorities have stated that in 15 years, all meat will need to be produced following organic standards, a very difficult target to achieve. People are becoming more interested in sustainable food systems. Mr. Vermeulen also mentions the concept of "food miles" that is currently being worked on in the U.S. and the U.K. For instance, meat produced in Argentina may be cheaper, but may cost more in terms of "food miles" than more expensive meat from Scotland. These indicators have still not been introduced into the Netherlands, but he is certain that they will be in the near future.

What is Mr. Vermeulen's advice to farmers and wholesalers? First, he advises that the products are properly packaged, as this provides the first impression to buyers. His second tip is that the product must be of good quality, which is generally the case with fair trade and organic food products. Lastly, his advice to farmers is to organise themselves and sell the products through the fair trade market: "There are millions of European people who prefer to spend a few more euros on fairly traded products than to send money to charity. With charity, you never know what happens with your money; but people have more trust in the impact of fair trade. The number of convinced consumers is growing – please help us supply them!"

■

Interview conducted by Frank van Schoubroeck, ILEIA.

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Photo: Annie Shattuck

Julio Cesar Rumaldo, member of Cooperativa La Concordia, Tacuba, El Salvador, sorting coffee cherries from his harvest.

Fair to the last drop: Corporate challenges to Fairtrade

Eric Holt-Giménez, Ian Bailey and Devon Sampson

In the wake of the recent extraordinary market expansion of fair trade –and in the midst of a mild rebound in the coffee market– the fair trade movement is coming under criticism. Even student groups, social justice groups, and some fair trade roasters are questioning the development claims, the "fairness" and the future of the fair trade coffee industry, for very different reasons. Farmers' organisations, such as *La Via Campesina* and the Brazilian Landless People's Movement (MST), challenge the fair trade movement to work politically for structural change. Many ethical consumers and fair trade activists are also uncomfortable about selling Fairtrade-certified products through multinational corporations with unfair labour practices and monopolistic market power.

The Fairtrade Labelling Organization International (FLO) and Fairtrade certifiers promote the idea that Fairtrade should become more "mainstream". Most recent criticism revolves around this strategy. For the largest coffee buyers, Fairtrade makes up only a tiny proportion of their coffee purchases. For these companies Fairtrade is not a social movement or a business ethic, but rather a public relations opportunity and a profitable niche. One Fairtrade product can make the whole brand seem socially responsible, even though the corporation continues to buy the vast majority of its coffee on the conventional market. This phenomenon has many actors in Fairtrade questioning the meaning of fair trade.

Is the goal to help as many peasant farmers as possible by selling as much Fairtrade coffee as possible? Or is the goal to transform coffee's historically unfair market structures? Are markets the engine for social change or are social movements the force to change markets? These questions reflect the growing disagreement among Fairtrade advocates over whether it is advisable to mainstream Fairtrade through the very corporations and market structures that provoked the coffee crisis in the first place.

Social change and value chains

Although the Fairtrade premium provided an important safety net during the worst of the coffee crisis, recent studies question many of the development claims reported by certifiers and corporate retailers.

In a study of Mexican and Central American coffee farming families and communities, researchers from the Community Agroecology Network (CAN), reported that there were no significant differences in the ability to send children to school or the level of food security between Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade farm families. The CAN study did not find evidence that Fairtrade certification alone empowered farmers to lift themselves out of poverty. Instead, the researchers noted that the co-operative that seemed to benefit most from Fairtrade had a direct relationship with a North American buyer that bought all of their coffee at a price above the Fairtrade minimum every year.

Studies also suggest that the development successes claimed by Fairtrade are as much due to the efforts farmers put into local organising as they are to certification. At the very least, there appears to be a mutually beneficial relation between higher premiums and the extensive social and political work carried out by farmers' movements. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine Fairtrade even taking root without building upon the historical agrarian struggles for land reform, co-operative organisations, and indigenous rights. However, none of this is reflected in corporate marketing of Fairtrade, where development claims are politically sanitised for mass consumption. At best, co-operation –not struggle– is emphasised.

Minimum wage or living wage?

In December 2006, the Association of Co-operatives of Small Coffee Producers of Nicaragua (CAFENICA) and the Co-ordinating body of Small Fair Trade Producers in Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAC) submitted a report to FLO requesting a 15 cent per pound Fairtrade price increase. Citing a lack of information, FLO initially denied the request and postponed talks. After pressure from farmers' organisations and consumer groups, FLO agreed to a five cent per pound increase.

The CLAC report and other impact studies expose some of the drawbacks within the Fairtrade certification process and its market mechanisms. Fairtrade's minimum price was a lifesaver during the coffee crisis. But it was never pegged to farmers' cost of production or cost of living, and it is now increasingly less effective at ensuring social benefits. Some studies indicate that farmers now lose money under Fairtrade – they just lose less than conventional growers. By pursuing a mainstream approach, Fairtrade ensures more of a "minimum wage" rather than a "living wage". Now, farmers represented in CLAC who seek a "living wage" for their coffee are at odds with Fairtrade certifiers, who must keep the price low if they are to mainstream Fairtrade through large corporate retailers.

Alternatives to corporate Fairtrade

Trading arrangements as practised by many of the Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs) do improve the conditions and opportunities for the coffee co-operatives with whom they trade directly because certification is seen as a floor and not a ceiling. Roasters like Equal Exchange in the U.S. and Cafédirect in the U.K. are committed to selling 100 percent Fairtrade certified coffee, and using certification as a point of departure for forming meaningful, long-term partnerships with producer co-operatives. Thanksgiving Coffee pays quality premiums up to 40 cents over the Fairtrade price. Owner Paul Katzeff searches out certified organic co-operatives and helps them obtain Fairtrade certification, and then works diligently with the producing communities to help improve the quality of the coffee. CAN's direct trade model localises the value added process and provides an alternative model to certification (see related article on p.28). Other companies are jointly owned by participating farmers' organisations. Farmer-ownership models not only return more of the retail value to farmers, they give farmers more sovereignty in the process of bringing their produce to market.

The Alternative Trade Organisations share a number of characteristics that differentiate them from the much larger, corporate Fairtrade players, as follows:

- *Transparency*. Fairtrade certified producers are required to open their books to auditors. Conversely, most large corporations who retail the coffee are secretive about how much Fairtrade coffee they sell. "Movement" companies are largely transparent about how much they pay farmers for their coffee, and what portion of their sales is Fairtrade.
- *Long-term commitment*. "Movement" companies work with producer co-operatives to invest in the quality of their coffee. This might mean training coffee tasters to be able to recognise and strive for quality coffee, or helping farm co-operatives diversify their production into other products, or supporting health and education projects.
- *Localising the value of coffee*. Traditionally, most of the value of coffee is exported, generating big profits at the roasting and retailing stages of the value chain. Even if farmers sell at the Fairtrade price, this unequal balance of power remains. "Movement" companies pursuing farmer-owned and direct trade initiatives allow more of the value of coffee to remain in the producing community.

Beyond the mainstreaming debate: Fairtrade and food sovereignty

Fairtrade's mainstreaming debate reflects growing disagreements on the fairness, development claims, and the future of Fairtrade. These differences are rooted in tensions between market-based and movement-based strategies for social change. On one hand, market-based certifiers champion the benefits of the increased volume made possible by a relatively low Fairtrade floor price. On the other, many producers and ATOs argue for prices based on production costs, and worry about the loss of control and authenticity of Fairtrade.

Prodecoop in Nicaragua

One of the most important roles of Fairtrade has been to help build and sustain farmers' co-operatives. In Nicaragua, when the leftist Sandinista government lost power in 1990, farmers' co-operatives found themselves without any government support. They formed co-operatives to provide marketing, credit, and other programmes. Prodecoop (Promotion of Co-operative Development of the Segovias region), was the first such organisation. Rosario Catellón, co-founder of Prodecoop, tells the story:

"In 1991, the first co-operatives that today make up Prodecoop first exported to the U.S. based fair trade coffee buyer, Equal Exchange. Some of the co-operative members of Prodecoop had taken out loans during the Sandinista revolution, but the new government demanded immediate repayment. The bank held their coffee crop as collateral, and put their land into foreclosure. The representatives of the member co-operatives came to the Prodecoop offices with this difficult situation.

"Jonathan Rosenthal, then Executive Director of Equal Exchange, listened to the co-operatives, and took the risk that no bank or other financial institution was willing to take. He advanced us a portion of the purchase of our coffee. After negotiations with the bank, Prodecoop bought the coffee back from them, promising to apply all the income from the sales to pay off the co-operatives' debts.

"Equal Exchange contributed to bringing Prodecoop out of anonymity. They were the first buyer of our coffee, and helped to make it known in the North American market. Jonathan Rosenthal and Equal Exchange have been dedicated to building bridges, so that those who have historically been at a disadvantage can pass over to the other side, where the coffee industry is, and break the long chain of intermediaries. In this way, they can access better incomes; alleviate poverty; achieve economic, environmental, and social sustainability; and most of all regain their hope for the future and for themselves. The small farmers of Prodecoop never imagined that they would, over and over again, be sitting down to negotiate face-to-face with North American and European coffee importers and roasters. Prodecoop has been an example for the country and the world. It has motivated the resurgence of many co-operatives of small farmers in Nicaragua and in other countries."

Photo: Annie Shattuck

Members of Cooperativa La Concordia, like coffee farmers all over the world, deserve a fair price for their products.

This puts the Fairtrade movement in a difficult position. If the movement is isolated from the mainstream, it may not be relevant enough to change the farmers' situation. But by interacting with the mainstream without asking critical questions, the movement risks becoming diluted, and the benefits may decrease. The mainstreaming emphasis of Fairtrade risks marginalising activists and farmers – the very drivers of social change that make Fairtrade more than just a "slightly better market" for poor coffee farmers.

The fairness of Fairtrade is more than a simple ethical debate. Fairness regarding transparency, risk, labour practices and profits are a reflection of market power. In the present unregulated coffee market, rules are set by those who control the most lucrative parts of the value chain: roasting and distribution. Until farmers are able to own substantial shares in roasting and distribution, they will always be subject to the levels of "fairness" acceptable to those who control the coffee market. Luckily, there are already encouraging experiments within the larger Fairtrade coffee community that shift power in the value chain towards the coffee producers. Scaling up these experiences would help tip Fairtrade's balance of power in favour of farmers rather than large corporations.

Safety net or development strategy?

The neoliberal position that markets themselves are sufficient to reduce poverty, end hunger, and promote sustainable development, is a notion that has been refuted by two decades of disastrous corporate-led globalisation. Fairtrade marketers who claim that Fairtrade "empowers farmers" are in essence claiming that certification is the small adjustment needed to make good on the neoliberal promise.

When coffee prices dropped catastrophically in 2001 and 2002, it became clear that Fairtrade price floors provide an essential safety net for farmers. One can find hundreds of testimonies from farmers who are acutely aware of this value, because they are widely published on the websites and promotional materials of certifiers and coffee companies that market Fairtrade products.

However, the farmers who organise co-operatives, the students and consumers who advocate for Fairtrade, and the NGO advocates that run major Fairtrade campaigns have something more than a safety net in mind: they want an end to hunger, poverty, and the extreme injustice brought about by "free" trade. They don't want to settle for a safety net, they want Fairtrade to be a strategy for sustainable development.

While such safety nets ensure farmers security from steep price drops and extreme poverty, a comprehensive development strategy is needed to provide farming communities and organisations opportunities to strengthen local institutions and farmers' market power. It is clear that certification –the kind of certification that is being adopted when big corporate players get into the Fairtrade business– fails to deliver on these larger issues.

To make good on its development claims, rather than mainstreaming, Fairtrade needs to intensify its work with peasant movements to roll back corporate globalisation and re-establish the social institutions and rural policies needed for productive, healthy agriculture.

Looking forward: building market sovereignty

The future of Fairtrade depends on the degree to which it can bring producers, consumers and roaster-distributors not just into its market, but into the growing social movements for agrarian change. It is clear that movement building depends on a sense of belonging, commitment and participation in decision-making. But because Fairtrade is a business as well as a movement, this participation also depends on ownership. To ensure the politically committed participation of farmers in Fairtrade, they must not only be "stakeholders" in development, but "shareholders" in the business. Giving farmers a majority stake on the FLO board of directors would go a long way towards this goal.

It is unlikely that large corporations will advance a farmer-driven, movement agenda for social change within Fairtrade. They will attempt to sell as little Fairtrade coffee as possible at the lowest possible price, counting on their vast market power to keep Fairtrade farmers coming to them. This is not a reason to give up the Fairtrade market. On the contrary, to keep Fairtrade from becoming irrelevant to farmers' livelihood struggles, it is up to alternative organisations, NGOs, and activists to help poor coffee farmers grow not just their market, but their market power; not just their business, but their controlling share within the business.

Ultimately, the ability to hold the corporate players in Fairtrade publicly accountable to more equitable standards depends on the degree that the Fairtrade movement advances farmers' market sovereignty – the ability to determine how to produce, process, sell and distribute in ways that are fair and sustainable. Building market sovereignty from the premium floor up will certainly not be easy, and will be strongly resisted by the corporate players.

Fortunately, the Fairtrade movement is dynamic and constantly evolves new forms of social, economic and political organisation. Even FLO surprised sceptics by rewriting its constitution to include seats for farmers' organisations on its board of directors, taking concrete steps towards letting farmers finally participate in ownership of Fairtrade certification. As farmers' power grows within Fairtrade, and as the movement links strategically with peasant and consumer movements for social change, Fairtrade will be well positioned to make good on its development claims.

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Direct trade that benefits poor communities in India and the U.K.

Mari Marcel Thekaekara

"Just Change" is becoming well known in fair trade and development circles around the world. It is an initiative which aims to establish an alternative and direct trading mechanism that will benefit poor communities. We have been successful in directly linking communities in India, the U.K., and encouraging them to trade amongst themselves. In our own way, we are standing globalisation on its head.

The origins of Just Change go back more than 20 years, and the development of the initiative is related to the struggle for survival of some of the poorest people in India. In 1985, a group of people founded the Action for Community Organisation, Rehabilitation and Development (ACCORD), with the aim of helping the *adivasis* –the indigenous people of the Gudalur valley in the Nilgiri mountains of Tamil Nadu, southern India– take control of their own lives. We wanted to support them in resisting being exploited by settlers, government departments and large tea plantations. To do this, we began a movement to reclaim ancestral lands. The *adivasi* people later planted tea on their newly reclaimed lands.


Photo: Author

Through growing and selling tea, *adivasi* women have gained more independence.

In the next few years, incomes began to trickle in from the newly planted tea, coffee and pepper, making a perceptible difference to the health and nutrition of the *adivasi* population. The mid 90s, however, saw a sudden drop in tea prices and with it, a drop in incomes. We were told that this was a result of the global market scenario. It was frustrating to watch all the gains of the previous years dissolve. Yet while all *adivasi* tea growers had their incomes reduced to less than half, we realised that tea prices for the consumer did not drop at all. It was obvious that someone somewhere was making a killing – but the farmers were being cheated as sellers, while consumers were being fleeced as buyers.

In the early 90s, a women's co-op visited us, bringing with them beautiful handloom saris which they made themselves. They sold these to our team at half the price the saris were going for in Gudalur town. Our team pounced on the saris amazed and delighted at the good deal. The women weavers took back Gudalur tea which they considered a bargain. They sold this for a slight profit back home. Both the groups had gained considerably by the transaction and a few more exchanges took place. It reconfirmed the fact that the market was treating us unfairly, and set us thinking.

In 1995, more than 200 *adivasi* village leaders resolved to purchase a tea plantation as a community asset, to "stand on our own feet" as they said. Supporters from the U.K. and Germany helped to buy a 176 acre estate called Madhuvana, and plant tea on it. Finally in 1998, the Gudalur *adivasis* became the proud owners of a tea plantation. It was another milestone crossed. Now, Madhuvana has about 100 acres of tea planted. On average, about 20 000 kilos of tea leaf is produced every month.

With all this going on, we began an in-depth analysis of the problem in Gudalur. We realised that when the exploiter was the local landlord, we all could do something about it. But, when the exploiter was a faceless enemy such as the "global market" it was beyond our grasp. In such cases it was essential to work out a new strategy and build networks with communities in other parts of the world. We had succeeded in exchanging our tea for saris and sold our tea to our support groups in the U.K. and Germany. We now needed to formalise these efforts – to build a strong network of poor and deprived communities, and to use globalisation to our advantage.

A step beyond fair trade

Just Change emerged from the concept of fair trade. The slogan "Fair Trade not Aid" was new, exciting and one which we embraced wholeheartedly. We began our fight for a fair deal for *adivasi* tea planters and for the poor producers when we first sold our tea in Germany. On a visit to Germany, Bomman, an *adivasi* leader, was shocked to discover that our German friends had to travel far to buy our tea, and also that they paid more for it. "But they are our friends and supporters, they should pay less," he protested. We soon realised that many unemployed people in Europe could not afford fair trade products. We also realised that we were depending on the goodwill of socially aware, middle class people, since they paid more for our tea in order to give the producers a break. Making people aware that fair trade could eliminate the need for aid was great. But there remained an element of benevolence. Wasn't it slightly patronising? It didn't change structures or trade relationships, or even question them. We decided we had to go one step further. Since poor people were being exploited in rich countries as well as poor, why not join the two communities through trade? That way, both groups would benefit. Then the solidarity would not be one-sided – it would be mutual. Forming a co-operative of poor consumers and producers created a global solidarity group that could tackle the negative impact of globalisation. Local communities, both in the U.K. and in India, adored the idea. In this way, Just Change was born.

Trading between communities

The concept became a reality when Gudalur *adivasis* traded their tea with various communities in Kerala and Orissa. This

Photo: Author

A Village Consumer Society in Calicut, being run by the Just Change India Producer Company.

was a phase in which we identified more products for trading between poor communities, realised the potential of the Just Change network and decided to bring more groups in.

The face to face contacts between the Kerala, Gudalur and Orissa groups produced a strong sense of solidarity and working together for one cause. Women's groups from Kerala began to send us a coconut based soap which was hugely popular. Orissa and Kerala loved our tea. The Just Change idea took off in Gudalur because we began to provide rice to people who found an enormous difference in price, quality and quantity. They discovered that for decades local traders had cheated them on both weight and price. So loyalty to Just Change and determination to succeed increased. As trading took place successfully, the Just Change identity emerged and, with it, confidence and trust in each other. We grew in experience and learnt much from outside advisers, who gave us new ideas and insights. We ironed out many problems and glitches and learnt from our mistakes.

On January 6, 2006, we took another giant step forward, when the Just Change India Producer Company was formally registered. We launched the company with *adivasis*, Orissa farmers and women's groups as the founding members and shareholders. We often confound ourselves and others by the sheer audacity of our ideas! But we try to break the mould, so the inauguration of our producer company happened under a tree. Community leaders lit lamps – no ribbon cutting. There was joyful singing and dancing, the cultural expression of our communities. The shareholders' focus was not on profits or dividends, but on benefits to producers and consumers – on justice!

The U.K. connection

The Just Change story also became inextricably linked and woven in with events in the United Kingdom. In the summer of 1994, ACCORD was invited to the U.K. by the Charities Advisory Trust and the Directory of Social Change to write a report on "Poverty in the U.K. from a southern perspective." ACCORD was struck by the fact that unemployed people living on welfare on housing estates were paying unnecessarily high prices for the endless cups of tea they drank. What if we could connect the two groups? They would pay less and we would get more. The idea seemed brilliant.

A number of experimental exchanges took place, at first with little success. However, with a volunteer who became the face of Just Change U.K., the idea moved along. A group of young people in Manchester started to sell tea to local community groups and through alternative shops. Other shops around the country started to buy our tea. We also relied on various supporters in the U.K. to keep us going. In 2001, an *adivasi* group came to the U.K., and met friends and supporters of Just Change in Hawick, Manchester, Gloucester and London. One of the strengths of Just Change U.K. lies in the volunteer groups – many of them young people who have spent a summer with us in Mysore, taking part in our programme, "Development from the inside". In 2006 we were able to set up a Board for Just Change U.K. We have also had articles published and the resulting publicity has helped to strengthen our networks. For example, the BBC publicised a blind taste test where Just Change tea came out tops, winning over the most popular local brands.

Nevertheless, Just Change was still not linking up with poor communities in the U.K. Then in March 2006 we met the Marsh Farm group. They are a group of 3000 people living on a housing estate near Luton, in southern England. They have formed a collective to work on community regeneration. There was an instant synergy and connection between people from Marsh Farm and the *adivasi*s, as each told their stories of struggle for survival and justice. This seemed like the breakthrough we had been looking for since 1994. In May 2007, we formally launched Just Change U.K. amongst the Marsh Farm Sunday market traders. Just Change supporters from around the U.K. arrived, and the launch was lively. A visiting *adivasi* group played drums, flutes and danced, attracting a lot of attention. We hope the tea will now take off in a big way from Marsh Farm. We also hope to find funding for a person to devote a few days a week to support Just Change in the U.K.

Towards the future

The New Internationalist and Amnesty International sell Just Change tea and soap through their catalogues. Both have done pretty well and we couldn't get more global than that! It is a great feeling to be fighting the war on our terms on their (global market) turf and to see the tide turning. While we need the volumes of tea to increase considerably in order to make a real difference economically, it is an enormously satisfying feeling to note the progress being made slowly but surely, as the idea and message spread, with all corners of the world responding to the concept of creating a just economic order. May the struggle continue.

■

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Photo: Erin Nelson / Laura Gómez

The participatory certification committee in action. The farm visit is viewed as an educational experience for all those involved.

Growing a local organic movement: The Mexican Network of Organic Markets

Erin Nelson, Rita Schwentesius Rindermann, Laura Gómez Tovar and Manuel Ángel Gómez Cruz

Over the past several years, in response to the rapid growth in global demand for organic goods, the amount of organic production in Mexico has increased dramatically. Indeed, while Mexican agriculture as a whole has suffered severe crises, the organic sector has boomed, and today more than 83 000 producers farm organically on over 300 000 hectares of land. Of these producers, 98 percent are small scale, farming an average of three hectares, and over 50 percent are indigenous people. Unfortunately, as is the case in many developing countries, the vast majority of organic production remains focused on export crops –particularly coffee, but also cocoa, coconut, and other fruit and vegetables– with 85 percent of organic goods being sent to foreign markets. From an environmental point of view, export-oriented production is extremely damaging because of the amounts of fossil fuels required for transportation. In addition, packaging for export consumes precious resources and creates mountains of waste. Moreover, an export-oriented focus constrains the degree to which domestic markets are developed, and it leaves Mexican producers highly vulnerable to international market fluctuations.

An alternative organic vision

These problems have not gone unnoticed in Mexico. In fact, as in many other countries, a local organic movement has been growing alongside the more conventional industry. For example, some Mexican grocery stores now carry organic goods, and a number of organic speciality shops and cafés have opened, primarily in and around Mexico City. One of the more grassroots efforts, which focuses specifically on small scale local organics, has been the emergence of a number of organic markets across the country. Supported by committed producers and consumers, and in many cases linked to universities and non-governmental organisations, 17 of these markets are already well established in nine states, and new initiatives are continuously being developed. Since 2004, these markets have joined together to form the Mexican Network of Organic Markets.

While remaining independent entities with distinct characteristics, the markets do share a common vision. Besides the desire to improve the environment by supporting organic agriculture practices, the Network views sustainability in broader terms, regarding social and economic justice. In the Network's view, promoting social and economic justice includes making healthy, safe, organic products more readily available to all Mexicans – and not just to those who live in urban centres and can afford to pay high premiums. Towards this goal, the organic markets focus on goods produced locally by small scale farmers, as well as on linking consumers directly with producers. By reducing the transportation and packaging of products and by eliminating intermediaries, the organic markets make it possible for small scale producers to earn more from their production while at the same time offering relatively affordable prices to consumers. Supporting these kinds of linkages also serves a more philosophical purpose – of building community solidarity and trust relationships.

Indeed, community building is at the heart of Mexico's local organic markets. They are not conceived of as simply places where people go to buy and sell goods. Rather, they are meant to be spaces where commerce and consumption can become a political, social, ethical, educational, and enjoyable act. In an effort to combine these various elements, the vast majority of the Network's markets offer a wide variety of workshops, lectures and other activities for both adults and children. In addition, many also host cultural events such as dance or musical performances, or other special events such as anniversary celebrations or fairs. As a result, the markets are dynamic initiatives that seek to support organic agriculture in a truly holistic sense, helping move towards environmental, social, and environmental sustainability.

Challenges facing the Mexican Network of Organic Markets

Although the number of local organic markets in Mexico is growing rapidly and there are a considerable number of highly committed producers, consumers, and organisers working tirelessly in support of the movement, each market confronts some significant challenges, and many of these are common across the Network. One of the primary challenges for each market is the struggle to secure the physical and human resources required in order to function. Unfortunately, market profits are generally not yet at a level that enables groups to pay for things like space rental or salaries to co-ordinators. Thus, the markets are heavily dependent on donations of resources and volunteer labour, which can be problematic.

A lack of funds also limits the degree to which the Network can pursue training and education programmes for both producers and consumers. Significant numbers of producers have demonstrated interest in shifting to organic production and accessing an organic market, but they lack the necessary expertise, and cannot access the educational resources needed to assist them in the endeavour. The difficulties in getting access to extension services exacerbates another problem in terms of growing local organic markets – insufficient supply of locally produced organic goods. In fact, although insufficient demand is often cited as a problem for local organics, the reality for many existing organic markets is that sometimes consumers come looking for goods and find them either sold or not available at all. In response to this problem, the markets are constantly searching for new producers to expand the supply of existing products and introduce new ones to meet consumer needs and preferences. The Network would also like to facilitate the inter-market exchange of products; however, a lack of funding for transportation has meant that this has not yet been possible.

Participatory organic certification system

Another major challenge confronting local organic markets are the economic and bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult for the small scale producers involved to obtain organic certification. This can make ensuring consumer confidence in the integrity of the products for sale difficult. In response to this issue, the organic markets that participate in the Network support the notion of participatory certification, and are working to develop smoothly functioning "Participatory Guarantee Systems". Key aspects of these systems are that they minimise bureaucracy, do not require any payment from the producer, and incorporate an element of social and environmental education for producers and consumers. In a major step forward for participatory certification in Mexico, the Network successfully lobbied for its inclusion in the recently passed law governing organic agriculture. As a result, products certified through participatory processes can now legally be referred to as "organic".

In Chapingo's organic market, for example, the first step for a producer wishing to achieve participatory certification is to contact the market co-ordinator and fill out a questionnaire regarding current and past production practices. This questionnaire is reviewed by Chapingo's participatory certification committee, which consists of local consumers, producers, agricultural researchers and students. The committee uses a combination of the norms of the National Organic Program of the United States and those of the Mexican certification body Certimex as a reference. If, based on the questionnaire, the producer meets the requirements for organic certification, a visit to the farm is scheduled.

This farm visit is not viewed as an inspection *per se*, but rather as an interactive experience designed to be educational for all those involved. During the visit, committee members consult a checklist that includes basic data about the farm operation (e.g. size of territory, number of crops, etc.), as well as basic organic control points such as the following: source of seeds and water; soil, pest and disease management practices; post-harvest treatment of crops; and the potential for contamination from neighbouring farms.

Following the farm visit, the case is discussed in a meeting of the entire certification committee. If producers comply with all standards, they are granted organic status within the market and certified without condition. In most cases however, certification comes with a set of conditions. The most common ones include the need to develop natural barriers to prevent contamination from neighbouring conventional farms, and to thoroughly compost manure before application to crops. Provided that the producers work with the committee to meet these conditions, and that they are not in serious violation of organic standards, they can then begin to sell their goods in the "natural" section of the market, which is physically separated from the organic section and marked with a sign. Follow-up visits and continuous communication are used to ensure that the conditions are being

The birth of a local organic market

One of the first markets created was in the community of Chapingo – home to Mexico's principle agricultural university. The Chapingo initiative began with a group of people at the university who organised courses and workshops on organic agriculture, as well as tasting sessions where members of the public could sample organic goods. They also contacted local organic farmers and began to organise a system of organic product delivery for consumers at the university and in neighbouring communities. By 2003, the number of consumers and producers involved in the project had grown to such an extent that the organisers decided to move from the order and delivery system to a fully functioning public market (or "*tianguis*"). Thus, in November of that year, the Chapingo market was officially inaugurated in a building lent out free of charge by the university.

Today, the Chapingo Organic Market opens every Saturday from 10:00 to 15:00 and has more than twenty participating vendor tables. There is a growing number of consumers coming from the surrounding communities and also, in many cases, from Mexico City, which is about an hour's drive away. The products offered include fruit and vegetables, meats, dairy products, eggs, baked goods, honey, coffee, processed goods such as syrup, oil, *salsa* and dried fruit, biodegradable cleaning and beauty products and artisanal work. In addition, consumers can enjoy a brunch of *tlacoyos*, *quesadillas* or *tamales* and drink coffee, chocolate or hibiscus juice. The market does not just offer goods for sale – it also has a small library with books about environmental and organic agriculture issues, an information table with books and pamphlets, and a space to hold free educational workshops for children and adults.

In many ways, the Chapingo market is representative of the other markets that form the Mexican Network of Organic Markets. Most of the markets run on a weekly basis, include educational elements such as workshops and presentations, are working towards developing participatory certification systems, and are run primarily on volunteer labour. The Mexican Network of Organic Markets pursues a wide variety of activities (including public education, marketing and promotion), but one of the primary objectives of the Network is to assist in the creation of new markets. Today there are 17 functioning markets and 8 proposals for new ones. The long term goal is to have 100 local organic markets open in Mexico.

Photo: Erin Nelson / Laura Gomez

One of the workshops regularly organised as part of the Chapingo Organic Market. Producers and customers exchange ideas about dried herbs.

met, and eventually the producer may be eligible for full organic status (refer to Figure 1 for the full picture of the process). Because transparency and community involvement are integral aspects of the system, the results of all questionnaires and committee decisions are available to the public, and anyone who wishes to join the certification committee is more than welcome to do so. In addition, consumers are encouraged to interact with producers at the Chapingo market, and this interaction has led to the development of strong relationships of trust, and in some cases friendship, between the buyers and sellers of organic products. These relationships are an important means of supporting the participatory certification process, as they provide the consumer with an extra sense of security.

It should be noted that the process of participatory certification is not without its own set of problems and limitations. One of the most prominent challenges for the implementation of participatory certification is that it is currently all done on a voluntary basis. This places significant constraints on the amount of time that people are able to devote to the process. In addition, many participants come and go, and this creates a lack of consistency and continuity within the certification committee. Finally, a lack of training and education means that several people who are currently active in the committee still lack the sufficient expertise to carry out inspections. These challenges have made it difficult to keep up with the demand for certifying new producers who wish to enter the market, and also to consistently monitor the farms of existing market members.

Future steps

The Mexican Network of Organic Markets is expected to continue growing, as it is doing that now at a very fast rate. Looking into the future, the Network's plans include to:

- solidify the participatory certification systems (i.e. make sure that they are codified in writing and that they are followed homogenously in all markets);
- systematically determine the characteristics of the various markets (including number of producers involved, products available, income generated, resources invested, etc.);
- offer training for market managers;

Participatory Guarantee Systems

Tegan Renner

Over the past three decades, organic agriculture has evolved into a global system of third party certification and international trade. This system has seen tremendous growth in recent years, but it has presented more challenges than opportunities for small scale producers, especially those in the South. There are many who abide by the principles but who are unable to market their crops as organic because they lack the third party certification that the global market demands. The reality is that most farmers are not able to afford the high costs associated with third party certification. The amount of paperwork that is required is also often seen as an obstacle. Aside from these barriers, the fact still remains that international organic standards like the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement's (IFOAM) Basic Standards have been developed in the North, despite 75 percent of IFOAM's members being from the South. The result is standards that do not consider southern climates or economies.

In reaction to these challenges, small farmers around the world have created alternative systems of organic certification that are suited to their local ecological and economic realities. Still founded on the principles of organic agriculture, these systems are often loosely based on IFOAM's Basic Standards but with the necessary modifications made to reflect their community's needs, including different cultural means of quantitatively or qualitatively measuring "organic." Most basic are changes involving reduced certification costs and amounts of required paperwork, but more significant are the structural differences. Very much a community organisation, the shared emphasis of participation in all these alternative systems has led to the overall term, "participatory guarantee systems" (PGS). With a focus on the local community, standards are created jointly by the producers and consumers that the system will serve. In this way and others, both transparency and participation are entrenched as core values in these alternative systems of certification. Trust is also a cornerstone of PGS –not only because of the joint participation of its creation– but also because of the continued relationship between producers and consumers in direct purchasing at markets or farm-gate sales and a close relationship between producers who work together to keep the PGS functioning. Sharing information and experience with each other is one way that this trust is established. Capacity building is also a key component of PGS, and training is often a requirement, as well as meetings to discuss farm management issues and share

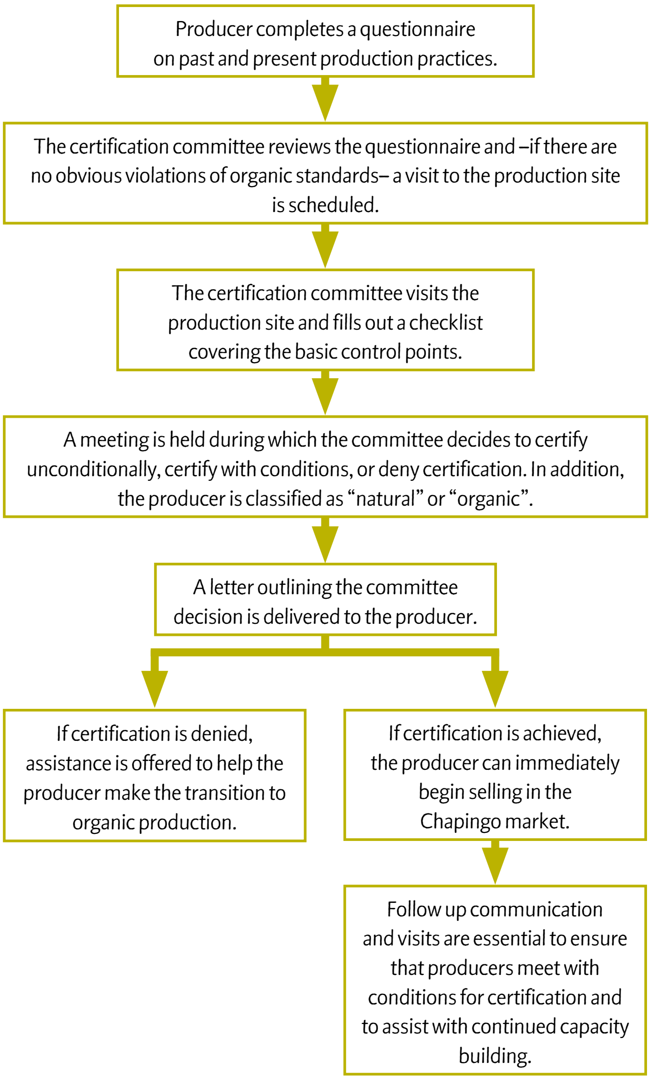

Figure 1: Steps to achieving participatory organic certification in Chapingo

- continue offering capacity building workshops on organic agriculture techniques as well as on price setting and small business management;
- address issues of gender within the local organic markets;
- increase promotion of the markets, for example by using radio and television and public events;
- visit elementary schools and offer education on the environment and organic agriculture; and
- continue to host meetings three times per year where all markets will be represented.

The rapid growth of the Mexican Network of Organic Markets demonstrates that there is a great deal of interest on the part of both Mexican producers and consumers to work together to create sustainable food systems. By increasing the links between producers and consumers and by providing high quality organic goods at prices that are fair for everyone involved, these markets help broaden the reach of the organic movement while simultaneously returning it to its philosophical roots. By facilitating the involvement of small scale producers and encouraging a focus on local food networks, the notion of participatory certification furthers this effort. Indeed, although still in its early phases, the Mexican experience with local organic markets and participatory certification offers an important alternative, not only to the conventional food sector, but also to the industrialised, export-oriented, "mainstream" organic sector. ■

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offer alternative certification

solutions. Most PGSs are non-hierarchical, which is achieved through a relatively even distribution of responsibility among producers who belong to the PGS.

From participatory-driven principles to action, the Ecovida Network in Brazil provides an example of PGS. This scheme, set up by local NGOs and research institutions, has 2300 farm families, 25 support organisations, 15 consumer groups, 8 marketing enterprises and 7 small scale agro-industries as members. Most farmer members of the Network sell individually or through farmers' groups at fairs and markets, but others sell to co-operative stores or agro-processing plants that are a part of the Network. Members are able to enjoy a price premium for their organic certification and are able to keep more of their profits as there is no intermediary.

IFOAM reports that there are dozens of PGSs around the world and they range in scale as well as approach. Though PGSs have common founding principles, how they run differs according to what is desired by the local community. It should be noted that even with a system like the Ecovida Network, the focus is still on direct local consumption. There are those within the PGS movement who wish to gain access to niche markets in the North, but this ambition is far from being realised. There are many signs that IFOAM recognises the importance of PGSs in direct, local consumption relationships, but not as an export-oriented system. Nevertheless, IFOAM has published a number of suggestions to guide NGOs and policy makers in promoting PGS. Ideas include building PGS credibility through the establishment of local markets, arranging access to urban areas for rural farmers, revitalising the link between socioeconomic issues and organic agriculture and many other actions to encourage PGS, both in regions where it is and is not established. PGS presents the opportunity for the organic movement to again support local consumption, in turn strengthening community ties, economies and rural livelihoods. ■

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Building grower-consumer alliances for confronting the coffee crisis

Roberta Jaffe, Devon Sampson and Annie Shattuck

In 2001, world coffee prices tumbled to all-time lows, devastating coffee-dependent farm families and their communities, in what became known as the global "coffee crisis." Out of necessity, many farm families left their communities to find wage labour, while others cut down their coffee plants and shade trees in favour of cattle pastures. The integrity of coffee producing communities in Mexico and Central America was strained by emigration, biodiversity was threatened by deforestation, and denuded and trampled hillsides started to wash away in the tropical rains.

That same year, a group of researchers formed a network based on long-term relationships with various Latin American farming communities, all of which were suffering the effects of the crash in coffee prices. They formed the Community Agroecology Network (CAN), a U.S.-based non-profit organisation, to support each other as researchers, to share knowledge and information with the farming communities, and to promote local empowerment and biodiversity conservation.

Four of the communities associated with CAN grow and export coffee as their main livelihood strategy. In conversation with researchers, communities in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Mexico asserted that finding stable alternative markets was their priority. It soon became a mission of CAN to build alternative markets that connect coffee producers with coffee consumers as directly as possible, so that they could sell a portion of their harvest outside the fluctuating and unpredictable global coffee market, receive a greater economic return, and more actively market their coffee. CAN is now a vibrant network of farmers, researchers, students and consumers, with links between the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), the University of Vermont, five communities in Mexico and Central America, three coffee co-operatives, and several farmers' organisations.

Several of the coffee co-operatives associated with CAN are already Fairtrade certified by the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations (FLO). The amount of Fairtrade coffee being sold in the world is skyrocketing, but the certification scheme has come under sharp criticism recently for failing to keep up with inflation and the rising cost of producing coffee, and for failing to live up to its claim that it enables farmers to pull themselves out of poverty. CAN is trying to take "fairness" further by creating a way of trading coffee that resembles a local farmers' market as an alternative to the global system controlled by transnational corporations. At a farmers' market, sales are direct and prices tend to be better for the consumer and the grower, and there are plenty of opportunities for person-to-person interactions. As most coffee drinkers live far from coffee farms, and direct, face-to-face sales are all but impossible, CAN has developed an alternative coffee business model known as "Fairtrade-Direct".

Two models of Fairtrade-Direct

Taking advantage of Costa Rica's dependable mail system and the capacity to roast coffee locally, CAN helped the Agua Buena co-operative set up a system to send roasted and packaged coffee directly to consumers in the United States. For US$ 11 (including shipping) consumers receive a pound (approx. 450 grammes) of fresh coffee delivered to their mailbox. After paying all costs, the farmers' co-operative nets a profit of approximately three dollars per pound of roasted coffee. In Santa Cruz, a small staff of students and recent graduates takes care of the importation logistics (orders, processing payments, legal paperwork), and acts as intermediary between consumers and the coffee farmers by translating language and cultural assumptions. CAN also assists by registering each order with the Food and Drug Administration to meet the U.S. government's requirement for importing food products. Funds based on orders received are wired every month to the co-operative's bank account. CAN refers to this as the "value-added" model, because selling a product directly to consumers, rather than a raw material, allows the community to keep the value of roasting, packaging and retailing their coffee in their community.

In Nicaragua and El Salvador, the need for a more direct market is similarly urgent, but the mail system is not reliable enough to replicate the value-added model. Instead, coffee is exported green (unroasted) in a bulk container shipment along with coffee from a U.S. based importer. In this "profit sharing" model, green coffee is purchased at the Fairtrade certified minimum price or above, and roasted and packaged in the Santa Cruz area. After sale to consumers, half the profits are wired to the co-operatives, along with a detailed report of sales and the costs of importing, roasting, and packaging. Over the past three years, CAN has been able to return US$ 2 per pound of green coffee (rather than the Fairtrade certified minimum price of US$ 1.51 for organic coffee) to partner co-operatives in Nicaragua and El Salvador. The commitment to transparency, personal relationships, and returning a larger slice of the retail dollar to the farmer co-operatives is key in both models.

Action Education

Fairtrade-Direct also includes an "action education" component, in which student interns help sustain and improve the trade model. University undergraduates, interning at CAN's offices at the University of California Santa Cruz or with partner organisations in farming communities, engage in "action education", defined both as education with a purpose and learning by doing. Students learn by working on the direct market, and the direct market grows on their creativity. A student's experience often begins in Santa Cruz, where he or she does much of the day-to-day workings of the organisation, and continues as a field study internship in Mexico or Central America. In Santa Cruz, an intern might develop marketing plans, write promotional material, staff a booth at the local farmers' market, write grants, and even navigate government importing bureaucracy. All this practical education is an invaluable addition to the often passive teaching of lecture halls.

CAN's international field study programme grounds students in the reality of rural Latin America. Students live and work with farmers and their organisations. They share life's everyday rituals, work on projects requested by the community, tie into existing research programmes or senior thesis research, or gain practical experience in rural development with a farmers' organisation. Students spend time doing farm chores alongside farm families. Farmers teach and mentor interns in the practice and application of sustainable farming and community development. The intern fee provides a much-needed contribution to farmers' livelihoods, and justly compensates them as educators, while the cost to students is usually well under tuition and living expenses at a public university. Just as the Fairtrade-Direct programme benefits both consumers and producers, the field internship experience is a mutually beneficial co-operation between farmers and students.

This educational model has produced some concrete successes in its relatively short existence. Interns have helped to develop the direct market so it returns over US$ 100 000 per year to the co-operatives. A major piece of this market expansion occurred in 2004. After a concentrated campaign by students, UCSC began purchasing 50 percent of their total coffee volume for dining halls and coffee carts directly from CAN's partner co-operatives in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The dining halls took the academic learning of food systems to a level of action, strengthening both the education programmes and the food policies on campus. Because of their commitment to this coffee and other local sourcing policies, the UCSC dining services have become a national model of an environmentally and socially responsible food provider. The integration of "action education" and the direct marketing model is important as it offers intercultural exchange and understanding of the marketplace to all who participate.

Participatory action research

Both the marketing and the education programmes grew out of the long-term relationships between CAN-affiliated researchers, farmers, and farm organisations. The trust and commitment that has developed over the years created the opportunity for alternative trade linked to sustainable farming practices in these highly sensitive tropical ecosystems. The researchers use "participatory action research" (PAR) to generate information the community will find useful to its own development.

Photo: Annie Shattuck

Arjun Ponambalum, one of the interns working in the coffee co-operatives, together with Clementino Rosales, Berta Alicia Rosales and Maximina Mendoza, all members of the El Sincuyo co-operative.

Researchers approach their work as a cycle, collaboratively identifying issues of concern on which research is conducted, reflecting preliminary results back to the community involved, creating steps for concrete action, and sharing the research results with all involved parties. In PAR, whether information is collected on biodiversity, economics, soil health, or a wealth of other topics, data help form the foundation for community decisions related to sustainable development.

Fairtrade-Direct in the field

All these activities aim to reconnect the two most important players in the food system, the growers and the consumers, where both benefit from the exchange. Rising shipping costs in the value-added model have been a challenge to efforts to keep the price fair for consumers and producers. Although CAN's volume of sales is relatively small compared to the total production of each community, a considerable sum was paid in 2007 to the three partner communities that participate in the direct market. As these models become more established, the direct market grows, and producers' organisations get stronger, this type of alternative market can be moved to a larger scale.

The greatest impact of this marketing model has been on the farmers in the area of Agua Buena, Costa Rica, who are able to mail their coffee directly to consumers in the U.S. In 2004, a group of 50 farm families formed a new co-operative, *CoopePueblos*, after their large regional co-operative collapsed due to the coffee crisis and mismanagement. This new co-operative is committed to sustainable practices and has been able to return a higher price to its members than other co-operatives in the region because of increased revenue from the direct market. The co-operative works closely with CAN in planning marketing strategies and educating consumers. Through the direct marketing partnership, farmers gain knowledge of consumer demands and how they can meet them, develop long-term relationships with students and consumers, and take pride in the quality of their coffee and their capacity to deliver it. The economic benefits of their efforts are felt beyond the farm since all of the value-added costs remain in the country of origin.

For consumers, this model allows coffee drinkers to engage in alternative trade networks. Consumers in the network know where their coffee comes from and have the opportunity to become more engaged with farmers. When harvesting their coffee, a farmer knows it is going to someone who is aware of its quality. In the words of a *CoopePueblos* farmer, "I want to sell my coffee to special clients who value that we produce sustainably."

In conclusion, it is important to ask whether this alternative model can grow to sell more of the co-operatives' coffee. All CAN partners would like to increase their sales volumes, and, of course, there are many other communities that could potentially benefit from this network. Over the next year, the potential of working with socially responsible coffee companies will be examined to offer a conservation-based brand that is connected to research on enhanced biodiversity and improved livelihoods. One day we hope to see this model expand into collaborations with other groups, other producing communities, and other products. Products that are currently sold under other Fairtrade models, like cocoa and tea, and many other speciality products produced in the tropical regions, could easily be brought into the "global farmers' market." ■

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Communication technologies support trade in Africa

Andreas Mandler

Trading agricultural commodities on rural markets in Africa is usually a personal affair. Small scale farmers generally know their clients very well, but they produce limited quantities, and have few alternative trading opportunities. In this traditional and static setting it is difficult to generate extra profits or to handle the fluctuation of prices. Smallholder markets in remote rural areas are neither competitive nor transparent. This generally unfavourable situation is often accompanied by other factors, such as limited transport and communication, incomplete education or the lack of capital to invest, so it hardly stimulates agricultural innovation and development.

The recent and widespread diffusion of mobile phones in Africa has enormous potential to change this. How the spreading of mobile telephones will affect African rural areas has been the object of many discussions. The latest Information Economy Report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for example, sees a positive economic impact for all those involved in trade, including remote smallholder farmers. According to the report, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) contributes greatly to economic growth: "ICTs generate numerous innovations, thus increasing productivity through the creation of new products, services, and processes". What we are already observing is that mobile phones, in combination with other ICT devices, are in a good position to change trading patterns at local agricultural commodity markets.

The involvement of the private sector in telecommunications and similar activities in many countries has led to new FM radio stations, television, print media, internet providers and telecommunications companies. As the private sector is interested in investing in new technologies which could improve business volume, there are more and more initiatives being developed, and a broader spectrum of information and services is now emerging. Some of these initiatives are especially relevant for the agricultural sector. The most interesting case seems to be the internet supported market information systems, already operating in different regions in Africa. Although all of them provide agricultural market information, they are all structured differently. Some of these agricultural market information systems are currently in use in, for example, Benin (through ONASA - the National Food Security Support Office) and in Senegal (through the Manobi Development Foundation). Other initiatives work across countries, as is the case of "Trade at Hand", a project funded by the UN's International Trade Centre in Geneva, which operates in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique and Senegal. What follows presents some of these structures, showing how well organised and systematically utilised ICTs can work for the benefit of farmers, particularly in the process of collecting market information and distributing it.

Photo: TradeNet

By registering information, a "tradepoint" helps people without internet access get this information easily via mobile phones.

Collecting and providing information

TradeNet, operating since 2004, offers online data on about 600 markets in 17 African countries, seeing itself as a platform for doing business. All information –including offers and inquiries– can be passed on by SMS on mobile phones, and is also stored on TradeNet's website. On request, the website sends specific information back to the mobile phone – so far free of charge. Through the website, it is very easy to identify local market prices and sellers. Local correspondents upload market information with the intention to attract buyers. TradeNet additionally placed market representation "trade points", making it possible for people without internet to register. In this way, TradeNet collects a wide range of market information, which is then available to everyone online or to registered users via SMS. Requesting market information may be a bit more complicated, as the SMS must be written in a specific way so that the computer system can read it. Of course, the website makes all the information available quite rapidly; and sellers can also be contacted easily through the SMS service. In general, TradeNet seems to be more appropriate for wholesalers who tend to buy larger amounts. So far, TradeNet reports approximately 6000 registered business users, all of whom have to pay a fee for every completed business deal.

The Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange (KACE) collects and provides regional market information, but in contrast to TradeNet, it focuses explicitly on the pro-poor effects of these processes. Back in 1997, KACE started working by setting up a Market Information and Linkage System (MILS), which reports market prices on a daily basis. At the moment, this system is formed by 12 different market dependencies, of which four are franchised entities. Depending on the size of the market, these dependencies become a Market Resource Centre (MRC), additionally providing a broad range of extra services. Among these, transport brokerage, warehouse and storage services, weighting service, quality control (testing for grain moisture), commodity grading, provision of farm inputs (fertilizers, seed), of financial services (micro-finance) or of short term trade credit (e.g. for hiring transport to markets). Additionally, the MRCs help in the preparation of documents, and provide mobile phone and e-mail services to their clients.

While KACE is collecting this information, interested parties are able to obtain it through various channels. First of all, by being an active KACE member, it is possible to find it on its website. A second option is through its SMS service, which sends specific information on request. Another form is to exchange information and establish business linkages through an FM radio show called *Soko Hekawi* (referred to as the "supermarket on the air"), broadcast to listeners in western Kenya. Although *Soko Hekawi* is transmitted only once a week for one hour, it provides a genuine service to the rural population, reaching an estimated total of 5 million listeners. During the show, approved offers by the MRCs are promoted, and interested traders can phone in to bid. By doing so, transparent market prices are publicly available, helping farmers in their business calculations. At the same time, the show attracts advertisements from other enterprises.

Capacity building

Private activities seem to be the right way to foster regional small scale agricultural business. As the interest will most likely remain high, ICTs will further spread into rural areas, facilitating the development of new agricultural market information systems. The main problem, however, seems not to lie in the development of technologies. According to Adrian Mukhebi, KACE's chairman, its main difficulty is that there are not enough local entrepreneurs with the knowledge and capacity to develop and deliver the services in the remote areas where most farmers live. As a result, scaling up is a slow process, even though capacity building receives far more attention than the development of infrastructure.

Providing information in a targeted manner to a large group of persons, leads to positive results. But at the same time it has become clear that such a task has not only to build on infrastructure and techniques, but capacities. Capacity is needed to handle ICTs as communication devices, and not just as top-down instruments. As the case of agricultural market information systems in different countries show, it is of crucial importance that farmers contribute to such a project with their knowledge. Without the input from farmers in the form of local market information, the whole system would not work. KACE perhaps anticipated this and, from the very beginning, established local representatives at the marketplaces. They carry out key functions without necessarily being online. Its outreach to rural people takes place on different communication channels.

The Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative, or BROSDI, underpins the social dimensions of rural productivity. This Ugandan organisation is helping to raise rural communities' standards of living in a sustainable manner through information and knowledge exchange. It is a not-for-profit initiative with regional roots. In addition to sending out consultants on assignments, organising public events and producing radio programmes, it is providing an extensive online service, disseminating the same information via several channels. BROSDI uses many different internet-based formats such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and RSS feeds (as part of what is now know as Web 2.0 appliances) to spread information on topics such as agriculture, health and education. BROSDI reaches a large share of its rural clientele through SMS on mobile phones. But more traditional communication means are also used to disseminate information, such as radio, publications, music, dance and drama. An important stake in their work remains the personal interaction with rural clients.

BROSDI's agricultural extension branch, CELAC, undertakes an extensive workshop programme in the field. The results of these workshops, or "knowledge sharing forums", are numerous. One of the most important results is the identification of a village representative, who henceforth becomes the "Village Knowledge Broker". Such a person needs to be sociable and willing to share knowledge, must be living in the rural area, should be a farmer, and should preferably be a woman. There are, of course, many city dwellers (like traders or consumers) who matter quite a bit to rural development. For any future development, such a Village Knowledge Broker can ideally play a very positive role. BROSDI is banking on Uganda's phone network spreading similarly quickly into rural areas in the future as it did in urban settings in the recent past. This would stimulate local communication in general and local agricultural markets would gain greater trade opportunities.

In conclusion, these examples indicate that even if a communication infrastructure and useful agricultural market information are available, some mediation is still necessary to support rural people in adapting this information. That is, finding and using locally appropriate channels through which to communicate, and supporting personal capacity building processes. Ideally, everything grows together: the infrastructure, the available information and the capacity of people. With the help of some training, farmers are in a good position to start the market transition on their own.

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Additional information:
- **ONASA**, ***Office National d´Appui á la Sécurité Alimentaire***. 06 B.P. 2544, Cotonou, Benin, http://www.onasa.org
- **Manobi Development Foundation**. Amitié II, BP 25026, Dakar Fann, Senegal, http://www.manobi.sn
- **Trade at Hand**. c/o International Trade Centre (ITC), Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10 – Switzerland, http://www.intracen.org/trade-at-hand
- **Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange**, **KACE**. Brick Court 2nd Floor, Mpaka Road, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya, http://www.kacekenya.com
- **Busoga Rural Open Source and Development Initiative**, **BROSDI**. Plot 22, Bukoto Street, Kampala, Uganda, http://www.brosdi.or.ug
- **TradeNet**, http://www.tradenet.biz


Photo: Henk Kloen

The June 2007 "strawberry celebration", encouraging children to get closer to nature.

Community Supported Agriculture: An alternative local food system

Petra van de Kop, Klaas Nijhof, Henk Kloen and Arnoud Braun

In a situation of growing globalisation of food systems, questions are increasingly being raised about the integrity of our food supply, the impact of its production on the environment and animal welfare, and the fairness of trade between consumers and workers along the food chain. These consumer concerns have led to a growing international market for fairly traded and organic products, and also to local initiatives where consumers buy directly from producers. Around the world, small-scale farmers are diversifying their production and income as a response to the changes in the world's food systems. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a marketing approach that encourages local, environmentally sustainable food production.

The CSA concept originated in the 1960s in Switzerland and Japan, where consumers interested in "safe" food joined up with farmers who were seeking stable markets for their crops. In Japan, CSA is called *teikei* which translates as "putting the farmer's face on food". CSA is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm (producer) and a community of supporters (consumers). The partnership provides a direct economic and social link between the production and consumption of food. CSA can take many forms, but the essence is that CSA members make a commitment to the producer to support the farm throughout the growing season, by purchasing a share of the season's harvest – up front. The farm provides, to the best of its ability, a supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season. In return, the farm is guaranteed a reliable market for a diverse selection of crops, and the farmer receives a guaranteed yearly income. One of the key differences between CSA and the industrial food system is that the risks of production are shared equally between the people who benefit. A growing number of CSAs have developed in Europe and North America, particularly since the early 1990s.

The experience of *De Nieuwe Ronde*

In the Netherlands, there are over 100 CSA initiatives, about 80 percent of which are organic farms. *De Nieuwe Ronde* (meaning "The New Circle") is a CSA farm located in Wageningen, in the centre of the Netherlands. This initiative started in 1998 and has grown to a farm serving 150 households (approximately 220 adults) on 1.5 hectares of land. The CSA business model consists of a producer and an association of members (consumers).
The basic aim of *De Nieuwe Ronde* is to use the farmland in a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable manner (also known as the "3Ps" – people, planet and profit).

Social farming

Members have different motives for joining *De Nieuwe Ronde*, ranging from product quality (organic, fresh, good taste), not having time or energy to garden themselves, desiring a nice and inspiring environment, wanting a closer link with food production, or simply because they want to support a more sustainable food system. Although the farmland belongs to the producer, the members perceive it as "their land".
It is a place where members can harvest, meet, relax and sometimes assist with farming activities. A website and a monthly digital newsletter informs members about social (e.g.

harvest celebration, flower arranging or cooking workshops) and farming activities, including availability of vegetables to be harvested. Members can also assist with various jobs on the farm, such as weeding and jam preparation. In general, members appreciate the initiative and about one third is actively involved in the association (see Box).

Environmental farming
The farm is organically certified according to the standards of the Dutch certification company, SKAL. Members, however, wanted to go beyond the SKAL standards and *De Nieuwe Ronde* uses a wider crop rotation to prevent crop diseases. Also, certain landscape elements such as hedges and border strips of shrubs have been placed in order to increase its environmental value and biodiversity, a system that has also been described in an earlier article in the *LEISA Magazine* (Vol. 22 No.4, December 2006). The farmland also offers a place for members' children to discover and learn about the crops.

Economic farming
Members pay a fixed annual membership fee that covers all farming costs as well as the producer's salary. In return for this fee, members can harvest a pre-defined share of vegetables, fruit, potatoes and flowers during the growing season. If there is surplus harvest, it is processed by the association and sold to third parties for income generation. The members of the association share the risks of crop failure equally: if production of a certain crop is lower than expected, each person harvests less. On the other hand, they also benefit if there is more to harvest when production is higher than expected. Every year an annual report is prepared that reports about the "3Ps", and the producer shares his financial report with members at their annual meeting. In this meeting the producer and members also jointly agree on the cropping plan and level of the membership fee for the next year.

Main lessons learnt

De Nieuwe Ronde is a successful example of a CSA marketing relationship. One of its important characteristics is that the producer (along with a group of supporters) started the farm without any external financial support. They were simply motivated people who managed to realise their ambitions independently, though the producer took the financial risk for the initial investments. Ideally, this risk should be shared with the association, but the bond of trust needed time to grow first. Values such as integrity, trust, responsibility, collaboration and openness have been crucial to its success. Besides time, intensive communication (formal and informal) between the producer and consumers is needed, to develop trust and shared values. Once established, the bond proved to be strong enough for sustainable co-operation between producer and members, but also amongst the members themselves. Experience shows that, over time, a clear and shared vision has evolved. As the association has become a network of people with very different assets, their knowledge, thinking power and financial means can be mobilised to overcome new challenges. For instance, the association convinced local authorities to offer additional farmland, and members themselves proposed to increase the membership fee to enable the producer to get a reasonable income.

Besides the positive contribution of consumer involvement, a CSA set-up creates new demands on producers. They must invest much more time into communicating with consumers and must also give up some control and autonomy. They must accept people coming to their farm at various times, and doing things differently from themselves. These issues reflect a considerable psychological barrier for many farmers. The farmer is, nevertheless, always free to express some limits, for instance by closing off part of the farm, or for part of the day, or to restrict the types of jobs undertaken by members.

De Nieuwe Ronde is just one example of a CSA initiative that developed in a particular situation. Community Supported Agriculture exists in many different forms, and variations on this theme are developing around the world. For example, consumers can receive a weekly bag of food products rather than harvesting themselves; farmers can serve one group of consumers together to offer an even wider range of food products; consumers can pay farm investments in return for several years' harvest; or consumers can "adopt" a fruit tree (getting fruit in return) or a cow (and visit the farm at times).

Relevance for small-scale agriculture in middle and low-income countries

Locally-based food markets are also developing in middle and low income countries, in response to changes in society. Smallholders, on the one hand, are increasingly confronted with a rapid spread of dynamic modern retailers, wholesalers and food processors in their countries. This imposes serious challenges on them, because they are required to produce consistent, high quality supplies in required volumes, while complying with new safety, environmental and social standards. On the other hand, many developing countries also have

Division of tasks and responsibilities between producer and association

Producer	Association	Joint responsibility
• General farm management and cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers. • Striving for a slight overproduction to compensate for failing harvests and for greater environmental value • Informing association members about harvestable crops • Providing sufficient labour for management of farmland • Providing and maintaining suitable farm equipment • Purchasing sustainable production inputs • Farm administration	• Harvesting crops that are indicated as harvestable by the producer, using appropriate harvesting methods • Helping with farming activities if necessary (e.g. weeding, processing) • Monitoring farm use when producer is absent • Activities such as production of newsletter, website management, organisation of social activities, processing of surplus harvest • Ensuring that all members of the association pay their membership fee	• Developing cultivation plan, once the producer makes a proposal and determines the "boundary conditions" • Fixing the level of the membership fee; the board of the association makes a first proposal • Determining the short term and long term farm strategy • External communications (field days, seminars, workshops and publications)

emerging middle classes in the bigger cities that have become concerned about the quality of their food. This can offer opportunities for small scale agricultural producers, especially those close to urban centres. In Vietnam for instance, there is a growing group of concerned urban consumers that is willing to pay a higher price for "safe" (pesticide-free) vegetables.

While rural people are more likely to be able to grow a small patch of vegetables for their own consumption, this option is often not available for many urban consumers. CSA has the potential to play a role in spatial planning. It may help to keep green areas close to or even within urban centres, offering a counterweight against expanding cities.

New initiatives have appeared globally in various forms, in which farmers and consumers have jointly developed food systems that are tailored to the local possibilities and needs of both sides. In Mexico, the "Circle of Responsible Production" brings together organic farmers and consumers in Jalisco state. The Circle was formed during the mid-nineties and brings together producers, consumers and promoters that share common goals about achieving food security, environmental justice and the provision of healthy food. In this initiative, promoters organise meetings to bring producers and consumers together to learn more about each others' experiences and concerns. Environmental educators also support the Circle by organising radio programmes, presentations and workshops that discuss the negative effects of agro-chemicals on human health and the environments. In Brazil, at the Serra Grande plateau in the state of Ceará, another CSA initiative started in 1997. A growing number of organic farmers in the area wanted to create market outlets for their produce while there was an interest by consumers to access organically produced food. Meetings were held to discuss the costs of producing food, and the availability of vegetables throughout the season. As a result, consumers pay an agreed monthly membership fee and can either access a "free choice" or a weekly box with ten different varieties of organic vegetables. In 2002, the project fed 450 consumers with produce supplied by four vegetable and fruit smallholders and three poultry and milk producers. The initiative has given the consumers access to organically produced food at lower prices than available through conventional retailers, while also enabling producers to receive a guaranteed income double that of the regional average.


Photo: Marianne van der Peijl

Farmer Klaas Nijhof taking care of his crops at *De Nieuwe Ronde*.

In conclusion, CSA experiences show how rising concerns of urban consumers can lead to co-operation with farmers, restoring the balance between rural areas and urban areas, between global and local food chains, and intensive and small scale food production.

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Call for articles

Empowerment and social inclusion

September 2008, Vol. 24.3

In all societies inequalities exist, due to gender, age, religion, cultural or caste affiliation, low education or income, unemployment, diseases, disabilities, migration, or geographic location, to name a few. Stigmas and social limitations result in social exclusion; that is, marginalisation and powerlessness within the wider society. This status not only keeps excluded people poor and powerless, but it also affects feelings of self-respect and confidence.

While some developments in conventional agriculture may exacerbate inequalities, low external input sustainable agriculture provides opportunities to lessen these differences. This issue of the *LEISA Magazine* is seeking examples in which socially excluded people have overcome such barriers. For example when a marginalised group acts to improve their life; when a group of farmers join hands and gain access to land, water, or a market; or when a stigmatised cultural group finds its way to a better status through agrotourism or marketing of handicrafts or food.

Social inclusion efforts open previously closed doors. They come from government, NGOs, businesses or community leaders. For example, in programmes in which orphans, widows, or ethnic groups increase their skills in agricultural activities, thereby improving their livelihoods and status in a community. Or, the government may change rules to provide particular groups of people access to markets, land or education.

We are looking for stories that highlight local initiatives as well as externally driven mechanisms. What opportunities are there in small-scale agriculture, and how can marginalised groups realise them? What difficulties are faced, and what lessons have been drawn from experiences so far?

Deadline for submission of articles is 1 June 2008.

Annual fair brings farmers and consumers together

Oluwagbemiga A. Dada

Mr. Babafemi is a small scale farmer living in a village close to Ibadan, Nigeria's largest city. He cultivates cocoa, yam and fruit, and on the rest of his land he raises livestock. He would like to increase the number of animals he keeps, as he has been unable to meet the local demand, especially during festivals such as Christmas, Easter and *Sallah*. Moreover, by keeping livestock he always has a supply of organic manure. Increasing the number of animals, however, is not easy. As in many farming communities, middlemen buy the local goods and transport them to the market to sell at a higher price. As a result, they frequently earn more than the producers. By selling to middlemen, Mr. Babafemi was only able to make enough profit to continue, but not to improve or enlarge his farming enterprise.

The national government is currently encouraging farmers to sell their products themselves. The main objective is for farmers to get a better price, and also to bridge the gap between the farmers and consumers. To this end, different methods have been tried to establish direct partnerships between farmers and consumers. One of these is through the organic fair that takes place in Ibadan once a year. Many small scale farmers from the neighbouring villages took part in the latest fair, showing and selling many different organic products. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) also took part in it, displaying many of their research results. A similar fair has been held in Lagos for the last 25 or so years.

Initial hesitance, many benefits

Mr. Babafemi and his neighbours had never heard of the fair, nor of the idea or opportunities of fairer trade. They got to know about it through an extension agent who came to their community for a research study. He informed them about the organic fair that was to take place in the nearby city, but found it difficult to convince them to participate. Mr. Babafemi and his neighbours suspected that this was one of the many ways the government tries to control and tax production and trade. At first they did not see that it was a real opportunity for bridging the gap between consumers and producers and that they might benefit.

Nevertheless, Mr. Babafemi was finally convinced and did participate in the fair in Ibadan. It turned out to be an illuminating experience. The benefits were evident: the income from the sales of his produce increased considerably. He was surprised to see that, by selling his organic produce directly to the consumers, he made ten times the profit he used to make. He was also surprised at the ease with which all his products were sold. He realised that coming into contact with the end-users of his products is of great importance, as they tell him what they want and how much they want. It was thus possible to estimate the exact quantity to be supplied at any given time.

Challenges

There are many challenges for small scale farmers who want to participate in fairs like the one in Ibadan. Firstly, the long period of time between the fairs – it is not a weekly or monthly activity, but only takes place once a year. This is an important factor to consider, as it does not add continuity to the farmer's income. The income generated is not sustainable, even though production goes on the whole year round.

Another important issue is accessibility. The distance they have to travel poses a challenge to all farmers, as they do not reside in the city. This demands time and resources for transportation of both their products and themselves.

Meeting the market demand is also an issue of great significance. It is mostly consumers who determine when such a fair is organised, and how it should be set up. This has generated an interesting debate among different farmers' organisations, in trying to find ways to meet consumer demand in terms of quantity. One tactic has been to make a careful survey of needs and based on that to estimate the quantity of different products demanded by the consumers. They can then decide amongst themselves the total quantity to be produced and transported to the market, considering each farmer's production capacity. After two years, Mr. Babafemi is proud to say that this method has had an estimated 80 percent efficiency.

Photo: Marcella Castro

All produce is screened before it is sold at the fair.

Without any fear of contradiction we can conclude that this type of direct (and fairer) trade is one avenue for improving the livelihoods of our rural farmers. It exposes them to the benefits and disadvantages of marketing, and helps them become active stakeholders in the agricultural sector. It is expected that the government will increase its support, and make it easier for even less privileged farmers to participate. ■

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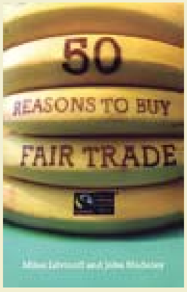
50 reasons to buy fair trade by Miles Litvinoff and John Madeley, 2007. ISBN 978-0-7453-2584-2. Pluto Press, 345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA, U.K., and 839 Greene Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, U.S.A. E-mail: simon@plutobooks.com ; http://www.plutobooks.com

This book invites consumers to make simple choices in the way they shop, opt for fair trade products, and thus help disadvantaged farmers and workers get a better deal from trade, help end exploitative child labour, and persuade companies and governments change the way they do business. It presents fair trade as the "success story of our time", with an increasing number of fairly traded products available in an increasing number of places, in a way that "everybody can be part of the fair trade revolution". Consumers can make a difference by backing a system that benefits the poor, paying a fairer price, helping rebuild lives and livelihoods, or by 47 other reasons.

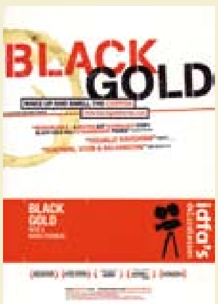


Slow trade - sound farming: A multilateral framework for sustainable markets in agriculture by Wolfgang Sachs and Tilman Santarius, 2007. ISBN 978-3-88916-271-7 MISEREOR and Heinrich Böll Foundation, Mozartstr. 9, D-52064 Aachen, Germany. Downloadable as a PDF file from http://www.ecofair-trade.org

This report is one of the results of the EcoFair Trade Dialogue, a project carried out with the objective of enriching and influencing the debate on the reform of the current multilateral regime of international agricultural trade. It is presented as the project's contribution to the global efforts in developing new and innovative solutions towards a more just and sustainable global society. The dialogue was conducted through regional consultations in Africa, Asia, Latin and North America, and Europe. Participants included representatives of farmers' organisations and NGOs, as well as ministries, representatives of many countries' parliaments, the scientific community and international organisations. The project is to continue organising conferences and seminars to make the reform proposals widely known.

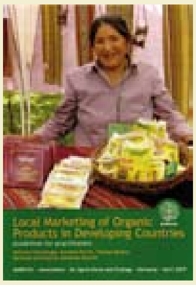
Black gold: Wake up and smell the coffee (DVD, 88 min.) by Nick Francis and Marc Francis, 2006. Speak-it Films / Fulcrum Productions. E-mail: distribution@blackgoldmovie.com ; http://www.blackgoldmovie.com

This award-winning documentary gives a compelling look at the multi-billion dollar coffee industry. *Black Gold* follows Tadesse Meskela, leader from Ethiopia's Oromia Coffee Farmers' Co-operative Union, as he visits producers, auctions, trade fairs and western supermarkets, following the coffee cherry from the tree to the cup, while tirelessly campaigning for a fair price for his producers. The film highlights the plight of underpaid coffee growers in Ethiopia and the effect this has in their communities. It provides stark contrasts between the origin of coffee and the blissfully ignorant consumers in the developed world. The film also enters into the mechanics of the global market as a whole and its unfair governance, and includes footage from a World Trade Organisation meeting in which leaders of developing countries try to get behind closed doors to have their say in setting trade rules.



Business unusual: Successes and challenges of fair trade by Anja Osterhaus (ed.), 2006. ISBN 978-90-902092-6-3. Fair Trade Advocacy Office, Rue du Commerce 124, B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium. E-mail: info@fairtrade-advocacy.org ; http://www.fairtrade-advocacy.org

Fair Trade is presented as a successful global movement, involving more and more farmers and producers, and with sales growing spectacularly all over the world. This book explores the reasons behind success, and also the challenges emerging nowadays. The first chapters of the book cover the general issues regarding fair trade, looking at producers, consumers and private companies. The second part focuses on specific products, serving as examples: handicrafts, coffee, rice, and cotton and textiles. By showing that fair trading is possible, the authors want to encourage all business actors to apply similar principles, while simultaneously aiming at changes in the policies regulating world trade.



Local marketing of organic products in developing countries: Guidelines for practitioners by Felicitas Flörchinger, Annette Bern, Thomas Becker, Berthold Schrimpf and Johannes Kotschi (eds), 2007. AGRECOL, Rohnsweg 56, 37085 Göttingen, Germany. E-mail: info@agrecol.de ; http://www.agrecol.de

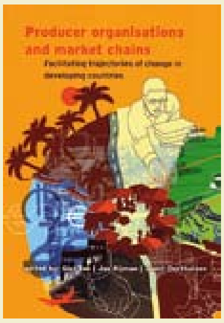
This manual looks at the most important issues to be considered when trying to develop or improve the marketing of organic agricultural products. Written for farmer groups, NGOs involved in the promotion of local marketing, governmental organisations or processors and traders, it provides a hands-on guide for helping farm families develop and improve their marketing efforts, with a special focus on organic products (where "organic" does not only refer to certified products, but to all those referred to as such by the local group). Its different chapters look at the basics of marketing, such as planning, pricing or the promotion of specific products.

Developing markets for agrobiodiversity: Securing livelihoods in dryland areas by Alessandra Giuliani, 2007. ISBN 978-1-84407-468-6. Bioversity International / Earthscan, 8-12 Camden High Street, London NW1 0JH, U.K. E-mail: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk ; http://www.earthscan.co.uk

This book presents the results of a pilot study conducted in dryland agrobiodiversity environments in Syria, carried out with the objective of contributing to a better understanding of livelihood options and use of underutilised plant species. Looking at how communities are developing markets for local products derived from these species, this study showed the potential of biodiversity to make a significant contribution to livelihood security. The cases selected (figs, jujube, laurel, capers and others) confirmed the importance of strengthening the marketing options in order to support the strategies of rural households and conserve the species *in situ*.

Breaking into mainstream food markets in the U.K.: Accessing first world food markets, information for third world entrepreneurs (CD-ROM), 2003. Tropical Wholefoods, Fullwell Mill Ltd., Unit 5d, Southwick Industrial Estate, North Hylton Rd., Sunderland SR5 3TX, U.K. E-mail: karen@fullwellmill.co.uk ; http://www.tropicalwholefoods.com

Based on real-life experiences, this CD-ROM looks at all the key aspects related to food marketing in the United Kingdom, aiming to assist those working in the food sector in the developing world look in a more analytical way at the steps required for accessing mainstream markets. It presents the relevant legislation, looks at the process of setting up a business on the basis of practical experiences, and does a market analysis for many products. Although it is specifically about developing products for U.K. mainstream markets, the lessons are just as applicable to businesses developing products for smaller, regional or local markets in the developing world.



Producer organisations and market chains: Facilitating trajectories of change in developing countries by Giel Ton, Jos Bijman and Joost Oorthuizen (eds.), 2007. ISBN 978-90-8686-048-7. Wageningen Academic Publishers, P.O. Box 220, 6700 AE Wageningen, the Netherlands. E-mail: info@wageningenacademic.com ; http://www.wageningenacademic.com

The different chapters which make up this book show how local, regional and international market chains are developing rapidly around the world. As the demands on producers increase, small scale farmers run the risk of being marginalised. Considering that strong producer organisations can play an important role in the economic development of rural areas, this book presents various approaches to support them. The book's second section looks at the development of value chains with producer organisations, with "fair trade" as a specific form of value chain. The third section looks at the institutional environment, as one which may facilitate or make producer organisations work more efficiently.

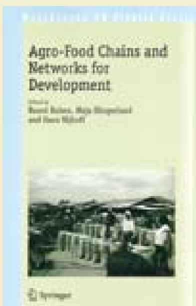
Organic cotton: An opportunity for trade by Peter Ton, 2007. ITC Technical Paper No. MDS-07.121.E, International Trade Center UNCTAD / WTO, ITC, Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: peterton@xs4all.nl ; will soon be downloadable from the ITC website, http://www.intracen.org

This document analyses the global market for organic cotton fibre, textiles and clothing. It gives a definition of organic and fair trade cotton; provides detailed figures for organic cotton production, trade and consumption, and presents the geographic markets for organic cotton fibre and textiles. It also describes the involvement of many large brands and retailers, reviewing organic cotton markets in the United States, Switzerland, Germany, United Kingdom, and France. It furthermore provides a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the organic cotton market worldwide, and includes recommendations and a bibliography.

Exploring fair trade timber: A review of issues in current practice, institutional structures and ways forward by Duncan Macqueen, Annie Dufey and Bindi Patel, 2007. ISBN 978-1-84369-630-8. IIED Small and Medium Forestry Enterprise Series No. 19. Natural Resource Group, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 4 Hanover Street, Edinburgh EH2 2EN, U.K. Downloadable as a PDF file from http://www.iied.org

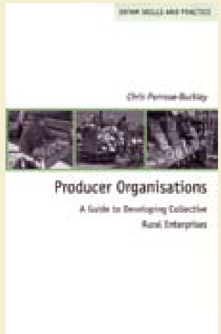
This paper explores the options for making progress towards fair trade timber. Both fair trade and forest certification are undergoing rapid market expansion – but this does not include community timber production. This paper gives a background to fair trade in agriculture and examines the implications of this for timber. Included are some examples of organised community timber producers who are taking advantage of their community status to secure better deals for their products. There is a pressing need to pilot and scale up mechanisms that deliver greater benefits to communities. To this end, an alliance of institutions interested in promoting fair trade timber is beginning to form. This report outlines some of the options available for building on current efforts and ensuring that the producer communities benefit.

The agro-food chains and networks for development by Ruerd Ruben, Maja Slingerland and Hans Nijhoff, 2006. ISBN 978-1-4020-4600-1. Wageningen UR Frontis Series, Volume 14. Springer, P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, the Netherlands. Downloadable as a PDF file from http://library.wur.nl/frontis



Agro-food chains and networks play an increasingly important role in providing access to markets for producers from developing countries. This was clear from the cases presented at the Frontis Workshop on Agro-Food Chains and Networks for Development, held in Wageningen, the Netherlands, in September 2004. Together with an analytical framework for analysis, the proceedings of this workshop present these cases, as examples from different parts of the world. The development and integration of agro-food chains is shown in examples from Peru (banana), Nigeria (cassava) and other countries. Business cases are also included, such as those built around fresh fruits and vegetables in Thailand or around medicinal plants in India. The last three chapters look at the main lessons and challenges needed to be tackled.

Producer organisations: A guide to developing collective rural enterprises by Chris Penrose-Buckley, 2007. ISBN 978-085598-575-2. Oxfam Skills and Practice Series, Oxfam GB. Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, U.K. E-mail: publish@oxfam.org.uk ; http://www.oxfam.org.uk



Small scale producers have to compete with large commercial producers, while state support services have been cut back, markets are volatile, and buyers demand high quality and safety standards. This book looks at the most important strategy that these producers can adopt in order to access, compete, and influence markets: collective action in the form of producer organisations (POs). These are farmer co-operatives, associations or informal groups; all of them having the possibility of influencing policy decisions, competing in the market, and providing the services their members require. The purpose of this book is to provide practical guidance for the staff of development NGOs involved in supporting POs, using ten case studies from around the world. It avoids unnecessary jargon; technical terms are explained in the text or in the glossary.

Forthcoming

Creating food futures: Trade, ethics and the environment by Cathy R. Farnworth, Janice Jiggins and Emyr Thomas, 2008. ISBN 978-0-7546-4907-6. Gower Publishing, Gower House, Croft Road Aldershot, GU11 3HR Hampshire, U.K. E-mail: mwest@gowerpublishing.com

This book considers how people trade, process and purchase the food they eat. It draws on examples and evidence throughout the world that indicate that a global transformation in food supply and consumption is taking place which is putting our food security at risk. The authors ask whether there is scope for creating food futures that explicitly favour considerations beyond those of commerce and consumption.

Fair Trade Advocacy Office

http://www.fairtrade-advocacy.org

Rue du Commerce, 124, B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium
E-mail: info@fairtrade-advocacy.org

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office speaks out for fair trade and trade justice with the aim to improve trading conditions for the benefit of small and marginalised producers and poor workers in developing countries. The office coordinates the advocacy activities of the four main fair trade networks: Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO), International Fair Trade Association (IFAT), Network of European Worldshops (NEWS!) and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA). The website provides links to various publications, and there is a monthly newsletter you can sign up to.

FLO International

http://www.fairtrade.net

Bonner Talweg 177, 53129 Bonn, Germany
E-mail: info@fairtrade.net

Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) is an umbrella organisation that unites 20 labelling initiatives in 21 countries and producer networks representing Fairtrade Certified Producer Organisations in Latin America, Africa and Asia. FLO is part of a worldwide network of fair trade organisations actively involved in supporting producers, awareness raising and campaigning for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade. It is the leading standard setting and certification organisation for labelled Fair Trade products. Currently, FLO facilitates the sustainable development and empowerment of disadvantaged producers and workers in 59 countries, helping them build necessary social infrastructure with improved access to low or no-interest loans, technical assistance, communications systems, or through better health care and education programmes. Their website presents many stories from the field, showing the impact and difference which fair trade has made. It is also possible to subscribe to the FLO Newsletter.

Organic Link - International Trade Centre

http://www.intracen.org/organics

ITC, Rue de Montbrillant, 54-56, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint technical co-operation agency of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). ITC aims to contribute to the UN's Millennium Development Goals, specifically to the goals relating to fostering global partnership for development, reducing poverty, promoting gender equality and ensuring environmental sustainability. Organic Link is a web portal serving the organic business communities. This website helps exporters and importers of organic products to find each other through an easy-to-access database of business contacts. It also contains useful information about organic products and markets, with detailed data from selected countries.

The International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance

http://www.isealalliance.org

Unit 1 Huguenot Place, 17a Heneage St, London E1 5LJ, U.K.

The growing number of voluntary standards and labels makes it difficult to differentiate credible standards from other claims. The ISEAL Alliance aims to address this by creating the tools necessary to improve how voluntary standards are set and to evaluate the credibility of these initiatives. The ISEAL Alliance is an association of leading voluntary international standard-setting and conformity assessment organisations that focus on social and environmental issues. ISEAL members represent standards and conformity assessment systems in sectors ranging from forestry and agriculture to fisheries, manufacturing and textiles. Working together, ISEAL members represent a holistic movement that has the potential to change the way the world does business.

International Fair Trade Association, IFAT

http://www.ifat.org

Prijssestraat 24, 4101 CR Culemborg, the Netherlands

IFAT has developed the Fair Trade Organisation (FTO) mark that identifies organisations whose core activity is fair trade. IFAT's mission is to enable producers to improve their livelihoods and communities through fair trade. It has three main areas of work: market development, fair trade monitoring (building trust in fair trade), and advocacy. IFAT is made up of three main groups: its members (in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, North America and the Pacific Rim), the Board of Directors, and the IFAT Secretariat. Members in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America have also joined together in IFAT regional chapters: Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa (COFTA), Asia Fair Trade Forum Inc. (AFTF), IFAT Europe and IFAT-LA in Latin America.

International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, ICTSD

http://www.ictsd.org

ICTSD, International Environment House 2, Chemin de Balexert 7, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) was established in Geneva in September 1996 to contribute to a better understanding of development and environment concerns in the context of international trade. As an independent non-profit and non-governmental organisation, ICTSD engages a broad range of actors in ongoing dialogue, and facilitates the interaction between policy makers and those outside the system to help trade policy become more supportive of sustainable development. By helping parties increase capacity and become better informed about each other, ICTSD builds bridges between groups with seemingly unrelated agendas. It seeks to enable these actors to discover the many places where their interests and priorities coincide. One of ICTSD's publications, available online, is the *Bridges Monthly Review*, which provides information and analysis on the interface between trade and sustainable development (in English, Spanish and Portuguese).

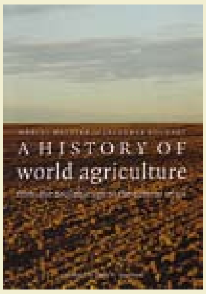
The BioTrade Initiative

http://www.biotrade.org

Trade and Environment Branch, UNCTAD. Palais des Nations, Building E, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: biotrade@unctad.org

UNCTAD, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, launched the BioTrade Initiative in 1996 during the third Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its mission is to stimulate trade and investment in biological resources to further sustainable development in line with the three objectives of the CBD: the conservation of biological diversity; sustainable use of its components; and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources. Since 2003, the BioTrade Initiative has also hosted the BioTrade Facilitation Programme (BTFP), which focuses on enhancing sustainable bio-resources management, product development, value adding processing and marketing.

NEW BOOKS

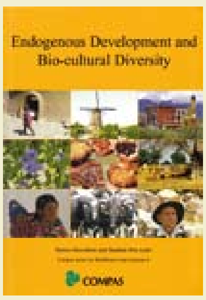


A history of world agriculture: From the neolithic age to the current crisis by Marcel Mazoyer and Laurence Roudart, 2006. ISBN 978-184407-399-3. Earthscan, 8-12 Camden High Street, London NW1 0JH, U.K. E-mail: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk ; http://www.earthscan.co.uk
This book considers the different agricultural systems that form "humanity's agrarian heritage", looking at the slash and burn systems in forest environments, the Incas' terraced mountain system, or at the hydraulic systems in arid regions such as the Nile valley. Each is analysed in detail, leading to a chapter on industrial agriculture and the resulting global agricultural crisis. As the authors put it, their aim is to show how the safeguarding and development of the "ill-equipped and relatively unproductive agriculture of the poor", with their enormous wealth in knowledge and natural variety, can contribute to solving this crisis.

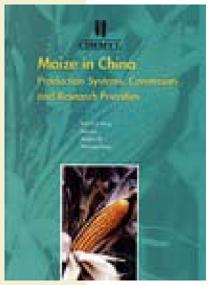
Springs of participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development by Karen Brock and Jethro Pettit (eds.), 2007. ISBN 978-853396-47-2. Practical Action Publishing, Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire CV23 9QZ, U.K. E-mail: publishinginfo@practicalaction.org.uk ; www.practicalactionpublishing.org
A group of practitioners of participatory methodologies, working in different parts of the world, came together in June 2005 to discuss and share their experiences in creating and adapting methods as part of their daily work. This book presents their reflections and analyses, put together with the aim of showing how academics and field level practitioners can learn to develop effective and sustainable working methods. The cases presented include, for example, the Reflect approach, as one that links literacy to empowerment, or the participatory village poverty reduction planning method; all of them illustrated by examples of their practical application. In each of them, the authors consider what enables and constrains creativity, adaptation, and innovation.

Village poultry in Ethiopia: Socio-technical analysis and learning with farmers by Aklilu Hailemichael Asgedom, 2007. ISBN 978-90-8504-679-0. Wageningen University, Technology and Agrarian Development Group. Hollandseweg 1, 6706 KN Wageningen, the Netherlands. E-mail: office.tad@wur.nl , http://www.tad.wur.nl
Village poultry contributes significantly to the livelihoods of poor households, providing an accessible source of proteins or serving as a means to recover from disasters. Improving poultry systems can bring even greater benefits, but to do so it is necessary to consider a large number of local complexities. This book, resulting from the author's Ph.D. research, shows that a combination of approaches and methods can help in getting a better understanding of the constraints affecting farmers' realities, leading to a more effective technology development process. The study confirms the fact that poultry research and development need to go beyond just finding technical solutions.

Endogenous development and bio-cultural diversity: The interplay of worldviews, globalization and locality by Bertus Haverkort and Stephan Rist (eds.), 2007. ISBN 978-90-77347-14-0. Compas series on worldviews and sciences, ETC/Compas, P.O. Box 64, 3830 AB Leusden, the Netherlands. E-mail: compas@etcnl.nl ; http://www.compasnet.org
Endogenous development is defined as "the sum of views, values and practices which marginalized social actors create from within". This book contains the papers that were presented at the International Conference on Endogenous Development and Bio-Cultural Diversity, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in October 2006, summarising the debates and discussions held. The book groups all papers in three sections: the first one focuses on the conceptual foundations of endogenous development and bio-cultural diversity. The second section shows concrete experiences of endogenous development in the contexts of Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, while the third section draws attention to the importance of a policy context, as one that either enables or hinders endogenous development.



Assessing and learning for social change: A discussion paper by Irene Guijt, 2007. Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, U.K. Also available as PDF file on http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/part/proj/socialchange.html
This document builds on the discussions and interactions held between a group of development professionals, grouped by their common "concern with the chasm between the need for reflective social change practice and the existing understanding and repertoire of approaches". Discussions were structured around four themes: understanding social change; the frameworks, concepts and methods used to ensure critical reflection; dealing with different actors in assessment and learning; and the issues of scale and interconnectedness. These themes provide the structure of this paper, ending with an agenda for action for donors, social change activists, and facilitators.



Maize in China: Production systems, constraints, and research priorities by Erika C.H. Meng, Ruifa Hu, Xiaohua Shi and Shihuang Zhang, 2006. ISBN 970-648-145-1. International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). Apdo. Postal 6-641, 06600 Mexico, D.F., Mexico. http://www.cimmyt.org
Focusing on the maize production environments in China, this report presents the results of a seven-country, three-year project, carried out to promote the sustainable intensification of maize production systems in upland environments in Asia. Among its objectives, this project wanted to collect detailed information on maize production systems by agroecological region, identify production constraints as well as production and consumption trends, and present recommendations for research and development and policy actions.

African agriculture and the World Bank: Development or impoverishment? by Kjell Havnevik, Deborah Bryceson, Lars-Erik Birgegard, Prosper Matondi and Atakilte Beyene (eds.), 2007. NAI Policy Dialogue series. The Nordic Africa Institute, P.O. Box 1703, SE-751 Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: nai@nai.uu.se ; http://www.nai.uu.se
Starting with an overview of African development policies over the last 25 years and considering the special role which the World Bank has had in shaping them since the oil crises of the 1970s, this paper presents a critical reflection of the World Development Report's portrayal of world agriculture with respect to Africa. The authors focus on the recommendations of the World Development Report 2008 and on the implications these would have for the survival of small scale farmers in this continent. On the basis of the authors' detailed analysis, the concluding section of this document presents measures to raise agricultural productivity and reduce rural poverty, invigorating, instead of marginalising, African family farming.

Readers' Survey 2007

Thank you for your time!

Who are you, why do you read the *LEISA Magazine* and to what extent do you like it? To be able to answer these questions, we sent you a questionnaire last March. Some 1100 readers from over sixty countries took the time to fill it out. We much appreciate the effort. Here is what you had to say.

The people who responded correspond very well to the *LEISA Magazine*'s general readership. More than a third of you are field workers, working directly with farmers, extending information and practical advice. The other readers are researchers (15 percent), administrators or decision makers (14 percent), teachers and lecturers (13 percent), and, not surprisingly, farmers (10 percent).

World-wide readership

Do you read every issue of the magazine, we asked? More than 70 percent of you say you do. For a quarter of you it depends on what the theme is. Almost all of you share the magazine with other readers, some with up to ten other people. On average every issue of the *LEISA Magazine* is read by five people. When we multiply the amount of subscribers to the *LEISA Magazine* by this number, the total readership comes to approximately 80 000 people, world-wide! The most popular part of the magazine is the Field Notes section, which relates a personal experience from the field. It is followed closely by the editorial, which many of you say you appreciate.

Use

Why read the *LEISA Magazine* at all? Because it has provided you with a better understanding of agriculture based on LEISA principles, 83 percent of you said. And because it keeps you up-to-date, and you enjoy reading about other peoples' experiences. You also use it for training purposes, and no less than one in every five of you actually take the time and effort to translate articles into your local language. Apparently it is not easy to find information about positive developments in small scale agriculture. The farmers among you say you find it encouraging to read about how people in other parts of the world face issues and find solutions. Almost half of you have tried out a new idea from the magazine. Many other reasons were given as to why you read the *LEISA Magazine*, such as that it stimulates discussion. One of the more remarkable ones was that 46 percent of you say it has made you more aware of gender issues. All together, 94 percent of you find the magazine relevant, of which 60 percent said it is "very relevant".

Suggestions

Several of you expressed a desire for more opportunities to meet each other, in order to exchange information. Can the *LEISA Magazine* not include a section that lists upcoming events, you asked? Unfortunately, that is a request that cannot easily be met.

Photo: Anita Ingevall

A reader from Guatemala discussing the Spanish edition of the LEISA magazine, *LEISA Revista de agroecología*, with one of the editors.

Such a list of events would have to cover all the regions where the *LEISA Magazine* is read, and would take up more space than we have. That is why we put this information on the website – where you can, by the way, add your own events or those that you would like to share.

One request we will definitely look into, is a better explanation of the terms and concepts used in the magazine. Just over half of you say you would like some extra background information. Some readers suggested a glossary of terms per issue, a suggestion that we think is highly usable. Several of you commented on the appearance of the magazine. As you can see in this issue, we are already taking up one of your suggestions, by publishing in full colour for the first time.

Did you not receive the survey and would still like to share your thoughts on the magazine? Don't wait until the next survey, but write us a note or send an e-mail (ileia@ileia.nl). We are always happy to hear what you think.

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