

What is Fair Trade?



Photo By: Cheryl Mrazik

The idea of fairness in trade is at least as old as our Christian faith. In fact, a good way to think about Fair Trade is to reflect on Jesus' life as a carpenter, when he worked alongside his adoptive father, Joseph, and before he began his public ministry. At its heart, Fair Trade is about building respectful, enduring relationships.

Fair Trade Is a Commitment to Building Relationships

We at CRS believe that Fair Trade embodies a comprehensive set of criteria, including, at a minimum, the following commitments:

- Paying a fair wage in the local context
- Offering employees opportunities for advancement
- Providing equal employment opportunities for all people, particularly the most disadvantaged
- Engaging in environmentally sustainable practices
- Being open to public accountability
- Building long-term trade relationships
- Providing healthy and safe working conditions within the local context
- Providing financial and technical assistance to producers whenever possible

These criteria were drawn from the [Fair Trade Federation](#), a trade association for Fair Trade businesses in the United States and Canada.

For more information about Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Fair Trade visit: www.crsfairtrade.org. To receive a free CRS fair Trade information packet visit: www.crsfairtrade.org/crafts or call 1-800-685-7572.



Fair Trade and Catholic Social Teaching

Dignity of Work

"The economy should serve people, not the other way around."
-U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

All the principles of fair trade embody this principle of Catholic social teaching. Fair trade promotes the dignity of workers by ensuring fair wages and by helping vulnerable producers maintain their livelihoods when traditional economic structures shut them out.

Community and Participation

"It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act."
-Pope Benedict XVI

People have a right and a duty to participate in society and to seek the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. When you buy fair trade products, you are participating in the economy in a morally just way.

Solidarity

"We are one human family...we are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. [This is] at the core of the virtue of solidarity."
-U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Fair trade means we recognize and respect the hard work that farmers and artisans do. By purchasing their coffee, chocolate and crafts, we stand in solidarity with them by supporting their economic livelihoods.

Dignity of the Human Person

"Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person."
-U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Human dignity comes directly from God. Fair trade recognizes this by creating economically just, long-term trading partnerships between diverse people from all over the world.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
- Matthew 25:40

Fair trade recognizes the dignity of the work performed by traditional artisans and farmers, and ensures that they are fairly compensated. When you choose fair trade products, you are exercising a preferential option for the poor.

Rights and Responsibilities

"If you want peace, work for justice."
-Pope Paul VI

Every person has basic rights that flow from our human dignity, and we all have the responsibility to respect the rights of others and to work for economic justice. Fair trade is a tangible way to respect the right to work of the poor and vulnerable.

Stewardship of God's Creation

"The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity."
-Pope Benedict XVI

Treating the environment with respect and ensuring that resources will be available for future generations is a core principle of fair trade. Fair trade means that we are good stewards of the planet by protecting both God's people and the planet through our economic choices.

Cut out and display Catholic Social Teaching principles at your Sale!
For more information visit: www.crsfairtrade.org/cst

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