



### News

Latest news  
UK & Ireland news  
World news  
Young people  
Arts & leisure  
Education  
Justice & peace  
Films  
Books  
Obituaries  
Blogs  
Letters  
Prayer Requests



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## Fairtrade: Its not just about tea and coffee

By: Barbara Kentish

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In Fairtrade Fortnight 2011, justice and peace groups around the UK are calling for greater commitment to the Fairtrade movement.

In this world recession, Fairtrade is more urgent than ever. The diocese of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission is working hard to persuade parishes to sign up to Fairtrade, to support trade justice as a way out of poverty. Here are some reasons to support Fairtrade, and some developments in the range of Fairtrade goods available. It's not just about tea and coffee!

Fairtrade shows that this can work if the conditions are right. Seven million disadvantaged producers, workers and their families are benefiting from Fairtrade, but they and millions more still remain at the mercy of unfair international trade rules. That's why we need to do more than buy Fairtrade products – we also need to campaign for trade justice.

'The fact that Fairtrade has allowed producers to transform their lives, also shows that the current system of trade is not working' says the Fairtrade Foundation, and explains:

- 'The price of coffee plummeted in recent years, not simply because of oversupply: oversupply was created when dozens of countries were forced to move into cash crops as a condition for loans from the World Bank.
- The price of sugar has hit rock bottom not simply because of an oversupply: oversupply was created by trade rules allowing huge subsidies to be provided to American sugar producers.
- Windward Island bananas has struggled to compete with dollar bananas from Latin America not because their production is too expensive but because production costs in Latin America have been pushed down through aggressive use of pesticides and exploitation of labour.'

At the Justice and Peace Commission, while we support fair trade through buying products with the FAIRTRADE Mark, we want to see our government, supporting fairer trade rules. The Fairtrade Foundation is a member of the Trade Justice Movement – a coalition of over 80 organisations campaigning for trade justice - not free trade - with the rules weighted to benefit poor people and the environment.

The Fairtrade Foundation launching Fairtrade Fortnight 2011 announced that sales of Fairtrade products soared by 40% in 2010 to an estimated retail value of £1.17bn compared with £836m in 2009. UK shoppers are continuing to embrace Fairtrade, showing no downturn on ethical values despite the tough economic times.

Figures released at the beginning of Fairtrade Fortnight by the Fairtrade Foundation reveal that every day in the UK, we are now consuming some 9.3 million cups of Fairtrade tea, 6.4 million cups of Fairtrade coffee, 2.3 million chocolate bars, 530,000 cups of Fairtrade drinking chocolate and 3.1 million Fairtrade bananas. New categories are also growing with over 1million cosmetic products using Fairtrade ingredients also being sold in 2010.

Gold is a further product to be added to the Fairtrade list of items.

World's oldest jeweller Garrard; pioneer ethical jeweller CRED and luxury bespoke jeweller Harriet Kelsall are among the first 20\* companies to launch the world's first Fairtrade and Fairmined certified gold, the Fairtrade Foundation and the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) announced on 14 February. Fabulous collections and one-off pieces including wedding and engagement rings, earrings and necklaces went on sale after Valentine's Day. Pieces are stamped with the FAIRTRADE Mark and Fairmined Mark, the stamp of reassurance that the miners are getting a better deal.

Green queen and Fairtrade ambassador Livia Firth said: "We associate gold with love and beauty but there is often nothing beautiful about the way that gold is produced. Tens of millions of small-scale gold miners risk their lives in often appalling conditions and get a raw deal for their strenuous efforts."

The launch of Fairtrade and Fairmined gold in the UK will provide a lifeline for thousands of impoverished small-scale and artisanal miners in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru who find themselves at the mercy of unfair markets. Many face exploitation from middle men who pay below market prices and cheat them on weight and purity of gold content.

If the Westminster, and other dioceses can commit to Fairtrade in their parishes, it can be a genuine witness for trade justice for developing countries, backing its already powerful contribution through CAFOD collections.