

# Fair Trade Coffee: The Time is Now

A RESOURCE AND ACTION GUIDE  
FOR STUDENT ORGANIZERS



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#### ON THE COVER

Marili Amador Diaz, a member of the FEDECARES Fair Trade coffee growers' cooperative in the Dominican Republic, hand picks ripe coffee cherries.

*Pedro Guzmán/Oxfam*

*Inset: www.roastyourrown.com*

#### ON THE BACK

Fair Trade revenues are often used to purchase mules for carrying coffee down steep mountainsides, so farmers do not have to carry it on their backs. PRODE-COOP, Nicaragua.

*Deborah Hirsh/TransFair USA*

## Dear Friend:

Thank you for your interest in promoting Fair Trade Certified coffee. As a campus Fair Trade activist, you are part of a growing movement of student and faith-based organizations, unions, and advocacy groups that are embracing Fair Trade as a positive, consumer-driven approach to economic justice and environmental sustainability.

In the conventional trading system, small-scale producers of coffee and other commodities receive only a tiny percentage of the final market value of their products. Fair Trade addresses this inequity by enabling producers to bypass middlemen and sell directly to international buyers at a fair price.

Millions of farmers and artisans throughout Latin America, Africa, and Asia have higher family incomes, a healthier environment and better community services as a result of their involvement in Fair Trade. In the coffee sector, more than half a million small farmers belong to democratic, farmer-owned cooperatives that are certified as producers and exporters of Fair Trade coffee.

Now more than ever, your commitment is needed to bring the benefits of Fair Trade to more farming communities. Rural families worldwide are losing their land, taking their kids out of school and facing starvation due to the crippling price crisis that hit the world coffee market in 2000. Since then, the world price of coffee has fallen to an all-time low of 45 cents a pound in 2001, well below the cost of production. For small-scale coffee farmers, Fair Trade represents their best hope to survive the crisis with dignity, keep their land and invest in their communities.

Sales of Fair Trade Certified coffee in the US have nearly doubled over the past year. But Fair Trade cooperatives still produce far more coffee than they are able to sell on Fair Trade terms. That's why it is critical to demonstrate to coffee companies and food service managers that consumers want Fair Trade.

In working to bring Fair Trade Certified coffee to your campus and community, you will encounter some challenges and opportunities that may be new to you. We hope this Resource and Action Guide will equip you to be creative and effective Fair Trade advocates. Please let us know how we can support your efforts and keep us informed of your campaigns.

Because of the work done by people like you, the list of coffee companies, institutions and retail locations offering Fair Trade Certified coffees grows every day – as does our collective experience and resources for building this movement. So please stay in touch and check our websites for updates on participating companies, media coverage and news of the movement.

Thank you for your commitment and vision.

Oxfam America and TransFair USA, February 2002

The time is now. Fair Trade is literally a lifeline for thousands of farmers during the coffee crisis, and campus activists play a critical role in building the Fair Trade movement. Here is a snapshot of recent accomplishments and future plans for the movement to promote Fair Trade Certified coffee:

- In the US, students at more than 100 colleges and universities are campaigning to bring Fair Trade Certified coffee to their campuses.
- At the end of 2001, there were 120 companies offering Fair Trade Certified coffee and tea in roughly 7000 retail locations across the US.
- Fair Trade and the plight of coffee farmers have received major press coverage over the past year, including stories in Newsweek, USA Today, New York Times, Financial Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Seattle Post Intelligencer, Denver Post and Boston Globe, among others.
- Fair Trade consumer education campaigns have been conducted over the past two years in New England, the San Francisco Bay Area and Seattle. In 2002, TransFair USA will launch Fair Trade awareness campaigns in Washington DC, the Midwest and other regions.
- In July 2001, 61 members of Congress signed a letter to bring Fair Trade Certified coffee to the US House of Representatives dining halls, and urged Starbucks to increase its commitment to Fair Trade. The House dining halls are planning to switch the “house” coffee to Fair Trade in 2002.
- In 2000, worldwide sales of Fair Trade Certified products grew by 15%. In addition to coffee, Fair Trade tea, cocoa, sugar, bananas, honey, orange juice and cut flowers are now sold throughout Europe.
- Fair Trade Certified coffee imports have almost doubled in the US each year since it was introduced in 1999.

*“Due to the coffee crisis, thousands of farmers are fleeing the countryside in search of work in the cities. But thanks to Fair Trade, the 2,400 families in our cooperative are staying on the land because they have access to credit and a decent price for their harvest. They planted corn and beans using their income from Fair Trade, so they are eating fairly well at a time when hunger is a reality for many of their neighbors.”*

Merling Preza, PRODECOOP, a cooperative in Nicaragua.



*“Our organizing, together with other campus campaigns, played a key role in motivating Sara Lee, one of the world’s largest coffee companies, to begin offering Fair Trade Certified coffee. We were inspired by the fact that our efforts here at UCLA were connected to the larger Fair Trade movement.”*

Christine Riordan, a student at UCLA



Why is so little of the profit from the coffee business captured by the growers? The answer lies in the legacy of colonialism and the way coffee is traded.

Coffee is a daily ritual and big business. On the international market, it ranks as the second most heavily traded commodity after petroleum. More than 70 developing countries are dependent on coffee for part of their export revenues. For many countries, coffee exports are the principal source of foreign exchange needed for their debt payments. Prices for tropical commodities have declined dramatically in recent years, leaving developing countries with fewer and fewer resources to meet the basic needs of their people. The world's major coffee-producing countries, in fact, are some of the poorest countries in the world (see map, page 8).

The current production and trade of coffee cannot be understood outside of its colonial history. European colonial powers structured the economies of their colonies around the export of raw materials. Products such as coffee, tea, tropical fruits, spices, and minerals were sent directly to European economic centers, which dictated the rules of the market. Today, the commodity trade still primarily benefits the importing industrialized countries.

There are more than 30 million small coffee-farming families and plantation workers who rely on coffee for their livelihoods. They are falling deeper into poverty as commodity prices decline. Even when prices are higher, workers are still only paid a daily wage of \$1-\$3, and small farmers are at the mercy of middlemen who buy their coffee at a fraction of the world market price. Small farmers are locked into poverty because they lack access to resources to compete in the world market: relationships with international buyers, market information, technical assistance and credit.



TransFair USA

The average coffee farmer earns less than \$3 a day.

*The coffee in your cup is an immediate, tangible connection with the rural poor in some of the most destitute parts of the planet. It is a physical link across space and cultures from one end of the human experience to the other.*

The Coffee Book, Dicum and Luttinger

## The current price crisis makes a bad situation worse

An unprecedented slump in coffee prices (now at their lowest point ever in real terms) is destroying the livelihoods of millions of farmers who can't cover their costs of production. In early 2002, coffee prices were hovering between 42 and 45 cents a pound on the world market. Family farmers at the bottom of the supply chain typically receive less than half of this amount. For many, these prices translate into an annual income of \$500 or less.

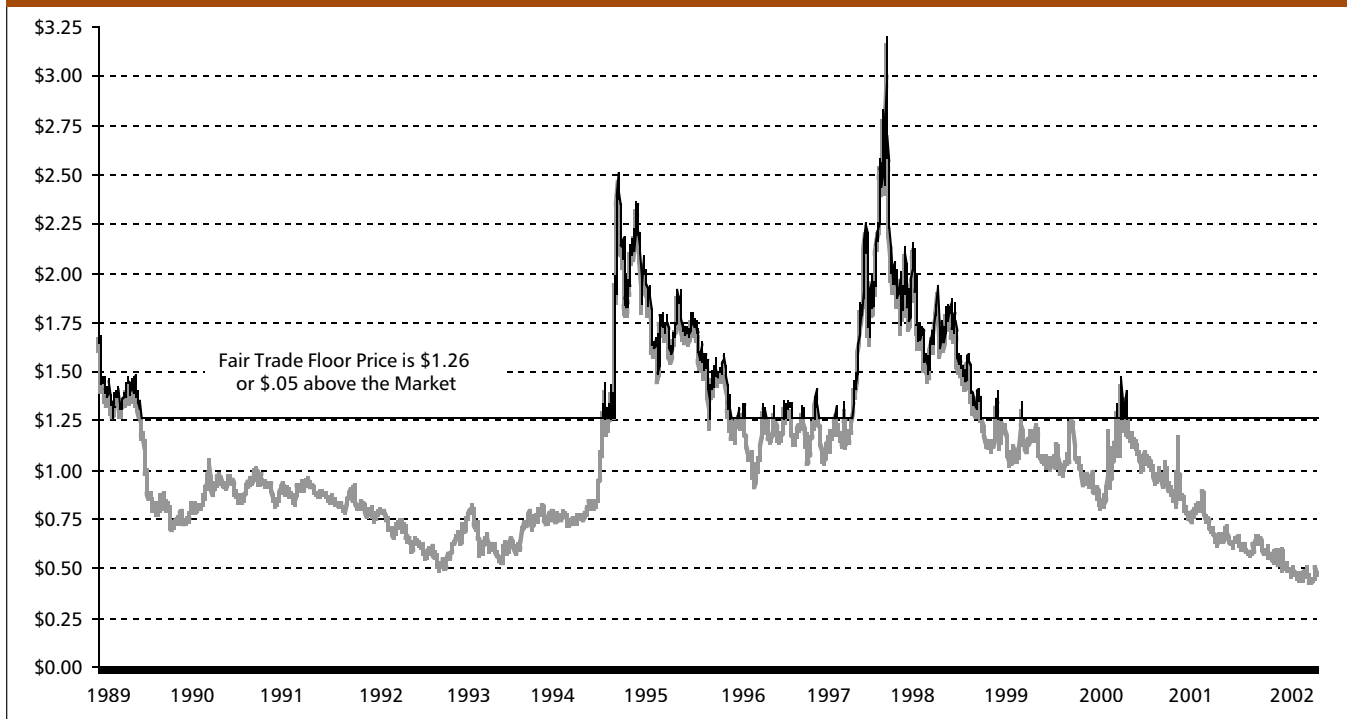
Low coffee prices are prompting many coffee farmers and plantation workers in coffee-growing areas of the Americas to abandon their farms and head to urban areas, where they try to eke out a living in any way possible. Women are left behind to harvest the coffee and to care for families. Children are being taken out of school to help with the harvest and take care of younger siblings, while their mothers work in the field. Some coffee farmers are migrating to the United States. In May of 2001, 14 immigrants were found dead in the desert near the Arizona-Mexico border. Most of them were coffee farmers and pickers from the Mexican state of Veracruz, who were fleeing their communities in search of work opportunities. Since mid-2001, thousands of Nicaraguan coffee farmers

and farmworkers have left the fields, only to go hungry in the cities. In 2001, Salvadoran government officials estimated that of the 130,000 jobs in El Salvador's coffee sector, 30,000 would be lost due to the low prices.

The coffee trade has always been plagued by wild price fluctuations, including steep inclines and devastating crashes, depending on unpredictable events such as weather patterns, outbreaks of plant disease, and global coffee supply. Farmers plant coffee trees when times are good and prices are high. Arabica coffee trees take nearly five years to reach maturity, and when trees mature for a large number of growers in the same season, the supply increases and the price drops. Farmers are reluctant to switch to other crops when prices drop because they have few alternatives and so much already invested in their trees.

This classic boom and bust cycle has been exacerbated recently by the demise of the International Coffee Agreement, which, until 1989, helped to stabilize prices by regulating supply. The US government and Brazil supported replacing the ICA with a "free market" approach in the coffee trade. It now falls to producer countries to develop retention plans to decrease the supply, and few are willing unless there is an enforceable agreement among all coffee producing countries.

NEW YORK COMMODITY EXCHANGE COFFEE PRICE VS. FAIR TRADE FLOOR PRICE



(source: New York Board of Trade and TransFair USA)

### Over-production, Free Trade, and “Technified” Coffee

The main cause of today’s price crisis is over-production of coffee on a global level. International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, transnational corporations and government aid agencies have contributed to oversupply by promoting “technified” agricultural techniques and liberalization of trade as central strategies for growth in the developing world. This phenomenon is especially notable in Vietnam, which is now the world’s second-largest producer of coffee, behind Brazil. Using high-yield, low-grade varieties of robusta coffee, Vietnam has almost tripled its coffee exports in the past five years.

Since the 1970s, coffee production has become increasingly technified throughout the coffee-growing world, using new hybrid varieties of coffee for higher yields and short-term disease resistance. Technified coffee also requires greater use of agrochemicals and encourages deforestation. The long-term result has been over-production, lower prices and environmental devastation.

For the most part, deregulated markets have further tipped the scales in favor of transnational corporations and against small farmers. The four largest coffee roasting companies in the world (Philip Morris, Nestlé, Procter & Gamble, and Sara Lee) control well over 60% of coffee sales worldwide, while the five largest coffee trading (importing) companies control more than 40% of total world imports. The market share of these companies has increased in recent years, giving them even greater power to influence production and prices on the ground. Open markets have enabled large coffee roasting and trading companies to “vertically integrate” the chain of production, by creating subsidiaries to process and export the coffee from developing countries. In contrast, small farmers rarely control the processing and export of their own coffee, and thus reap only a small portion of their product’s market value.



Deborah Hirsch/TransFair USA

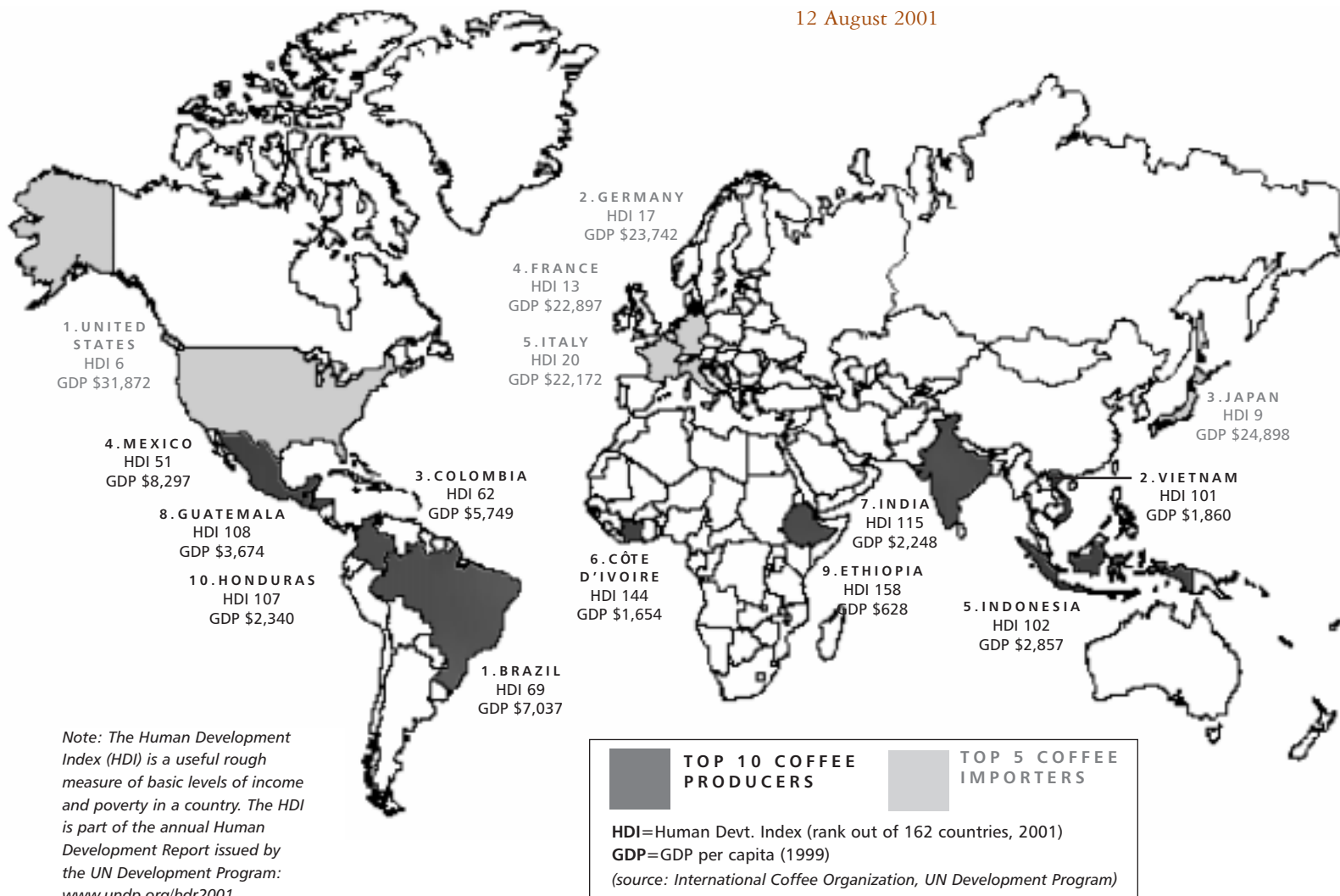
Fair trade revenues are often used to purchase mules for carrying coffee down steep mountainsides, so farmers do not have to carry it on their backs. PRODECOOP, Nicaragua.

## TOP COFFEE PRODUCING AND IMPORTING COUNTRIES

The world's major coffee-producing countries are also some of the poorest countries in the world. This map shows the top-10 coffee producers in the 1999-2000 crop year, and their respective 1999 gross domestic product (GDP) per person and ranking position in the UN Development Program's 2001 Human Development Index. GDP per capita and HDI rank are also provided for the top-five coffee importing countries, for comparison. The Human Development Index measures a country's achievements in three aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

GDP expresses the total income earned in a country and total expenditure on domestically produced goods and services. GDP per capita is an average; many coffee farmers in producing countries earn considerably less than the average GDP per capita.

*"According to International Coffee Organization figures, 10 years ago the world coffee market was worth \$30 billion, of which producers received \$12 billion. Today it is worth \$50 billion, with producers receiving just \$8 billion. (This) means that although the value of the coffee trade has increased by two thirds, the share going to producers has fallen from 40 percent to 16 percent."*  
 "World Takes Caffeine Hit," The Observer, 12 August 2001

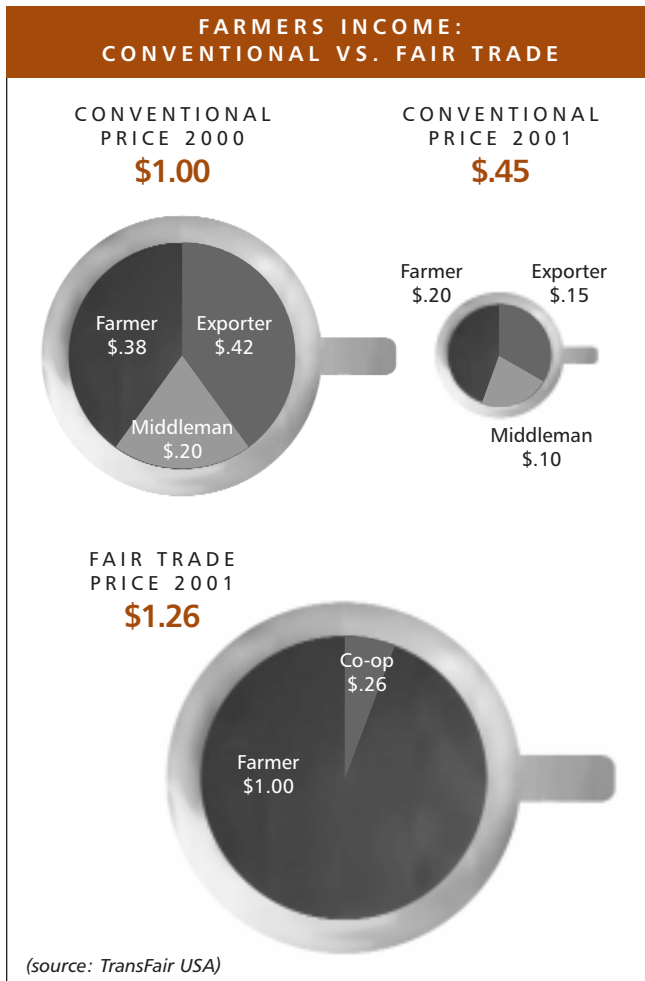




The coffee crisis gives new urgency to efforts to promote Fair Trade in the coffee sector. Today, with world commodity prices far below the costs of production, Fair Trade provides a critical alternative to the “free trade” market and creates a more equitable and stable trading system. The Fair Trade floor price and direct market access reduce the devastating effects of the boom and bust cycle on farmers and their organizations. The result is stronger farmers’ cooperatives, independence from exploitative middlemen, and more revenue for social development and environmental conservation programs.

**International Fair Trade Criteria for Coffee**

- ✓ **Fair Price**  
Farmer cooperatives are guaranteed a fair price (a floor price of US\$1.26 per pound or 5 cents above the prevailing market price; US\$1.41 for certified organic coffee or 15 cents above the market price).
- ✓ **Direct Trade and Long-Term Relationships**  
Importers must purchase coffee directly from certified Fair Trade producers and agree to establish stable, long-term relationships.
- ✓ **Democratic Organization**  
Farmers must belong to cooperatives or associations that are transparent and democratically-controlled by their members.
- ✓ **Access to Credit**  
When requested by producers, importers must provide pre-harvest financing or credit (up to 60% of each order).
- ✓ **Environmental protection**  
Producers must implement integrated crop management and environmental protection plans. Through price incentives, producers are encouraged to work towards organic production.



Fair Trade farmer harvests coffee cherries.

TransFair USA

### SMALL FARMERS

Over 50% of the world's coffee is grown by small family farmers. Most small farmers, who are not organized into marketing cooperatives, are at the mercy of middlemen or estate owners to sell their product, capturing a mere 2%-4% of the retail price of coffee. Low prices and lack of control over the processing, exporting and marketing of the beans trap farmers in a cycle of poverty and debt.

### PROCESSING MILL

Processing of coffee is generally carried out on large farms or in coffee mills. Most coffee mills are privately owned, though occasionally they may be owned by small farmer cooperatives or government agencies.



Larry Luxner

### ESTATE WORKERS

Millions of people are employed as workers on coffee plantations and estates, many of whom are migrants. In the plantation sector, low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of housing, education, nutrition, and healthcare prevail.

### COFFEE ESTATES

Plantations or estates vary in size and can be as large as thousands of acres. Estate owners control the majority of available processing facilities and often manage the export process, which enables them to reap more of the profits in the coffee chain. Many coffee estates are highly mechanized and rely on regular applications of agrochemicals.

# From Crop to Cup: The Fair Trade Route vs. the Conventional Trade Route

### LOCAL MIDDLEMAN

Middlemen are intermediary traders who buy coffee from small farmers. These middlemen frequently take advantage of the farmers' lack of access to credit, transportation and information. They commonly act as bankers, local shopkeepers and often control local transportation systems. This virtual monopoly allows them to offer loans on the condition that farmers sell their coffee at greatly reduced prices and repay their loans at extremely high rates of interest.

### EXPORTERS

Exporters are either independent companies or subsidiaries of multinational corporations that export coffee beans to importers in other countries. The primary goal of the conventional exporter is to buy coffee at the lowest possible price and resell it for the highest possible profit, while maintaining the quality demanded by their customers.

### BROKERS

Brokers buy and sell coffee on commission without ever officially owning the coffee that they trade. They act as intermediaries between exporters and importers. Multinational corporations have their own brokers and have enormous buying and selling power which allows them to speculate and exercise great influence on the New York and London coffee exchanges.



Larry Luxner

## THE FAIR TRADE COFFEE ROUTE

Fair Trade enables cooperatives to bypass middlemen and sell directly to US importers at fair prices.



Liam Brody/Oxfam

### FARMERS

There are 550,000 farmers who are members of cooperatives which sell directly to Fair Trade importers in North America and Europe. By linking directly with markets, farmers in Fair Trade cooperatives are able to earn 3 to 5 times as much as they receive by selling their coffee through conventional mechanisms.

### COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives enable farmers to achieve economies of scale. There are 300 Fair Trade cooperatives or associations. By selling directly to foreign importers and establishing their own processing equipment, farmers are able to capture greater benefits from their production. These cooperatives are democratically organized and often invest a portion of the Fair Trade premium into community development, quality improvement and environmental protection programs.



TransFair USA



## THE CONVENTIONAL COFFEE ROUTE

In conventional trade, large producers and transnational corporations have access to markets, capital and technology, while plantation workers and small coffee farmers are isolated from the market and unable to gain the full benefits of “free” trade.

### IMPORTERS

Importers purchase raw green coffee beans either from brokers or exporters, which they subsequently sell to roasters.



### ROASTERS

Most roasters buy their coffee from importers. After roasting and packaging the coffee, roasters then sell either to distributors or directly to retail and institutional accounts. Some roasters have their own retail stores.



### DISTRIBUTORS

Distributors are sometimes involved in channeling roasters’ coffee to retail and institutional accounts such as universities, hotels, hospitals, and airlines.

### RETAILERS

Retailers are grocery stores, restaurants, cafés, and institutional accounts that sell coffee to consumers.

### CONSUMERS

Consumers buy and drink coffee in cafés and restaurants, from grocery stores, at home and at the work place. Most coffee is still purchased at grocery stores. Consumers are usually unaware of the conditions under which the coffee was produced and traded.



### IMPORTERS

Importers buy directly from certified cooperatives and pay the Fair Trade minimum price (\$1.26 per pound; \$1.41 for certified organic) or higher. If requested, importers must offer credit to the cooperative. Their direct relationship with the cooperative enables the cooperative to gain valuable information about the US market. There are 15 importers currently certified by TransFair USA to sell Fair Trade Certified coffee to roasters.

### ROASTERS

Roasters buy from importers certified by TransFair USA, and roast and package coffee for retail sale. They have signed agreements with TransFair USA to use the “Fair Trade Certified” label. Through marketing and consumer education, roasters teach their customers about Fair Trade.

### DISTRIBUTORS

Distributors are sometimes involved in channeling Fair Trade Certified coffee to retailers and institutional accounts.

### RETAILERS

Retailers include grocery stores, cafés, restaurants, dining services and other venues that sell Fair Trade coffee directly to the consumer. As of January 2002, Fair Trade coffee was being sold in approximately 7,000 retail locations in the US.

### CONSUMERS

Consumers are the engine driving the Fair Trade movement, by creating and sustaining demand for Fair Trade Certified coffee and other Fair Trade products.

#### FAIR TRADE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

TransFair USA and its umbrella organization, the Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO), certify that Fair Trade criteria are being met by cooperatives, importers and roasters.

#### NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Non Profit Organizations such as Oxfam America play a significant role in building awareness and demand for Fair Trade products through consumer education programs.



### Fair Trade Certification and Labeling

Socially responsible consumers are increasingly seeking independent, third-party monitoring systems to ensure that companies' business practices uphold their stated ethical standards. Fair Trade Certification is a guarantee for both farmers and consumers that Fair Trade criteria are being followed, from

crop to cup. When the "Fair Trade Certified" label appears on a bag of coffee, it signifies that TransFair USA has tracked that coffee from a certified Fair Trade cooperative to certified US importers and roasters, verifying that the Fair Trade price was paid and other Fair Trade criteria were met. In developing countries, Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO) is responsible for on-site certification and monitoring of producer cooperatives. Based in Germany, FLO brings together 17 National Initiatives, including TransFair USA, which certify Fair Trade commodities in their respective countries.

### History and Growth of Fair Trade

Fair Trade coffee is part of a larger Fair Trade movement that dates back to the late 1940s when US churches began selling handicrafts made by refugees in Europe after World War II. Since then, "alternative trade" or Fair Trade organizations, like Equal Exchange, SERRV, and Ten Thousand Villages, have sought to address structural inequities in the global economy and promote grassroots development through direct, equitable trade.

Fair Trade certification of commodities began in the Netherlands in 1988 as a response to plummeting prices in the world coffee market. Dutch visionaries formed the Max Havelaar Foundation, named after a fictional character who opposed the exploitation of coffee pickers in Dutch colonies. The TransFair seal was later launched in Germany. Today, 17 countries have their own Max Havelaar or TransFair labeling initiatives, operating with shared criteria under the FLO umbrella. Fair Trade Certified coffee, bananas, tea, chocolate, honey, sugar, orange juice and flowers are available in stores throughout Europe. Fair Trade handicrafts are sold in thousands of Fair Trade shops in Europe, the US, Canada and Japan. Many US organizations that deal exclusively in Fair Trade crafts or coffee are grouped together under the Fair Trade Federation.

### Fair Trade Coffee in the US

Equal Exchange, a worker-owned cooperative founded in 1986, pioneered the Fair Trade coffee movement in the US and continues to be a leader in educating consumers about Fair Trade. Growing steadily for 15 years, Equal Exchange now offers more than 40 varieties of Fair Trade coffee, all of them certified by TransFair USA. Oxfam America has promoted Equal Exchange coffee for many years and provided a grant to help Equal Exchange to purchase Fair Trade coffee from El Salvador. Oxfam America is engaged in advocating for more equitable trade rules that will help farmers in impoverished communities. Oxfam also provides direct grants to coffee cooperatives in Central America.

TransFair USA opened its doors in October 1998 to bring Fair Trade Certified coffee to mainstream coffee consumers in the US, and to pave the way for other Fair Trade Certified products. Since launching the Fair Trade Certified label in 1999, TransFair USA has galvanized many of the specialty coffee industry's leading firms in support of the Fair Trade alternative. The efforts of TransFair USA, participating coffee companies, non-profit organizations such as Oxfam and Global Exchange, students, and religious institutions are all contributing to a dramatic increase in consumer demand for Fair Trade. These broad-based efforts have succeeded in bringing the benefits of Fair Trade to tens of thousands of coffee farmers and communities around the globe.



Café Salvador began as a collaboration between Equal Exchange, Oxfam and Neighbor to Neighbor.

*"With world market prices as low as they are right now, we see that a lot of farmers cannot maintain their families and their land anymore. We need Fair Trade now more than ever."* Jerónimo Bollen, Marketing Director of Manos Campesinos coffee cooperative in Guatemala.



### Fair Trade Helps Farmers Care for Their Families

Additional income from Fair Trade helps farmers avoid debt, improve their working conditions, and buy clothing and school supplies for their children.

*“Before, life was very hard for us, mainly because we could never get a decent price for our harvest. With the income we get from Fair Trade, our children are now well fed and have better clothing. We have also been able to send our children to school and pay for teachers.”* Flavio Clemente Gaitan, La Esperanza, Colombia

The cooperative of Carice in northern Haiti, which sells 100 percent of its production to Fair Trade organizations, bought coffee from about 300 families in 2000. In 2001, farmers received the equivalent of 90 US cents/lb for their coffee. This was 50% higher than the price received by farmers outside the cooperative. The average benefit was US\$36 per member, equivalent to one full month of rice consumption for an average family.

*“I don’t even want to think what would have happened without the cooperative. I could not have sent my son to school.”* Mme Fabius Mirttil, member of the Carice cooperative

### Fair Trade Empowers Women

Fair Trade encourages women’s leadership in cooperatives as well as supporting programs that benefit women. Peru’s COCLA cooperative supports a women’s leadership project that includes training and income generation projects. In Nicaragua, CECOCAFEN uses popular theater to educate the community about domestic violence. In the state of Oaxaca in Mexico, the CEPSCO network of coffee cooperatives has a Women’s Commission that has helped to elevate the status of women coffee growers and change perceptions of women as more than just wives and mothers. Women also get training in cultivating coffee and other income generating activities.

*“Thanks to CEPSCO, we have woken up. We realize that as women, we can do more than stay home and have children.”* Epifania Velasco, Oaxaca, Mexico



©1999 Susan Meiselas/Magnum Photos

Santiago Rivera, a Nicaraguan coffee farmer who sells his coffee through a Fair Trade cooperative, pictured here with his family.

### Fair Trade Keeps Families Together

With today’s low coffee prices, small farmers and coffee pickers who are not connected with Fair Trade are fleeing the rural areas in search of work. Women and children are left behind to tend the fields and pick the coffee; kids are taken out of school. In contrast, income earned from Fair Trade coffee is helping farm families stay together and keep the kids in school.



Geoff Sayer/Oxfam

Fair Trade helps farmers in Uganda keep their land.

## Fair Trade Supports Community Development

**Better Housing** Fair Trade revenues invested in a local community housing project provided new homes for members of the Colombian indigenous coop Ingrumá. And in El Salvador, the Fair Trade coop APECAFE led local reconstruction efforts to rebuild 500 homes that were damaged or destroyed by the 2001 earthquake.

*“For us Fair Trade was like a revolution. Before, this house was not ours. Now it is.”* COOCAFE Member, Costa Rica

**Health Programs** The CECOCAFEN coop in Nicaragua has used Fair Trade premiums to establish a reproductive health program for coop members and the surrounding community. Local health promoters educate women about cancer prevention and treatment, and a woman doctor visits the community regularly.

**Schools and Scholarships** The Costa Rican cooperative COOCAFE used Fair Trade revenues to fund improvements in 70 local schools and to provide 6,700 scholarships to students so they could afford to attend high school and university.

*“Ten years ago, our children couldn’t study past the age of eight because there was no bus to the school and we had no money. Now with Fair Trade, we have fixed the road and we have bus service. Our kids can go to school with the help of scholarships from the coop’s fund. One is getting a business degree at the university and the other is in high school.”* Sabino Brenes, Costa Rica



Liam Brody/Oxfam

Vicente Ventura of El Salvador speaking to students at a coffee festival.

## Knowledge is Power

With increased knowledge about the coffee trade and Fair Trade, farmers are empowered to demand better prices from middlemen when they aren’t selling to cooperatives. Like their individual members, the expertise co-ops gain through exporting to Fair Trade buyers enables them to bargain more effectively with conventional buyers.



TransFair USA

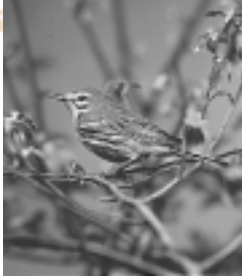
Many cooperatives use Fair Trade revenues to fund school improvements.

## Sustainable Agriculture and Reforestation

The Union of Indigenous Communities of the Isthmus Region in Mexico and the La Florida Agrarian Coffee Growers Cooperative in Peru have used Fair Trade revenues to establish sustainable agriculture training for coop members and other local farmers. This helps diversify the ways farmers can earn cash, and helps them get through tough times when coffee prices are low.

## Solidarity among Farmers

Fair Trade is building solidarity across borders, not simply from North to South but among disadvantaged producers themselves. APECAFE, a group of Salvadoran Fair Trade coops, lost loved ones, homes and farmland as a result of the devastating earthquakes in El Salvador in the winter of 2001. Fair Trade cooperatives in Nicaragua and Costa Rica sent contributions to APECAFE within days of the earthquake to help with reconstruction. There are also cases of technical assistance between Fair Trade coops. Costa Rican Fair Trade leaders helped introduce eco-friendly coffee-processing technology to Fair Trade coops in northern Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan farmers are now using 90% less water when they remove the red fruit from harvested coffee “cherries.”



Steve Maslovski

Most Fair Trade farmers grow coffee under shade trees—critical habitat for migratory songbirds.

Buying and drinking Fair Trade coffee encourages environmentally friendly ways of growing coffee, protecting the land and wildlife habitat.

Efforts to produce more coffee have led not only to lower prices but also to environmental degradation. Since the 1970s, many

coffee plantations and estates have cleared more and more forests and started aggressively cultivating high-yield coffee varieties under the open sun. In order to tolerate the increased sun exposure, these hybrid trees rely more heavily on chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Deforestation and the resulting loss of biodiversity pose a significant threat to the survival of migratory songbirds and other wildlife. Deforestation has also led to devastating landslides and flooding during weather emergencies such as Hurricane Mitch, which killed thousands in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras in 1998. In addition, modernized crops that demand more chemical inputs are bad for the health of farmworkers and pollute local water supplies. In contrast to estate coffee, Fair Trade coffee is usually grown under the canopy of a forest ecosystem, without the use of chemical inputs. When grown in this way, coffee provides a sustainable livelihood for farmers without destroying natural resources. Fair Trade helps keep small farmers on the land, thereby maintaining thousands of acres in more traditional, earth-friendly agroecosystems. Here are some of the specific ways that small farmers and Fair Trade protect the environment.

**Small-scale farms use land more efficiently.**

By growing a variety of crops in one area (“intercropping”), together with livestock, small farms use land more efficiently than large monoculture estates. Traditional small coffee farms contain many species of crop, shade and fruit trees, which can provide nearly all of the food a family needs. Such farms ensure a balanced diet for the family and help reduce farmers’ financial risk, and increase self-sufficiency.

**Small-scale farms maintain diverse tropical forest systems.** Small-scale diversified coffee farms host a rich array of wildlife, including songbirds that migrate seasonally from North America, and can be as biodiverse as natural forested ecosystems. These shaded farms also protect topsoil from erosion, prevent damage from heavy rains and wind, and help keep nutrients and moisture in the soil.

**Small-scale farms use fewer agrochemicals.**

The lion’s share of pesticides used around the world are applied on large estates that have access to modern technology and financial credit programs.

Agrochemicals poison farmworkers and pollute the soil, water and air, even far from where they are applied. Small-scale farmers rarely use chemical inputs because of their high cost, relying instead on organic fertilizer and natural pest control. The vast majority of small farmers involved in Fair Trade worldwide grow coffee without chemical fertilizers or pesticides and are considered “passive organic.”

**Fair Trade helps small farmers become organic-certified.**

Although organic production may be unrealistic for larger estates that are already deforested and dependent on agrochemicals, small farmers can transition from “passive organic” to certified organic relatively easily. In addition to the standard Fair Trade floor price of \$1.26/lb, the Fair Trade model includes an additional \$0.15/lb premium for certified organics—a strong incentive for farmers and more than enough to cover certification costs.

**Fair Trade facilitates technical assistance for sustainable farming.**

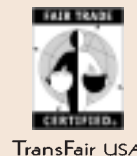
In order to join the register of certified Fair Trade coffee producers, cooperatives must use sustainable production techniques. Many coops invest Fair Trade revenues in technical assistance programs to train their members in soil improvement, agroforestry, organic production and environmentally-friendly coffee processing.

**Fair Trade builds markets for organic and shade-grown coffee.**

Since 1999, 80% of the coffee certified as Fair Trade by TransFair has also been certified organic. A similar percentage is shade-grown.

- Importers of Fair Trade Certified coffee pay at least \$1.26/lb (the Fair Trade floor price) directly to farmers' cooperatives. If the coffee is certified organic, they pay \$1.41/lb. When world coffee prices go above \$1.26, Fair Trade importers pay a 5-cent premium, and 15-cent premium for organic coffee.
- Farmer cooperative members receive an average of \$1.00/lb from that \$1.26, and more if the world market price goes above \$1.26. The remainder goes towards processing, transport and export costs.
- According to recent reports from Latin America, non-Fair Trade coffee farmers are receiving an average of about 20¢ per pound from local middlemen.
- Farmers receiving a Fair Trade price for their coffee can afford improved health care and housing for their families, and their children can attend school longer, instead of working in the fields. Fair Trade also helps farmers improve their working conditions by acquiring equipment such as mechanical de-pulping machines to process coffee cherries, or even mules to carry heavy coffee sacks down steep mountainsides.
- Fair Trade Certified coffee is grown on small, family-run farms. These farmers typically grow their coffee in the shade of a taller forest canopy, which provides habitat for wildlife such as song-birds. These farmers also tend to avoid the use of pesticides.
- 21 countries throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa produce Fair Trade coffee.
- TransFair USA is one of 17 members of the international umbrella organization, Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO).
- There are now over half a million farming families selling coffee through 300 coffee growing cooperatives that are Fair Trade Certified by the Fair Trade Labeling Organization. Fair Trade criteria require that: cooperatives must be democratically controlled by its members; Fair Trade premiums are reinvested in community development and technological improvements; environmental protection plans are implemented on the farms; and cooperatives have the capacity to bring a quality product to market.
- As the only third-party certification organization for Fair Trade products in the US, TransFair USA licenses coffee companies to use the Fair Trade Certified label on coffees that meet Fair Trade criteria. TransFair USA then monitors each transaction between Fair Trade producers and Fair Trade Certified importers and roasters.
- In 1999, 2 million pounds of green coffee were Fair Trade Certified in the US; TransFair USA certified over 4 million pounds of green coffee in 2000 and an estimated 7 million pounds in 2001.
- Currently, 120 coffee roasters and importers from all over the country are licensed to sell Fair Trade Certified coffee, and it is available in more than 7,000 retail outlets.
- Approximately 80% of the Fair Trade Certified coffee sold in the US since 1999 was certified organic.
- Fair Trade coffee has been in Europe for about 12 years; sales topped \$300 million there last year.
- US consumers drink one-fifth of the world's coffee.
- Fair Trade coffee is served in the US House of Representatives and in the European Parliament.
- In Europe over 130 brands of Fair Trade coffee are available in more than 35,000 supermarkets.
- Coffee is the second most heavily traded commodity after petroleum.
- Coffee and tea are the only Fair Trade Certified products available in the US today. As demand grows, TransFair USA will certify chocolate, bananas and other products.

Coffee drinkers can consult the **TransFair USA** and **Oxfam America** web sites to find out where to buy Fair Trade Certified coffee. See [www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org) and [www.oxfamamerica.org/fairtrade](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/fairtrade)





## **What's the difference between Fair Trade and "Free Trade" coffee?**

Fair Trade guarantees producers a fair price for their product (at least \$1.26 per pound; \$1.41 per pound for certified organic) that enables farmers to cover the costs of production, reinvest in their farms and meet their families' basic needs, including health care and education. Fair Trade creates direct trade links between producers and importers, bypassing various intermediaries who take a share of the profits. Fair Trade is not charity – it is a market-based approach to increasing small farmer self-sufficiency and generating more resources for community development and environmental conservation. In contrast, conventionally traded coffee is part of the larger "free trade" system, favoring larger producers and multinational corporations, often at the expense of local communities and the environment. Under conventional trade, coffee prices are determined by a volatile international market. The world market price often falls below a farmer's costs of production and leaves farm families in a struggle for survival. Even when the world market price is relatively high, family farmers get a small fraction of that price, with the lion's share of profits going to intermediaries.

## **If an importer pays at least \$1.26/lb price for coffee, does that mean the coffee is considered Fair Trade Certified?**

No. The importer would have to be certified by TransFair USA and import the coffee from cooperatives that are listed on the international Fair Trade register maintained by Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO). Furthermore, simply paying \$1.26/lb or more to a coffee exporter does not guarantee that the farmer received a fair price for the harvest. In fact, there is very little "trickle down" to the farmer in conventional trade, so most of that price likely went to middlemen. The "Fair Trade Certified" label assures consumers that the farmer got a fair deal and received most of the export price.

## **If you see the "Fair Trade Certified" label on one type of coffee a company offers, does that mean that all of that company's coffee is Fair Trade Certified?**

No. Only the coffee bearing the Fair Trade Certified label is certified by TransFair USA.

## **Does Fair Trade Certified coffee cost more for consumers or coffee companies?**

This depends on pricing policies of each roaster and retailer and on the world market price of coffee. The retail price of Fair Trade coffee varies, but it is generally within the range of other high-quality coffees. Since most Fair Trade Certified coffee in the US is also certified organic, which commands a higher price, Fair Trade consumers often pay about the same price as regular organic coffee. Some high-end coffee roasters claim that they pay a premium price for all of their coffees, which would mean that Fair Trade coffee does not cost more – the difference is in how much the farmer gets. But the current price crisis in the coffee industry may make it harder for consumers to find Fair Trade coffee at a comparable price to other gourmet blends. Today, most coffee is being imported at substantially below the Fair Trade floor price, so companies are paying more for Fair Trade Certified beans and may pass the cost on to consumers. Still, the fairness guarantee is worth a few pennies more per cup.

## **Is the quality of Fair Trade Certified coffee comparable to other gourmet coffee?**

Fair Trade Certified coffee is often the same, high quality coffee that gourmet coffee companies are purchasing through conventional mechanisms. In addition, by guaranteeing farmers a fair price, Fair Trade certification enables farmers to invest further in quality improvement and management programs.

## **Does Fair Trade Certified mean organic too?**

Although the two certification systems are distinct, more than 80% of the Fair Trade Certified coffee presently in the US market is also certified organic. Fair Trade coffee is always grown by small-scale farmers who tend to grow coffee in the shade, avoid agrochemicals, and take meticulous care of their crops. Revenues from Fair Trade are often used to train farmers in organic techniques, such as composting and mulching and to promote eco-friendly processing that uses less water.

## **Is Fair Trade Certified coffee also bird-friendly or shade grown?**

Although the two terms are not synonymous, most Fair Trade Certified coffee is also shade-grown, bird-friendly coffee. This is because all Fair Trade coffee is grown by family farmers, most of whom own traditional, shaded farms that host a high diversity of birds. These shade trees also bear fruit, providing additional food or income for farmers and their families.



## Fair Trade Action Guide for Campus Campaigns

So you want to bring Fair Trade Certified coffee to your campus?

You're taking on a noble cause and embarking on an exciting adventure! This campaign will probably be different from other kinds of activism you've been involved in. Fair Trade achieves change not through boycotts or other forms of protest but by building respectful relationships among all players in the chain of production, distribution and consumption – from family farmers to coffee buyers and students on your campus.

The most successful campaigns do two things simultaneously: build and demonstrate consumer demand for Fair Trade and help coffee buyers solve the practical problems that arise in meeting that demand. This Action Guide aims to help you do both, in order to sell as much Fair Trade Certified coffee on your campus as possible.

Of the dozens of campus campaigns we've supported, no two are alike. But we have learned some lessons that will help you along the way. We encourage you to use the guidelines, questions and case studies that follow to help you plan and think strategically about your campaign. Keep in mind that this is not a blueprint, but rather a collection of tools from which you can pick and choose as you develop the best approach for your campus.

It might help to think of your campaign in stages.

**STAGE 1: DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

**STAGE 2: DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY**

**STAGE 3: LAUNCH YOUR CAMPAIGN**

**STAGE 4: BUILD MOMENTUM**

**STAGE 5: PREPARE FOR VICTORY**

**STAGE 6: PLAN YOUR NEXT STEPS**



Oxfam

Student organizers at the University of Colorado hosting a Fair Trade coffee tasting.

Begin by laying the groundwork for your campaign. The following steps can be taken simultaneously.


**Educate yourself on the issues and how Fair Trade Certification works.**

In addition to this Guide, several websites may be useful: TransFair USA ([www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org)), Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International ([www.fair-trade.net](http://www.fair-trade.net)), Oxfam America ([www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)) and Global Exchange ([www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)).

**Research campus dining halls and cafés.**


There are four main questions to consider at each venue. Find friendly employees or managers who can help you determine:

**What brands of coffee are currently served?**

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Find out if these coffee roasters are already signed up with TransFair USA. If they are, then they will have at least one Fair Trade Certified coffee to offer. An up-to-date list of licensed roasters is available on TransFair’s website.

**Who decides what coffee is served?**

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Look into the management of each venue and get the names of the individuals and committees in charge of coffee purchases at each site. These are the people you will be meeting and corresponding with in the future.


**Is a distributor involved in the coffee supply?**

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Common distributors are Sodexo-Marriott, Aramark, Sysco and Bon Appetit, among others. Most of these national distributors already carry coffee from the larger coffee companies that offer Fair Trade Certified coffee (i.e. Starbucks, Seattle’s Best Coffee, and Sara Lee). Most also work with smaller roasters, whose coffees they distribute to institutions within a particular region (i.e. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters of Vermont, Equal Exchange of Massachusetts, Thanksgiving Coffee of California, all of which have

Fair Trade Certified coffees). Even if the roaster supplying coffee for your café or dining hall isn’t involved in Fair Trade, the distributor may already have a relationship with another roaster that offers Fair Trade Certified coffee, which could facilitate a switch.

**How much coffee is consumed at each location?**

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Get estimates of the volume (in pounds) of coffee used annually or weekly at each venue. This will inform your decision on goals and targets. If the coffee buyer is not willing to share that information, coffee enthusiasts in your group will probably have a sense of which venues sell the most coffee.

**Form a coalition to bring Fair Trade coffee to your campus.**

If you are already a member of an organization that wants to incorporate Fair Trade into its work, that’s great! In any case, you should approach other groups for support. It will help to have more volunteers to raise awareness and a wide range of organizations to endorse the effort. Groups that work on international development, Latin America, human rights, corporate accountability, social justice, immigrant rights or environmental issues are obvious potential allies. But think broadly, since Fair Trade coffee appeals to all kinds of people. Invite professors and staff to be involved too. The stronger and more diverse your coalition is, the easier it will be to get Fair Trade Certified coffee served on campus.

**Connect yourself to campaigns on other campuses by joining a student Fair Trade coffee listserv:**

Oxfam, STARC (Students Reforming and Resisting Corporations) and Global Exchange each run listservs where student Fair Trade activists share ideas, swap advice and hook up with other campuses that are targeting the same roaster or distributor. Simultaneous action on several campuses has proven to be a powerful way to convince major corporations to carry Fair Trade Certified coffees.

**To subscribe to Oxfam and Global Exchange lists, visit their websites: [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org) and [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org). To subscribe to STARC’s Student Fair Trade List, send an email to: [studentfairtrade-subscribe@topica.com](mailto:studentfairtrade-subscribe@topica.com).**

### First, pick your target

Consider everything you've learned about the various coffee-serving venues on campus. Pick a single café or the dining halls (assuming they're all under the same management) as your first target – perhaps the venue that would be easiest to convert. After scoring one victory, you will be better prepared for a more challenging target.

Think through the various ways in which Fair Trade Certified coffee could be brought into this location.

**If the coffee supplier (roaster) of your targeted location is already working with TransFair USA,** the easiest way to bring in Fair Trade Certified coffee is by replacing the current blend(s) with Fair Trade Certified coffee from the same roaster.

**If the coffee roaster does not already offer Fair Trade Certified coffees,** you may be able to convince the company to sign up with TransFair USA. Several roasters have decided to participate in Fair Trade because of requests from their college or university accounts (see UCLA case study on page 21). By getting a new roaster to join the Fair Trade movement, you can help make Fair Trade Certified coffees available to that company's other campus and retail accounts. This multiplier effect helps build the overall market for Fair Trade coffee, increasing sales and benefiting more farmers. Another approach is to ask your target café or dining hall to change coffee suppliers and bring in a roaster that is already licensed by TransFair – preferably one that offers a variety of Fair Trade Certified coffees.

### Try this pop quiz:

**Question:** Which would help farmers more?

- a. Selling a little Fair Trade Certified coffee at every campus café
- b. Converting the main coffee in the dining halls
- c. Switching all coffees at the most popular café
- d. Selling packaged Fair Trade Certified coffee in the bookstore

**Answer:** a, b, or c, depending on the total sales volume. Remember that your ultimate goal is to sell as much Fair Trade Certified coffee on campus as possible, regardless of how many venues or how many varieties of Fair Trade Certified coffees are involved. While educating consumers is important, it doesn't help farmers unless it translates into sales of Fair Trade Certified coffee.

### Next, define your "ask"

**Fair Trade coffee: one alternative or the only option?** Your coalition should decide whether you are going to ask your target to switch all its coffee to Fair Trade, convert its best sellers or house coffee, or offer one Fair Trade Certified coffee as an option. This decision will depend on the technicalities of the venue's coffee set-up, the decision-makers' attitudes, the political climate of your school, and the power of your mobilization.

On some campuses, individual cafés have replaced all of their coffees with Fair Trade Certified blends, and a few campuses are now moving toward 100% Fair Trade. Clearly, this is ideal. But these are the minority, so if you ask for a total switch, be prepared to negotiate to a more winnable position.

Many coffee buyers are reluctant to replace a supplier or coffee that has been working well for them but will consider adding a Fair Trade Certified blend as an alternative to their existing coffees. But offering Fair Trade Certified coffee as an option alongside non-Fair Trade coffees means that its sales will depend on consumers' choosing it each time they buy. You may be put in the position of having to boost sales through ongoing educational efforts. Once you add one Fair Trade coffee as a marginal part of the venue's overall coffee program, it may be difficult to get managers to do more.

A stronger position would be to switch the "default" coffee or house coffee so those customers who don't request a specific blend will get Fair Trade Certified coffee. In most cafés and dining halls, the house coffee sells the most, even when a wide range of flavors, blends and single-origin coffees are offered.

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### Then, consider your approach

**Educate or agitate?** It is important to think carefully about your tone and actions toward key decision-makers. For Fair Trade Certified coffee to work on your campus, you need to have a good relationship with food service managers, and they need to feel good about Fair Trade. Treat decision-makers as allies. If they prove themselves otherwise, it is appropriate to apply friendly pressure. As a last resort, you might choose more confrontational tactics, but often “agitating” can alienate the very decision-makers whose commitment is needed to ensure the successful implementation of a Fair Trade coffee program.

**If you want to “go all out,” you might consider a comprehensive purchasing restriction that mandates all coffee on campus be Fair Trade Certified.**

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### Fair Trade Victory at UCLA

Students at UCLA succeeded in convincing one of the world’s largest coffee companies, Sara Lee, to offer Fair Trade Certified coffee on their campus. Sara Lee then started selling Fair Trade coffee to other retail customers, including more than 300 Borders Books stores. The Sara Lee victory had ripple effects both off campus and on. The UCLA Medical Center Campus moved quickly to make the switch to Fair Trade with their supplier, Starbucks. Here are some of the reasons behind the success of this campaign.

**Thorough research and strong leadership:** The UCLA Environmental Coalition (EC) identified all of the coffee brands and coffee buyers on campus and put together a detailed report about Fair Trade Certified coffee at the request of decision-makers at their first target venue. The group made decisions together about key strategy questions and established clear accountability for each campaign event or task.

**Carefully-considered goals and targets in the context of the national movement:** The campaign initially targeted four main campus cafés under the same management. These cafés, which were supplied by Sara Lee, sold more coffee than other locations and were accessible to the entire campus community. EC members coordinated with students at Villanova who were also working on Sara Lee. Success with this target helped switch other areas like the medical center, and the UCLA Dining and Guest Services.

**Professional and thorough communication with management:** Students met several times with management, making their own Power Point presentation about Fair Trade and inviting a representative of TransFair. Most importantly, there was a very thorough follow-up, including phone calls and additional meetings.

**Creative organizing to make the campaign visible and create a broad base of support:** Over two academic years, EC members hosted events and speakers on Fair Trade, held numerous tablings and tastings, got more than 1000 signatures on a petition, and even had buttons made to raise the campaign’s visibility. When Fair Trade coffee debuted on campus, they handed out fliers with nickels taped to them – catching students’ attention and covering the new coffee’s increased cost!

When you're ready to go public with your request, check in with allied groups to see how strong your base of support is on campus. Then set up a meeting with management in charge of coffee purchasing at your targeted location in order to make a formal request for Fair Trade Certified coffee. Pull together a small group of people who represent different parts of the campus community to participate in the meeting.

### Before you meet:

**Plan the agenda** and make sure the members of your delegation know who is responsible for each agenda item. Be sure to cover why Fair Trade is needed and how only Fair Trade Certification guarantees farmers a fair price for their coffee. Plan a "pitch" that will appeal to the decision-makers. Many students emphasize that Fair Trade is not charity. *Fair Trade means direct trade and a fair price for a high-quality product.*

### When you meet:

**Bring educational materials** about Fair Trade to leave with the coffee buyer. Include in your packet a few news articles, Frequently Asked Questions about Fair Trade Coffee, Fair Trade Fact Sheet, and the most up-to-date list of licensed roasters from TransFair USA.

**Clearly state your request** for either adding, or serving only, Fair Trade Certified coffee at this venue.

**Indicate who is behind your request**, especially if you can claim to represent a wide range of campus constituencies.

### After you meet:

**Send a letter from your group to the coffee buyer, as well as the coffee roaster.** The letter should thank them for meeting and for any commitments they may have made, restate your request, and address any concerns that were raised during the meeting, if you can. A written letter documents your efforts and helps hold managers accountable if they don't move forward in a timely manner. It may be useful to send a copy to other members of management. If your target is the dining halls, consider sending a copy to the school's administration.

## To charge more or not to charge more?

One of the most common responses from managers is "We can't do Fair Trade if it costs more." Many students

have chosen to address this by letting management know up front that students are willing to pay a few cents more per cup to guarantee farmers a fair deal. In the case of coffee for dining hall services, quite a few roasters have been happy to switch to their Fair Trade coffee without a price increase. Before putting in writing that you would consider paying more per cup, test the waters to see if management is likely to insist on a price increase. If you must concede to paying more (which is likely if the supplier is a small roaster with much smaller profit margins), then suggest \$0.05 more per cup, as this should cover the difference in cost between Fair Trade Certified coffee and high-quality conventionally traded coffee. If the venue is currently serving non-specialty coffee (e.g. Maxwell House, Folgers), try to think creatively with management about ways to address a more substantial difference in cost.



Even if you have a quick or positive response to your formal request of management, you will need to do some basic education on campus to generate awareness and build visible support for the switch. If you have received a negative response to your meeting and letter, you have even more reason to mobilize the campus community. Consider a combination of the tactics below.

**A Fair Trade Workshop or Teach-In** with a well-respected speaker can educate more students, recruit volunteers and generate publicity for your campaign. Always have an action request, such as signing a petition, as a main component of your workshop. (See Fair Trade Workshop Guide and Sample Petition at [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org).) Contact TransFair or Oxfam about speaker possibilities.

**Fair Trade coffee tastings and tablings in a well-trafficked part of campus** are a great way to educate folks about Fair Trade. Most people won't pass up a free taste of gourmet coffee. Tasting/Tablings are also a good opportunity to collect signatures for a petition or recruit volunteers. If you don't have a relationship with a roaster that offers Fair Trade Certified coffee, TransFair USA can help you obtain donated coffee.

**An article, letter-to-the-editor, or op-ed piece** about your Fair Trade Campaign in the campus paper can increase the visibility of your efforts and attract new supporters (make sure contact information for campaign organizers is included). If you have an active ongoing campaign, ask the school paper to run periodic update articles. Pitching the story to the local papers is also a great way to connect with the larger community.

**Petition Drives** enable you to document the number of students supporting your efforts, and you can use the names and contact info for future actions. Present the petitions at a meeting, or if you prefer to mail it, make a photocopy every several hundred signatures, and then send the originals to the intended recipient, with copies to the coffee roaster and school paper, if appropriate. Don't forget to keep copies for yourself.

FAIR TRADE COFFEE  
TASTING/TABLING ESSENTIALS

- Make a sign that highlights the Fair Trade Certified label, or download one from Oxfam's website. Make a colorful banner that you can reuse later.
- Have plenty of brewed coffee, small tasting cups, sugar, milk/soy milk, stirrers, and napkins on hand. Ideally, serve the coffee from an airpot, which keeps it hot and fresh-tasting.

If you're requesting that a roaster donate Fair Trade Certified coffee for the event, make sure you ask well in advance. Be clear about the date and time of the event, how much coffee you need and whether it should be whole bean, ground or brewed coffee. Some roasters can supply cups, cream and sugar, as well.

If you're brewing the coffee yourself, taste it before serving to make sure it's good. The proportion of coffee grounds to water is critical! Remember, you have to win over people's tastebuds, as well as their hearts and minds.

- Know the content in "Frequently Asked Questions about Fair Trade Coffee" well, and have copies on hand.
- Have students sign a petition and get their contact information on a sign-up sheet so that you can reach them later if you need their support or want to update them on the campaign.
- Have any other materials you feel are relevant for folks to take away (e.g. Fair Trade: Environmental Benefits, Fair Trade Fact Sheet, Fair Trade: Empowering Communities).

Tips for getting more signatures on your petition

- Ask your professors to let you make a brief announcement and circulate the petition during class.
- Ask other student groups to take a clean copy of the petition, get signatures from their members, and return the copy to you.
- Do a Fair Trade Coffee tasting/abling at a high-traffic location during lunchtime to get students' signatures as they try a taste.

**A Letter writing or postcard campaign** to the coffee buyer and other relevant individuals (i.e. the administration) is useful **IF** combined with personal visits to the main recipient. Always provide a sample letter for participants to copy or borrow talking points. As a rule, hand-written letters are most effective. Keep track, as best you can, of how many letters are sent by collecting and mailing/delivering them yourself, or asking letter-writers to copy you (see sample on Oxfam's website).

**A faculty petition or sign-on letter** is another tool for documenting your broad base of support. Any administration values the opinions of their faculty! Enthusiastic professors will likely go the extra step and ask other members of their department to sign on as well.

**Rallies are a tactic of final recourse** – useful only if the collaborative approach fails. They are good for showing impressive numbers of supporters, **IF** you can guarantee the turnout. They also require a lot of work, and each successive one must be larger than the last – if not, your target will assume the campaign is losing momentum.

### What to do if they tell you “no.”

Say you've gone through all the motions of making a formal request, including a meeting, letter and phone calls, and the management either gives you a direct “No,” stalls, or won't return your calls. Perhaps they have told you that they can't do it because of the higher cost. None of this means you have lost – it's just time to turn up the heat. If you don't already have a broad base of support from other student organizations, now is the time to cultivate and demonstrate that support. Effective tactics include Fair Trade Coffee tabling/tastings, educational events, petition drives and letter-writing campaigns.

### Fair Trade Victory at Boston University

Activists on the BU campus were met with silence in their first attempts to approach the manager of the dining services to discuss making Fair Trade Certified coffee available. Despite the initial lack of communication, their persistence and creative approaches to educating students and demonstrating the demand for Fair Trade resulted in success: Fair Trade Certified coffee is now served in the dining halls on the Boston University campus. Shayna Harris and Rose-Del Adewebi, key organizers of this campaign, offer these observations on their tactics:

**Talk to people.** “We set up an informational table in the Student Union in an area where we couldn't be missed, and didn't let a student pass without handing them a pamphlet and directing them to the information table. At the table we showed “Santiago's Story,” a video about a Fair Trade coffee farmer, and had tons of posters and students in the coalition who were eager to answer questions.”

**Show student support.** “Besides getting thousands of signatures on petitions, our most valuable support came from one-on-one conversations about how Fair Trade would benefit and enrich our campus. With this increased support, visibility, and variety of student groups mobilized, we finally became a priority for campus dining services and sat down with the manager to talk about the reality of getting Fair Trade on campus.”

**Hold a teach-in.** “We also invited the manager of dining services to our final teach-in of the year. We publicized the event by having Green Mountain Coffee Roasters give out free Fair Trade coffee samples to students while we played music and handed out flyers. At the actual event, a coffee farmer from Mexico spoke about the positive benefits that Fair Trade has made possible in his community. The student demand combined with hearing the real-life story of a Mexican coffee farmer, led our dining services manager to agree to sell and brew Fair Trade coffee!”



### When you're getting close to a victory:

**Be realistic about how long it will take to bring in the new Fair Trade Certified coffee(s).** Let management know you support them in taking the time needed to find the right Fair Trade Certified product and promote it well. Inform your coalition about what the timeline will be and why.

**Work with management to develop signage** to be displayed where the Fair Trade Certified coffee will be served. Be sure the signs include the Fair Trade Certified label and indicate clearly which coffees are Fair Trade Certified. Most importantly, the airpot or brewer that dispenses the Fair Trade Certified coffee should also be labeled, so consumers don't get regular coffee when they think they're getting Fair Trade (and vice-versa).

**Develop plans for a launch event and ongoing promotion** of the new Fair Trade Certified coffee(s). Launch events are often the best opportunity for press coverage. Find out from Oxfam and TransFair whether any Fair Trade farmers will be touring your area at the time of your launch event. Or someone from Oxfam or TransFair may be available to speak.

### Timing can be everything.

As students and consumers, you have a lot of power to influence how quickly Fair Trade coffee appears on campus, once management agrees. While a rapid pace could be good for your coalition's morale, and venue managers may want to move quickly to satisfy public demand, some campuses have had problems with their new Fair Trade Certified coffee programs because they were implemented hastily. It is in your interest to leave enough time to develop appropriate signage and a promotional plan for the new Fair Trade Certified coffee. Because there are many Fair Trade Certified coffee varieties available, it may also take time for the roaster or manager to develop or choose the new product. Especially if you are asking a new coffee roaster to sign up with TransFair USA, we recommend that you stay in touch with TransFair to keep tabs on where the roaster is in the process. There are some minimum requirements that a roaster must meet, so the sign-up process can vary greatly in length. As you decide how to follow up after a positive decision, your group should balance these factors with the need to maintain momentum and ensure that management honors its commitments.

### Once you have succeeded in getting Fair Trade Certified coffee served in your target location:

**Hold your victory party!** Get all of your volunteers to come celebrate the victory along with management. But make sure the coffee is there first. The best way to know is by asking to see the coffee's original packaging, which should have the Fair Trade Certified label or the words "Fair Trade." Also, check that appropriate signage is in place. If you have any doubts, ask TransFair to check in with the roaster.

**Write thank you letters** to the coffee roaster, decision-makers and management at the café or dining hall.

**Work with management to promote the Fair Trade coffee** with tastings, tabling, newspaper articles, special events, etc.

**Check in with management periodically** to see how the coffee is selling and help trouble-shoot any problems that arise.

**Share your story with Oxfam or TransFair** so we can use it as a case study in student trainings. Email information about your campaign to [fairtrade@oxfamamerica.org](mailto:fairtrade@oxfamamerica.org) and [info@transfairusa.org](mailto:info@transfairusa.org).




Liam Brody/Oxfam

Coffee cooperative members perform a song about Fair Trade.

**Start planning your campaign's next steps with your coalition.**

Discuss what worked well with your first target and any lessons you learned. If your group is led by students who will be leaving campus in a semester or two, it is important to bring younger leaders to the fore as you move ahead.

Pick another coffee-serving establishment on campus, or outside the university. Local supermarkets, neighborhood cafés, city government offices, cultural institutions and places of worship are all good candidates.

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**ADDITIONAL FAIR TRADE ORGANIZING RESOURCES**

Visit [www.oxfamamerica.org/fairtrade](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/fairtrade) for ready-to-use campus organizing tools. There you'll find the following types of materials:

- Fair Trade Coffee Event Sign
- Fair Trade Workshop or Teach-In Guide
- Sample Letters and Postcards
- Sample Petition
- Tips for Working with the Media
- Public Service Announcement materials featuring Martin Sheen
- Sample Resolution and Purchasing Restriction



TransFair USA

Fair Trade connects producers and consumers in new and powerful ways.

For more information on Fair Trade Coffee and the Fair Trade movement around the world, check out these resources.

## Oxfam America

Oxfam America is dedicated to creating lasting solutions to hunger, poverty, and social injustice through long-term partnerships with impoverished communities around the world. Oxfam's web site contains information on the Fair Trade Coffee Campaign, including profiles on coffee-growing cooperatives and information for activists.

Oxfam America  
26 West Street  
Boston, MA 02111-1206  
800/77-0XFAM  
[www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)

## TransFair USA

TransFair USA, a non profit, is the only independent organization in the US that certifies companies and products that are traded according to internationally recognized Fair Trade criteria. TransFair USA educates consumers about Fair Trade and works with student groups, faith-based communities, international development groups, environmental organizations and others to build a strong consumer movement for Fair Trade products. TransFair USA currently certifies coffee and tea and in the future, plans to certify chocolate, bananas and other products.

TransFair USA  
1611 Telegraph Ave. Suite 900  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510/663 5260  
Fax: 510/663 5264  
[www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org)

## Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International

The Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO) is the international umbrella organization of independent monitoring and Fair Trade certification bodies.

Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO)  
Kaiser Friedrich Strasse 13 53113  
Bonn, Germany  
49-228-949230  
Fax: 49-228-2421713  
[www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)

## Global Exchange

Global Exchange is a human rights organization dedicated to promoting environmental, political, and social justice around the world. Since it was founded in 1988, Global Exchange has worked to increase global awareness among the US public while building international partnerships around the world. The organization

supports activists seeking to increase demand for Fair Trade coffee in the US with campaigning materials designed to help organizers and an informative listserv.

Global Exchange  
2017 Mission Street #303  
San Francisco, California 94110  
415/255-7296  
Fax: 415/255-7498  
[www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)  
[info@globalexchange.org](mailto:info@globalexchange.org)

## Équiterre

Équiterre (from the French words for equity and the earth) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting ecological, socially just choices through action, education and research. Since 1996 Équiterre has been working to promote Fair Trade coffee and to make it more accessible to consumers through its campaign, *A Just Coffee*.

Équiterre  
2177 Masson Street, Suite 317  
Montreal, Québec H2H 1B1 Canada  
514/522-2000  
[www.equiterre.qc.ca](http://www.equiterre.qc.ca)

## Fair Trade Federation and Fair Trade Resource Network

The Fair Trade Federation is an association of Fair Trade wholesalers, retailers, and producers. FTF links low-income producers with consumer markets and educates consumers about the importance of purchasing fairly traded products. FTF also supports the Fair Trade Resource Network for student activists promoting Fair Trade.

Fair Trade Federation, Inc.  
PO Box 698  
Kirksville, MO 63501 USA  
660/665-8962  
[www.fairtradefederation.com](http://www.fairtradefederation.com)

Fair Trade Resource Network  
c/o Traditions Fair Trade  
300 5th Ave. SW  
Olympia, WA 98501  
202/234-6797  
Fax: 360/705-0747  
[www.fairtraderesource.org](http://www.fairtraderesource.org)  
[info@fairtraderesource.org](mailto:info@fairtraderesource.org)

## International Federation for Alternative Trade

The International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT) is a federation of producers and alternative trading organizations (ATOs) seeking to improve the living conditions of the poor and oppressed in developing countries; and to change unfair structures of international trade.

International Federation for Alternative Trade  
69 Observatory Street  
Oxford OX2 6EP UK  
44 1865 510980  
Fax: 44 1865 201717  
[www.ifat.org](http://www.ifat.org)

## Max Havelaar

The Max Havelaar Foundation promotes sustainable production, trade and consumption. The Foundation offers access to international trade with good conditions for farmers and workers in disadvantaged parts of the Third World so that they can build a better future for themselves.

Stichting Max Havelaar  
Postbus 1252, 3500 BG  
Utrecht, Netherlands  
030-2337070  
Fax: 030-2332992  
[www.maxhavelaar.nl](http://www.maxhavelaar.nl)

## NorthWest Shade Coffee Campaign

The Northwest Shade Coffee Campaign raises awareness in the coffee industry and in the public about the positive role of shade and Fair Trade coffee in conserving migratory birds. The campaign currently has 36 coffee industry members and a core group of volunteers who are involved in public outreach activities.

Northwest Shade Coffee Campaign  
Seattle Audubon Society  
8050 35th Ave NE  
Seattle, WA 98115  
206/523-4483  
[coffee@seattleaudubon.org](mailto:coffee@seattleaudubon.org)

## Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC)

The Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC) is a grassroots movement of students and community members dedicated to challenging corporate power, and demanding that corporations treat people and the environment with respect. STARC has an activist group or "cluster" working on Fair Trade Coffee, and a listserv.

STARC  
405 14th Street, Suite 209  
Oakland, CA 94612  
510/272-9109  
[www.corpreform.org/FairTrade](http://www.corpreform.org/FairTrade)  
[staffer@corpreform.org](mailto:staffer@corpreform.org)

## Songbird Foundation

A non-profit foundation promoting awareness of the decline in migratory bird habitat and destructive coffee cultivation practices. The Songbird Foundation web site is a good source of information about the environment and how Fair Trade coffee growers help protect it.

The Songbird Foundation  
2367 Eastlake Avenue East  
Seattle, WA 98102  
206/374-3674  
[www.songbird.org](http://www.songbird.org)

## COFFEE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Publications that will help you become a better-informed activist:

*"Bitter Coffee: How the Poor are Paying for the Slump in Coffee Prices,"* Oxfam, 2000; Oxford, UK  
[www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/coffee/coffee.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/policy/papers/coffee/coffee.htm)

*The Coffee Book: Anatomy of an Industry from Crop to the Last Drop*  
Gregory Dicum and Nina Luttinger, 1999; The New Press, New York, NY

*Coffee With Pleasure: Just Java and World Trade*  
Laurel Waridel, 2002; Black Rose Books, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

*States and Social Evolution: Coffee and the Rise of Governments in Central America*  
Robert G. Williams, 1994; U. North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC

*Sustainable Coffee at the Crossroads*  
Paul D. Rice and Jennifer McLean, 1999; Consumers' Choice Council, Washington, DC  
[www.consumerscouncil.org/coffee/coffeebook/coffeebook.htm](http://www.consumerscouncil.org/coffee/coffeebook/coffeebook.htm)

*Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*  
Mark Pendergrast, 1999; Basic Books, New York, NY





Oxfam America  
26 West Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
800-77-OXFAM  
[www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)



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