

Public Affairs

Mobilising action for Fair Trade Public Procurement
&

Fair Trade Advocacy Office



Position Paper on the Committee of the Regions opinion on Fair Trade

The Fair Trade networks are pleased that the European Union's Committee of the Regions is developing an Opinion on Fair Trade in response to the EC Communication on Fair Trade from May 2009. The Fair Trade networks are fully supportive of the rapporteur's, Ms Kerstin Kiessler, views and draft opinion.

In this context, the Public Affairs project and the Fair Trade Advocacy Office, representing the main Fair Trade networks (World Fair Trade Organisation *WFTO*, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International *FLO*, and European Fair Trade Association *EFTA*) would like to suggest that the Committee of the Regions:

1. Recognises and supports Fair Trade
2. Includes a list of the main actions / examples (toolkit) with which local and regional authorities can, at their level, support marginalised producers and workers in the Global South, in the context of sustainable development and climate change adaptation.
3. In that regard, particular attention should be given to the inclusion of Fair Trade criteria in public procurement procedures as a legitimate way for local and regional authorities to support sustainable development
4. Identifies what the EC and EU Member States could be asked to do, to support these actions

The Committee of the Regions will be voting on the Opinion on “contribution to sustainable development: the role of Fair Trade and non governmental trade-related sustainability assurance scheme” during its next plenary session. Therefore, the Fair Trade networks would like to remind the local and regional authorities’ representatives the importance to:

1) RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT FAIR TRADE

Fair Trade should be seen as a holistic approach that covers the three pillars of sustainable development: social, environment and economic. Fair Trade is a concept clearly defined by the International Fair Trade movement through the FINE definition of Fair Trade and the Charter of Fair Trade Principles.

Fair Trade Definition

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade.

It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers especially in the South.”

Fair Trade organizations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade”.

This definition has already been supported by the EP Fair Trade Resolution of 2006, EC Fair Trade Communication of May 2009 and EESC opinion on Fair Trade Food of October 2009. The Fair Trade movement calls on the Committee of the Regions to also support Fair Trade movement definition.

Fair Trade comes as a ‘package’ of criteria and all of these criteria should be met for the product to be considered Fair Trade. There are two complementary Fair Trade systems (the integrated supply chain route -Fair Trade organizations- and the product labelling -Fairtrade label) which have demonstrated to improve the livelihoods of Fair Trade producers. Labels are a way to prove compliance with this internationally recognised definition.

Fair Trade should be recognised as a useful tool for local and regional authorities in meeting part of their obligations to national and internationally agreed principles such as Agenda 21, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the EU Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan and as an instrument for the forthcoming EU Climate Adaptation Strategy. Fair Trade can be used as a key instrument for local and regional authorities’ sustainable development and public purchasing policy, to ‘share the burden of sustainable development’ and more specifically to support marginalised producers and their communities in the South.

2) INCLUDE A LIST OF EXAMPLES / ACTIONS (TOOLKIT) THAT CAN SUPPORT FAIR TRADE

Network/Platform of European Authorities for Fair Trade

A considerable number of regional and local authorities have already adopted Fair Trade policies, as their own way to improve the livelihoods of marginalised producers and workers in the South. This is however not common in all Member States, with an unequal level of involvement and awareness of Fair Trade in Southern and Eastern Europe. Local and regional authorities could be supported to set up a Europe-wide cooperation in the field of Fair Trade. This network could exchange information, share experiences and create bench marking to help Southern and Eastern European countries to get ideas on how to support Fair Trade in the context of their sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategies.

Twinning for Fair Trade

Specifically, Northern local and regional authorities could twin with their equals in Southern and Eastern Europe on Fair Trade projects or as part of current twinning programme. This would enable the exchange of information that at the moment is located disproportionately in Northern Europe. This could be taken further, where communities not only come together to support Fair Trade and development in their own community but build relations and support for other communities across Europe in a certain field. This could be linked with the successful Fair Trade Towns campaign

Decentralised Cooperation, partnerships and Fair Trade projects

Many local and regional authorities have been developing their decentralised cooperation and providing support for specific projects in the South. Projects could be developed with authorities in the South. This would create support and solidarity between communities and encourage both north and south based authorities to see the impact of production and consumption has on communities, engaging together on projects that can help develop sustainable development and adaptation to climate change. This partnership would also encourage local and regional authorities in the South to understand the power they have with their purchasing power, where they can support their local producers and small and medium enterprises. An example of a successful project is the Britany region and the development of Fair Trade and Organic cotton.

Fair Trade Towns Campaign

The Fair Trade Town Campaign is an opportunity for local government, schools, businesses, community organisations and activists to work together. The campaign is run already in more than 730 towns in 12 European countries. The campaign was funded by the EU and more information can be found on the website, www.fairtradetowns.org, where interested parties can exchange information and best practices. This example shows how successful the campaign has been so far, but support from the Committee of the Regions could strengthen it greatly.

Information Campaigns for Citizens

Information campaigns for citizens help inform about the positive work that Authorities have been doing in the field of sustainable development and climate change adaptation. Authorities could engage in information campaigns around Fair Trade events. This would help citizens to make informed choices about the products they buy and their contribution to sustainable consumption and to support marginalized producers and workers in the South.

3) PROMOTE FAIR TRADE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AS A LEGITIMATE TOOL TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Fair Trade Public Procurement

Public Procurement is an important sector of the European economy, currently accounting for around 16,3% of the Community's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). An increasing number of public authorities are supporting sustainable development by promoting Fair Trade in their procurement procedures. Their purchasing decisions not only have an impact on the lives of producers in developing countries, but also set an example for others. "Fair Trade Public Procurement", i.e. introducing Fair Trade considerations into the different stages of public procurement procedures, while respecting the fundamental principles of EU law, is a legitimate means of contributing to sustainable development and eradicating poverty. This is why the Committee of the Regions should encourage the local and regional authorities that it represents, to engage in Fair Trade Public Procurement as part of their sustainable development strategy.

Fair Trade products can be purchased for hospitals, schools, city halls, administration departments and even in the form of uniforms for local civil servants.

For further information on how to procure Fair Trade, the European Observatory on Fair Trade Public Procurement (EU funded) gives a number of best practices, example tenders and guides:

<http://www.european-fair-trade-association.org/observatory/>.

A sample of best practice tenders can be found from the cities of Madrid, Nantes, and La Spezia, concerning various ranges of Fair Trade products, and procurement methods.

Information Campaigns for civil servants, schools and companies

When informing civil servants about Fair Trade, it is always important to combine technical information with additional practical information. For example a workshop about Fair Trade and public procurement must be related to a tasting of coffees, teas and/or other products. For schools, authorities could encourage a long term process, working up from a few specific Fair Trade activities to structural consumption and information sharing such as having a small Fair Trade shop, regular educational events and direct relations with children from producer countries. Authorities could encourage restaurants and local commerce to sell more Fair Trade products as part of these campaigns or events such as Fair Trade Week or a Fair Trade Menu. In a few countries like the UK and Belgium, there is a special campaign for companies which is called 'Fairtrade@work'. By organising a competition between companies, companies take initiative and can be very creative in how they promote Fair Trade and development issues, in their workplace.

4) ENCOURAGE EU MEMBER STATES AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE FAIR TRADE TOOLKIT

To help implement the identified tools to support Fair Trade, cooperation is needed from EU Member States and the European Commission. This cooperation comes in various forms:

A Fair and Sustainable Global Europe Strategy (EC level)

The "*Global Europe*" strategy needs to be revised so as to:

- ◇ promote sustainable development and not undermine the efforts to become competitive of those marginalised by conventional International trade rules and practices in the world markets;
- ◇ encourage high environmental and social standards in International trade;
- ◇ acknowledge the role that pro-poor private standards can play in achieving that goal;
- ◇ ensure a transparent trade negotiation process with adequate involvement of civil society, in particular representatives from marginalized producers and workers in the South.

¹ 'Global Europe' was launched in October 2006 in a European Commission Communication entitled "Global Europe: Competing in the World". The 'Global Europe' Communication puts forward a new doctrine for the EU's external economic policies centered around the imperative of 'competitiveness'. Global Europe is conceived as the "external dimension" of the Lisbon Strategy for "growth, jobs and competitiveness" (adopted in 2000) and a response to new "global challenges", such as the rise of China and India.

European Workplan for Fair Trade (EC level)

As the EP requested in its 2006 Resolution on Fair Trade and Development, the European Commission should prepare a work plan of policies and measures in support of Fair Trade. The European Commission needs to be reminded that it was identified that there was a need to set up an EC single contact point on Fair Trade, which would contribute to a consistent policy implementation across EC services.

Supportive EC Public Procurement (EC level)

Guidance given by the European Commission on the implementation of the EU Public Procurement Directives regarding the inclusion of social and environmental considerations, such as Fair Trade, should not be limited to a restrictive interpretation. This would run against the subsidiarity principle, and hinder the efforts that have been carried out by many of Authorities across the EU who choose Fair Trade Public Procurement as a successful tool to implement their commitments to sustainable development.

Policies to support Fair Trade and marginalised producers and workers in the South (EC/national level)

At both the European and national level, policies should be put in place that support and give legal guidance to help authorities and citizens. These should help to encourage and implement a range of activities for Fair Trade and to support marginalised producers and workers in the South.

Budget Earmarking for Fair Trade activities (EC/national level)

Earmarking in certain budget lines for local and regional authorities to access and implement their activities in Fair Trade would allow for implementation of twinning for Fair Trade, information campaigns and the setting up of a platform or network of European Fair Trade Authorities. Finances could also be offered as 'matching funds' to the decentralised projects implemented by local and regional authorities.

Information Campaigns (EC/national level)

The EC and national governments could also participate in information campaigns to allow citizens to make an informed choice about the products they buy. The exchange of best practices between authorities within Member States should also be supported by the national governments. This would allow the spread of information throughout the member state and the European Union and would allow Eastern and Southern Europe, who until now have had little knowledge of Fair Trade to decide if they would like to use it as a tool for their sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategies.

About Public Affairs

Public Affairs: Mobilising action for Fair Trade Public Procurement" is a 3 year project, co-financed by the European Commission. It brings together 3 of EFTA's members - CTM-Aitromercato in Italy, IDEAS in Spain and Oxfam Wereldwinkels in Belgium - and ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability.

For additional information on the Public Affairs project or on Fair Trade and Public Procurement, please contact:

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About FTAO

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office The Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) speaks out for Fair Trade and trade justice with the aim to improve the livelihoods of marginalized producers and workers - especially in the South. Based in Brussels, the office coordinates the advocacy activities of the three main Fair Trade Networks: The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) represent over 2 million Fair Trade producers and workers from more than 65 countries, 19 labelling initiatives, over 500 specialized Fair Trade importers, 4,000 world shops and more than 100,000 volunteers.

For more information, visit: <http://fairtrade-advocacy.org/>



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