

# How Can You Act Fairly with Your Spending?

Read about fair trade and discuss.

Definition from Wikipedia:

**Fair Trade** is an organized social movement and market-based approach that aims to help producers in **developing countries** [countries with low levels of material well-being] obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability. The movement advocates the payment of a higher price to producers as well as social and environmental standards. It focuses in particular on exports from developing countries to developed countries, most notably handicrafts, coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, cotton, wine, fresh fruit, chocolate and flowers.

- Background: Fair trade organizations work to protect small farmers, workers, and **artisans** [skilled manual laborers who make products that are functional and/or decorative] around the world who are not paid fairly or are in danger of losing their land because they cannot earn a fair wage. Big organizations may not always pay the **producers** (farmers, workers, and artists) a fair price because they are trying to get the best deals to pass on savings to their customers and to make the biggest profits. Sometimes these price negotiations leave the farmers or artists without enough money to earn a living wage. Philanthropic fair trade organizations, taking action to address a need that isn't met by governments or business, establish connections between farmers and **retail stores** [stores that sell directly to consumers]. Many stores are happy to carry fair trade certified products because the quality is high and they feel it is the right and fair thing to do. This brings more profits directly to the farmers and producers. The small farmer can use safe and environmentally sound practices that are better for workers and the world. This brings local practices to the **global**[involving the entire world] market.
- Questions for discussion:
  1. Have you ever seen in a store or purchased fair trade products? If so, what did you think of the quality?
  2. Why would a philanthropist (someone who shares time, talent, or treasure or takes action for the common good) choose to support unknown farmers across the world?
  3. Do you think you have the power to spend your money in ways that affect fairness and justice in the world?
  4. Would you buy a fair trade certified product even if it is more expensive because you know it benefits small farmers more? Why or why not?
  5. How does buying fair trade certified products affect the common good?

