

Your morning coffee can change the world

Poland is getting more and more involved in helping other countries build a better living for less fortunate. According to the TNS OBOP survey, 75% of Poles believe Poland should support developing countries. Many of those may ask a question how they can actively influence the life of world's poor. Buying the Fair Trade products may be an answer.

Recently Poland has been increasingly active as a donor of development assistance, supporting the social and economic progress of developing countries and contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is worth mentioning that sharing the fruits of success with the people from developing countries is widely accepted by the Polish society. According to the TNS OBOP survey, done in December 2006 for the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 75% of Poles claim that Poland should support developing countries.

What else – apart from financing aid programmes – can be done to express solidarity with the inhabitants of the developing countries?

Buying fair trade products may be the answer to this question. According to the definition agreed upon by four major fair trade networks, fair trade “a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade and contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers - especially in the South.”

In order to sell their products as Fairtrade, both producers and importers have to comply with very clear regulations developed by Fairtrade Labelling Organization. Fairtrade logo guarantees that:

- producers were paid the price that covers the costs of sustainable production and living
- the producers' organization was paid a 'premium' that can be invested in social, economic and environmental development projects, following their joint decision based on democratic procedures (e.g. building a hospital, financing organic certification process, investing in new equipment)
- contracts that were signed allow for long-term planning and sustainable production practices

Fairtrade standards refer to fundamental values, such as human rights and labor rights protection (e.g. prohibition of child labor or slavery, according to ILO conventions). They also promote empowerment of the local people and gender equality, as well as environment protection. The first and most popular product to carry the Fairtrade mark is coffee but

nowadays you can also find Fairtrade tea, chocolate, fruits, wine, cotton, flowers, even footballs.

Fairtrade movement offers an alternative to existing trade regime that favors short-sighted interests of the rich countries over human rights, while at the same time urging governments and international organizations to change those rules in a way that would be beneficial for all countries. One of the main issues is putting an end to agricultural subsidies, paid by rich countries to their farmers. Subsidies and trade tariffs enforced by European Union and US make it impossible for African countries to sell their products on the global market, therefore impeding the development of the region.

Fair trade in Poland

In recent years fair trade movement has finally reached Poland. One of the main events to promote this new concept was the conference “Fair Trade – Fair Play. Fair Play Rules in Trade with Africa” organized by the British Embassy in Warsaw in cooperation with the Institute of Developing Countries, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies Warsaw University, Polish Society of African Studies and the Fair Trade Association “The Third World and Us”. The perspectives of developing fair trade and ethical consumption in Poland were also discussed during the conference “Globally, locally – always fair” organized by Grupa eFTe on the occasion of World Fairtrade Day 2007.

Since May 2006 Fairtrade products are available in Poland and they are becoming increasingly popular among local customers.

Global dimension of our everyday shopping

Choosing Fairtrade products is one of many ways in which we, the consumers, can influence political, social and environmental conditions in Poland and worldwide. Sustainable consumption – as a key factor responsible for sustainable development – is one of the priorities set out in Agenda 21, strategic document adopted by world leaders during Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and later reaffirmed in Johannesburg in 2002 during World Summit for Sustainable Development.

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