

Making policy statements for Fairtrade

This is the support text that can be downloaded from a webquest on creating policies on Fairtrade. The webquest is an online activity that helps students to use research on the web to fulfil a direct, focused task. In this case creating a policy.

To find the webquest go to www.global.lgfl.net and you will find it under 'highlights'.

Fairtrade is Too Simple?

Fairtrade reduces complex issues of trade and the economics of poverty to the choice of the consumer, you, the person who buys the things. This is brilliant in terms of making individual action easier, and in terms of moving away from charity to issues of trade, but it is very important to use Fairtrade as a **starting point for discussion**.

Questions people raise include: why cannot everything be Fairtrade? How much do the farmers actually get? Are there better ways of helping the people? Why are the farmers poor in the first place?

Importance of Co-ops

Fairtrade is the easiest way an individual can try to help the poor in the world. Instead of helping communities through charity, which means raising and giving money, it allows communities that are poor to use their own economic activities to get a fairer wage. This normally relies on the creation of producer co-ops.

This has been done over the past 100 years through the creation of co-operatives. A co-operative is a business that is democratically run by its members, to help its members, and its members can be the business workers, the business customers, or a group of small businesses working together, like a group of farmers or producers.

Small farmers do not have the selling power to negotiate a fair price for their goods with a middleman, or to buy at economic rates seeds, fertilisers etc (must buy in bulk). By grouping together into a co-operative the farmers can start negotiating better prices, selling and buying in bulk, and then saving through a Credit Union (a co-operative type of small local bank) to get enough money to invest in the farm, or a better house, or in education, and getting fair loans for investment.

Supply Chain

Companies like Twin Trading and Equal Exchange, set-up Fairtrade companies like Café Direct and the newest one, Liberation Foods, which are owned by the growers. Fairtrade **does not** ensure that the profits from the supply chain go to the growers, it simply ensures a fair price and a social dividend. Most food is bought unprocessed and its value increases as it travels along the supply chain, most of the profits never reaching the country of origin. This is challenged if the supply chain is owned by the growers themselves.

With Liberation Foods, some 22,000 co-operative farmers around the world own 42% of the company that imports, processes, packages and markets nuts. This allows the growers to benefit from all the points of the supply chain!

It would be good for your students to have a sense of the supply chain – this can be got from playing the banana game, and who gets what money:

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/var/storage/original/application/dfe325509d429ea0e9ce8a6dae26d010.pdf>

There are also a wonderful set of simple animations done by Oxfam to explain trade and inequality at:

http://www.maketrade4fair.com/en/index.php?file=issues_dumping.htm&cat=2&subcat=3&select=1

The coffee supply breakdown is;

http://www.maketrade4fair.com/en/index.php?file=coffee_chain06.htm

There is also a great cartoon, created by CAFOD on 'Nuts' and trade, The Luckiest Nut in the World: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtIYyUJjACw>

Making the Policy

For the school to create a policy statement on Fairtrade it should include the whole school, preferably starting with the school council, and then ending with the Governors and Senior Staff.

The school council should discuss and vote on policy statements, after doing some initial research. The example below tries to place Fairtrade into the context of world poverty, the United Nations and the role of Co-ops.

They should then create a powerpoint to explain the policy to their classes and to be the start of a class discussion and vote. The suggested policy statements to be found on this websquest are written by an adult, and could be used as an idea but should be rewritten by the children after their research.

The policy should be presented to the staff, senior management team and governors, especially to get their consent over issues of purchasing and curriculum. Then once the whole school has voted on it, the governors should be asked to include it in the school development plan.

A Policy Statement:

Start with the context and values of the policy. In this case it is about world poverty, and as Fairtrade relies on producer co-ops, a major business tool to empower people and help communities out of poverty, it would be a very appropriate point to get students to learn about co-ops.

Task 1: Why do you want a policy on Fairtrade?

You will need to discuss what poverty is and find out people's response to it. There are some great starting points on the webquest. There is a sheet of statements that ask for people to respond to, called 'Get Talking'; there are the needs and wants cards to think about what poverty means; there is an assembly and some case studies giving the human side; and there are some simple activities to do with poverty and trade... The important thing is to have discussion and from this discussion to create your own statement about poverty.

General value:

"This school council expresses its support for the poor of the world, and will do its utmost to help reduce world poverty."

“This school council supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and will do its utmost to ensure children all around the world have these rights. This states:

“Article 27

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

“Article 32

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

Reasons for statement, you can refer to someone else's, as below, or use reasons that have come up in your class/council/group discussions:

“We support the UK's Department for International Development's statement:

“More than a billion people, one in five of the world's population, live in extreme poverty. This means they live on less than 65p a day. Ten million children die before their fifth birthday, most of them from preventable diseases. More than 113 million children do not go to school.

“In a world of growing wealth, such levels of human suffering and wasted potential are not only morally wrong, they are also against our own interests. We are becoming much closer to people in faraway countries. We trade more and more with people around the world.

“Many of the problems which affect us, such as war and conflict, international crime, refugees, the trade in illegal drugs and the spread of diseases like HIV and AIDS, are caused or made worse by poverty in developing countries. Getting rid of poverty will make for a better world for everybody.”

Ref: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/>

Task 2: What are other people doing about this issue?

Once you have your general values statement it would be good to put it in the context of what other people are doing about poverty. There are two main groups, all the countries of the world, as represented by the United Nations, and the British Government's Department for International Development. There are a few websites that will help the council to learn about these organisations.

Framing it within the actions of the United Nations:

“This school council supports the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1, that aims to half the number of people in the world living on less than a dollar a day and to half the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015.”

[This introduces what all the countries of the world, through the United Nations, are trying to do.](#)

You could also add a statement about the British government.

Framing it within the actions of the British Government:

“This school council urges the British government to support the work of its Department for International Development in ending world poverty. We support the DfID’s work:

“DFID supports long-term programmes to help tackle the underlying causes of poverty. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made.

“DFID works in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies, and the European Commission.

DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide, with a budget of nearly £4 billion in 2004. Its headquarters are in London and East Kilbride, near Glasgow.”

Ref: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/missionstatement.asp>

Task 3: What is one of the major tools to combat poverty and increase the rights of the individual?

To understand the power behind Fairtrade you really need to understand the supply chain and the power of co-ops. There are some simple games and web activities that look at the supply chain. The best way to think about the importance of co-ops is in the statistics, the numbers.

Importance of Co-ops:

“This school council recognises that over 3 billion people’s lives, nearly half the world’s population, are made better through co-ops, according to the United Nations (1994).

“Fairtrade for small farmers and producers depends on co-ops.

“Small farmers and producers do not have the selling power to negotiate with a middleman a fair price for their goods, or to buy at economic rates seeds, fertilisers etc (must buy in bulk). By grouping together into a co-operative the farmers can start negotiating better prices, selling and buying in bulk, and then saving through a Credit Union to get enough money to invest in the farm, or a better house, or in education, and getting fair loans for investment.

“Most food or produce is bought unprocessed, which is cheap. The value increases as it travels along the supply chain and is processed, most of the profits never reach the country of origin. This is challenged if the supply chain is owned by the growers themselves, as a co-operative.

“Co-ops give power and rights to the growers and producers through being democratically controlled by them and by acting in their best interests.

“Our school council will promote co-operative learning, working and businesses within the school, its local community and around the world.”

Other statistics about Co-ops:

100 million jobs provided by Co-ops around the world, that's 20% more than provided by multi-national corporations...

Co-ops are the largest private employer in Switzerland...

Indian Dairy Co-ops provide work for 12.90 million families...

Second largest employer in Colombia...

Provides 71% of all the jobs in Wisconsin (USA)...

Task 4: Why Fairtrade?

Now you have statements of values, of other people's activities, of the role of co-ops, now you need to make the specific statements about Fairtrade, why you support it and what is the school going to do...

Fairtrade:

This school council supports Fairtrade as one way of supporting poor farmers and producers. Fairtrade ensures they get a fair price for their goods, that their communities get a social dividend to support their education, health or water, and encourages them to look after the environment.

Detailed policy:

How will the school support Fairtrade?

This school council will promote Fairtrade and poverty reduction by:

1. register to become a Fairtrade School with the Fairtrade Foundation's website.
2. holding regular stalls of Fairtrade products.
3. organising at least three events a year promoting awareness of Fairtrade and issues of trade justice.
4. creating a school steering group of children, staff, a governor, a member of senior staff, and a parent to meet at least once a term to ensure that this policy is being acted on.
5. ensuring the school council and class circle times annually discuss the role of Fairtrade and co-ops in getting rid of world poverty.
6. trying to ensure that fruit, coffee, tea, juices and other Fairtrade foods are supplied within the school wherever possible.

7. trying to ensure that sports equipment and kits are Fairtrade.
8. trying to ensure that parents have a choice of buying Fairtrade school uniforms.
9. ensuring that for at least two year groups in the school students learn about Fairtrade in at least three subjects.
10. organising events with the wider community to promote Fairtrade and co-ops.
11. for the school to look at creating a Credit Union group for its students to allow them to save money and learn about financial literacy.
12. ensuring Fairtrade posters are in all classrooms and the staffroom.
13. each year creating a Fairtrade display, including children's work.
14. forming contacts with businesses, Fairtrade producers and co-ops locally and internationally who can help the school, its staff and children learn about how co-ops are created and run.
15. encouraging student projects in the school to be run as co-ops so that children learn how such businesses work and help communities to change and improve.
16. presenting a school assembly on Fairtrade and poverty reduction.
17. that this policy is presented, once voted on by the school council is presented to all classes for discussion and voting, to ensure that it represents the voice of the students.
18. presented to the Staff, Senior Management Team and the Governors to ensure their support and to propose that the policy becomes part of the school development plan.
19. that this policy is reviewed very year by the new school council, and any changes presented to the whole school as in 15-17.