

# Fair Comment



The e-newsletter of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba Program > Spring 2010

Welcome to the spring edition of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba e-newsletter. In these pages, we will provide you with the highlights in local and international fair trade news, while giving you ideas on how to engage your school, workplace or community group in fair trade issues.

You will be pleased to note that our province continues to be a leader in all things fair trade. Currently, thanks to the dedication of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, Manitoba carries the most fair trade wines of any jurisdiction in the country. In addition, this year's One-Month Challenge engaged hundreds of Manitobans - garnering massive support for fair trade and sending a message to retailers that consumers are shopping ethically. On the international front, Ben & Jerry's, the ice cream powerhouse, has committed to using only Fair Trade Certified ingredients in all their ice cream flavours. It is our hope that more large corporations follow this lead and realize that fair trade is good business for everyone.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We hope you'll take action as a global citizen and join us in supporting and promoting fair trade in your community and throughout Manitoba.

Fair Trade Manitoba - a program of the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) - works with retailers, consumers and organizations to inform people about the benefits of fair trade and encourage its wider availability in the province. To find out more about Fair Trade Manitoba and fair trade issues in general, visit [www.fairtrademanitoba.ca](http://www.fairtrademanitoba.ca).

Contact us at (204) 987 6420 or [fairtrade@mcic.ca](mailto:fairtrade@mcic.ca).



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*"Manitoba is really on the radar now when it comes to fair trade in Canada. People in the business of fair trade are starting to pay attention."*

- Michael Zelmer, Community Relations Manager for Transfair Canada

Visit us at [www.fairtrademanitoba.ca](http://www.fairtrademanitoba.ca) to access

- > A Fair Trade Shopping Guide for Manitoba
- > Information on fair trade and its benefits
- > Resources for bringing fair trade issues to the classroom
- > Details on upcoming fair trade events
- > The latest international news on fair trade
- > A video on fair trade in Manitoba

# Many Fair Trade Wines to Choose From

MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba program congratulates the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) for its commitment to sourcing Fair Trade Certified wines. There are now over twenty different fair trade wines from Argentina, Chile and South Africa available in red and white at most Manitoba Liquor Marts in Winnipeg and around the province. They can be identified by the international fair trade logo and by "shelf talkers" (signs that describe the item) affixed below them in stores.



A year ago, MCIC staff first met with the Minister Responsible for the MLCC (Andrew Swan at the time) and MLCC management when only two fair trade wines were available in Manitoba. MLCC officials committed themselves to increasing that number, doing high profile public promotion of fair trade wines, and educating MLCC staff about fair trade concepts. Credit also goes to the socially responsible companies that are making fair trade wines available to consumers and retailers. Manitoba now sells more fair trade wines than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

## Manitobans Take On the One-Month Challenge

Over 700 Manitobans participated in MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba One-Month Challenge this February and March. The challenge asked participants to switch to only fair trade brands of coffee, tea and chocolate for 30 days starting February 14, for a chance to win great fair trade prizes. Our lucky prize package winners this year were Maria Abiusi, Allison Eidse, Cathie Clement of the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba and Craig Gibb of the Windsor Park United Church Young Adult Group. **MCIC would like to thank Mennonite Central Committee's Ten Thousand Villages for their extra enthusiasm and support with promotion during the 2010 One-Month Challenge.**



MCIC would also like to congratulate all participants of the One-Month Challenge. In being part of this initiative you are taking action as a global citizen by raising awareness about fair trade. Those that buy fair trade products and encourage others to do the same are taking a stand against child labour and exploitation in the developing world. Campaigns like the One-Month Challenge send an important message to retailers; Manitobans are prepared to use their consumer power for good.

*The One-Month Challenge is a great way to raise awareness and I hope to encourage others in buying fair trade products on a regular basis. I really liked the "where to find fair trade products in your area" part of the website...great help for the fair trade newbies!*

- One-Month Challenge participant

## Credit Goes to ACU

Assiniboine Credit Union has been a strong supporter of MCIC's Fair Trade Manitoba program and especially our Fair Trade One-Month Challenge. They have not only provided financial support, but also promotional support of our fair trade activities through ACU's web site, at their branches and at our events. We also appreciate the expertise and advice of ACU personnel as MCIC works with the community development and small business communities on these important economic and social issues. Thanks!

# Fair Trade, A Long Term Solution

Fair Trade. Just another simple answer to a very complicated problem? We are bombarded with news of poverty and injustice on a daily basis. There seems to be no end of projects to support, and crises to donate to. We give what we can, and besides, many of these countries have been struggling for decades and even centuries. How can buying fair trade really make a difference? And how many fair trade carvings and embroidery pieces do we need?

There is no doubt that economic problems run deep and donations are not a long term solution. But fair trade is not about dealing with acute crises, it is about building sustainable local economies, supporting capacity building, and empowering people to improve their present and their future. Equal pay and an equal voice for women, education, empowerment, adult labour, work for the disabled, safe working conditions, dialogue, transparency, respect and of course fair wages - these are the words that describe fair trade. Everything we buy is produced by someone, and our consumer decisions affect people's lives. When we choose to shop fair trade, we are supporting long term change for people and communities.

Supporting fair trade used to mean buying simple gifts at tiny self-help shops, or coffee that was big on principles but not so much on taste. Those days are long gone. Fair trade chocolate and coffee, and even oranges, bananas, rice, sugar and ice cream can be found in many mainstream stores. Fair trade clothes, shoes, flowers and even wine are available - all it takes is a little Googling. And at Ten Thousand Villages - Canada's largest and oldest fair trade organization and a project of MCC - you can find fair trade jewelry, personal accessories, home décor, furniture, toys, instruments, paper products, garden accessories, skin care products, and a host of



gourmet and organic food products. Through personal and on-line shopping it is possible to make fair trade a part of our every day consumer decisions.

When the Tsunami hit Sri Lanka in 2004 it was the fair trade producer group Gospel House that had the knowledge and resources to help establish brick and boat building businesses in affected villages. When the earthquake hit Indonesia in 2009 it was the fair trade producer group Pekerti that provided immediate money and shelter to affected areas. When there was mass rioting in Kenya in 2008, according to Mike Muchilwa, Director of the Fair Trade producer group KICK, "... many artisans would have joined the looting, destruction and death had it not been for fair trade." Fair trade empowers people to help themselves and each other.

Fair trade is part of the answer to a complicated problem. By incorporating fair trade into our consumer decisions we can make a difference, every day. No donations required.

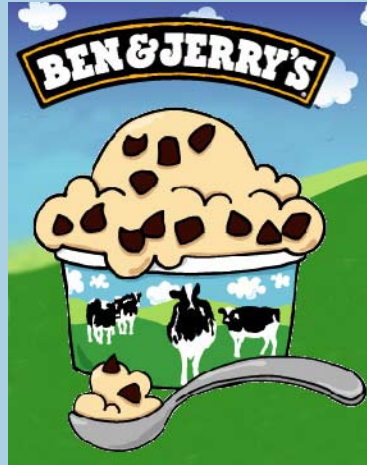
***By Ingrid Heinrichs Pauls, Mennonite Central Committee head office in Hamburg.***

*At Ten Thousand Villages, we believe that Fair Trade relationships are of vital importance in the face of tragedy because they allow North American consumers to support, in lasting ways, the meaningful work that Haitian partners are doing to restore and rebuild their communities.*

- Gwen Repeta, Ten Thousand Villages

# News from Away Ben & Jerry's Goes Fair Trade

Ben & Jerry's announced its commitment to go fully fair trade across its entire global flavor portfolio. From Cherry Garcia to Chocolate Fudge Brownie, all of the flavors in all of the countries where Ben & Jerry's is sold will be converted to fair trade Certified ingredients by the end of 2013.



Ben & Jerry's was the first ice cream company in the world to use fair trade Certified ingredients starting in 2005, and today it's racing ahead as the first ice cream company to make such a significant commitment to fair trade across its global portfolio.

"Fair trade is about making sure people get their fair share of the pie," says cofounder Jerry Greenfield. "The whole concept of fair trade goes to the heart of our values and sense of right and wrong. Nobody wants to buy something that was made by exploiting somebody else."

Ben & Jerry's Fair Trade commitment means that every ingredient that can be

sourced Fair Trade Certified, now or in the future, is Fair Trade Certified. Globally, this involves converting up to 121 different chunks and swirls, working across 11 different ingredients such as cocoa, banana, vanilla and other flavorings, fruits, and nuts. It also means working with Fair Trade Cooperatives that total a combined membership of over 27,000 farmers.

"Congratulations to Ben & Jerry's on the scale and the depth of this commitment to take their whole range fair trade," says Rob Cameron, CEO of Fairtrade Labelling Organizations

International (FLO). "Tackling poverty and sustainable agriculture through trade may not be easy but it is always worth it, and Ben & Jerry's has demonstrated real leadership in laying out this long-term ambition to engage with smallholders, who grow nuts, bananas, vanilla, cocoa, and other Fair Trade Certified ingredients. Ben & Jerry's, like all of us in the fair trade movement, believe that people can have fun standing up to injustice and campaigning against poverty while enjoying some of Ben & Jerry's best-selling favorites like Phish Food and Chocolate Fudge Brownie."

Farmers selling fair trade products earn a better income, which allows them to stay on their land. Fair trade premiums also allow for reinvestment in their farms, their families, their communities and their future. Fair trade means that certified farmers are using environmentally sound practices to grow and harvest their crops in a sustainable way.

*Article courtesy of QSR Magazine*

## Celebrate World Fair Trade Day, May 8



From May 1 to 15, the British celebrate "Fair Trade Fortnight", which North Americans call "Fair Trade Weeks". Saturday, May 8, is World Fair Trade Day! Now is the time to engage your school, workplace or community group with a fair trade activity!

Invite a speaker, show a video or play a game to educate your group or class on fair trade. We can help you with this. Contact MCIC for resources and information.

Have a fundraiser with fair trade products and give the proceeds to an international project.

Host a fair trade coffee/tea party in your staff room to raise awareness and allow staff to sample fair trade products.

Consider purchasing fair trade sports balls and athletic clothes for your recreation sports team. We can help you with sourcing.

Give a fair trade products as graduation and end-of-year presents.

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# Fair Trade Advocates for Avocado Producers

Fruit lovers take note! Yet another fair trade fruit is available in our markets; the avocado.

One of the pioneer organizations in bringing fair trade, organic avocados into the North American market is Fairtrasa, led by the award-winning social entrepreneur Patrick Struebi. Fairtrasa started up in 2004 with Mexican avocados and added Argentinean wines in 2005. Since then, they have expanded to mangoes, limes, grapefruit, coconuts and other fruit, sourcing also in Peru and Southeast Asia and distributing to Europe as well as North America. Struebi saw that small farmers lacked capital, were squeezed by markets and middlemen, were getting poorer and abandoning their traditional way of life. As large companies seized their land, the rural poor became economic refugees, fleeing to the cities or across the US border. Fairtrasa provides capital, access to international markets, environment and

food safety programs, entrepreneurial training, and local infrastructure, such as water, roads and computers.

One of Strebi's avocado producers is Alfredo Anguianos. In 1993, Alfredo gave up on a life on the land and paid a trafficker to smuggle him across the US border. While working a series of menial jobs in America, he heard that his parents' farm faced collapse. He returned home to what he thought would be a life of poverty but then joined the local organic producers' association. Now, selling to Fairtrasa, he inspects his two metre high avocado bush-like trees, heavily laden with fruit. Fairtrasa pays Alfredo a minimum price which is above the world market price, plus the fair trade premium. If the world market price exceeds Fairtrasa's price, then it automatically increases.

Alfredo says that there is more money in his family now for school books, food and house repairs. The key for

him, he says, is the guarantee that his produce will be sold, and at a set price or higher. While Fairtrasa pays him \$1.22 per kilo, including the premium, local traders try to exploit producers, offering only 70 cents. Given their ability in Mexico to grow avocados at different altitudes, avocados can be harvested year-round rather than the usual twice per year. This gives Mexican growers a definite advantage over other avocado-growing regions and means that sales potential really is unlimited. The future for Alfredo and the whole fair trade avocado market seems assured.

Manitoba grocers are also beginning to bring in fair trade, organic avocados. Look for the logo and ask your storekeeper. It's another success story in community development, poverty reduction and good eating!

*By Zack Gross, originally published in the Brandon Sun newspaper*

## Manitoba Hosts Fair Trade Champions

In March, MCIC welcomed **Ian Hussey** to Manitoba. Ian is the founder of the Canadian Student Fair Trade Network, and has helped develop the Canadian Coalition for Fair Trade. On Friday, March 26, Ian visited both Garden City Collegiate and Springs Academy to speak about the importance of fair trade, and spoke with students and staff at the University of Winnipeg as part of a fair trade coffee break. Ian also facilitated a discussion at Mondragon Cafe and Bookstore regarding his dissertation content, and then visited Brandon on March 27th to speak at a wine-and-cheese event hosted by The Marquis Project. The wine served was Fair Trade Certified.

**Stacey Toews**, one of the founders of Level Ground Trading, also visited in March. Stacey was at Winnipeg's Ten Thousand Villages (Plaza Drive) store on Saturday, March 13 to give demonstrations on how his fair trade coffee is roasted. He gave away samples of the diverse blends and spoke with the public about his work with Level Ground. Stacey also spoke about fair trade at Arthur Day and Robert Andrews Middle School in Winnipeg.

**MCIC would like to thank both Ian and Stacey for helping spread the word about fair trade in Manitoba!**

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