

# **Fair Trade Coffee Talking Points**

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## **HUH?**

Fair Trade certified coffee is now available at Princeton! Café Vivian brews FT/organic coffee daily and will use it for espresso, and Dining Services is working with its supplier to get FT in all the dining halls.

## **What does Fair Trade Certified Mean?**

Coffee with the Fair Trade Certified label guarantees consumers that the farmers who grew the coffee: 1) are paid a fair price for their harvest and 2) are organized into democratically-organized cooperatives that sell direct to buyers in consuming countries. The Fair Trade System involves 300 Fair Trade cooperatives representing 550,000 farmers and their families from 21 countries throughout Latin America, Asia and Africa who produce Fair Trade coffee.

## **How is it certified in the United States?**

TransFair USA, which launched its Fair Trade Certified label in Spring of 1999, is the only third-party certification agency for Fair Trade coffee in the US. The presence of TransFair's certification label on a bag of coffee means that every step involved in getting your coffee from the crop to your cup has been monitored and certified by an independent, third-party certification agency to ensure the farmers really received a fair price for the coffee.

## **Why is Fair Trade important now?**

World coffee prices have plummeted in recent years. As a result small coffee farmers receive prices for their coffee that are less than the costs of production, forcing them into a cycle of poverty and debt. With little or no income between harvest months, farmers are usually forced to sell their next crop in advance to exploitative middlemen, who pay far below the harvest's value.

## **What does FT do for the farmers?**

Farmers receiving a Fair Trade price for their coffee can afford adequate healthcare for their families and can keep their kids in school longer, instead of working in the fields. Some of the revenues from Fair Trade co-ops are also used for community projects, such as building schools and healthcare centers. Revenues are also often used to provide farmers with training in organic farming techniques.

## **Why is it important to buy FT over other coffee?**

Coffee is worth an estimated \$18 billion in the US alone. This means that the coffee we choose to buy is a powerful tool for positive change. Unfortunately, the benefits of the FT system are not guaranteed to all Fair Trade farmers because there is not sufficient demand for their coffee. Last year less than 20% out of the 165 million pounds of Fair Trade coffee produced was actually sold on Fair Trade terms. By selling Fair Trade, café owners can help build the market for all of the Fair Trade coffee produced each year and make it possible to enroll even more farmers in the Fair Trade program.

### **Does Fair Trade Certified mean organic, too?**

About 15% of Fair Trade farms are certified organic and approximately 80-85% of all Fair Trade farms don't use pesticides but have not yet been certified. Fair Trade coffee is always grown on small farms by family farmers who tend to avoid the use of pesticides and take meticulous care of their crops. Revenues from Fair Trade cooperatives are often used to train farmers in organic farming techniques, such as composting and mulching.

### **Is Fair Trade Certified coffee also bird-friendly or shade grown?**

Most Fair Trade Certified coffee is also shade-grown, bird-friendly coffee because all Fair Trade coffee is grown by small family farmers, most of whom own traditional, shaded farms that host a high diversity of birds. In addition to providing a rich habitat for birds, these shade trees often bear fruit, providing additional food or income for the farmers and their families.

### **Does Fair Trade Certified coffee cost more for companies or consumers?**

Not necessarily. Fair Trade coffee is usually within the same price range as other gourmet coffee. The main reason coffee farmers earn a better income under Fair Trade is that the farmer cooperatives export directly to importers, cutting out the conventional middlemen who typically capture more of the profit. Fair Trade importers pay the Fair Trade price (\$1.26/lb) to Fair Trade cooperatives; roasters pay TransFair a licensing fee of 10¢/lb of green coffee to use TransFair's Fair Trade Certified label. This fee is used to cover certification costs, including annual visits to farmer cooperatives and promotional efforts to increase consumer demand for Fair Trade Certified coffee. TransFair overhead is covered by foundation grants.

### **Where can I find FT coffee?**

On campus, every day at CAFÉ VIVIAN. In town, Wednesdays at Bucks Co., the 22nd of every month at Starbucks, bulk and brewed at the Whole Earth Center, and bulk at Wild Oats. In addition, Fair Trade coffee has gained a rapidly increasing market share since it was introduced to the US market in 1999. It is now offered by over 100 companies and can be purchased at over 7,000 locations including Safeway, Borders bookstores, and Ralph's supermarkets.

### **Will I like Fair Trade certified coffee?**

Surveys show that more consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about social and environmental issues, and are even willing to pay a little more money for coffee that supports a cause they believe in. Buying Fair Trade coffee is an ideal way for you to support social justice and environmental preservation with every cup of coffee you drink. Fair Trade coffee also tastes great – according to some, “a true pleasure to the palate and the conscience!”

### **Where can I order wholesale Fair Trade Certified coffee?**

You can find a list of wholesale Fair Trade licensees at <http://www.transfairusa.org/> or <http://www.globalexchange.org/economy/coffee/licensees.html>

### **Where can I find more information about Fair Trade Certified coffee?**

Global Exchange: <http://www.globalexchange.org/economy/coffee>  
TransFair USA: <http://www.transfairusa.org/>