

The Sisters Coffee Press



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AN ETHIOPIAN WOMAN ON A FAIR TRADE FARM

A FAIR TRADE OFF?

A Brief Look at Fair Trade Coffee

BY HARRISON WOMACK

If you buy a Fair Trade certified product in the United States, it is certified by the non-profit company Transfair USA. But what does it mean that a product is “Fair Trade?”

Transfair USA’s mission is to “enable sustainable development and community empowerment by cultivating a more equitable global trade model that benefits farmers, workers, consumers, industry, and the earth.” It does so by being one of the 24 members of Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International and certifying the standards set by the FLO. Basically what it does is to guarantee a bottom line that a farm’s coffee price cannot fall beneath, and if the market happens to be higher than the bottom line it promises a price slightly above the market. Their vision “is a world in which all producers can enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfill their potential and decide on their future.”

However, there is controversy surrounding the Fair Trade movement. In an article in December 2006 the Economist wrote some objections. First, Fair Trade is not for “all producers,” but is only eligible for small farms and co-ops. “...limiting certification to co-ops means ‘missing out on helping the vast majority of farm workers, who work on plantations,’ says Mr. Wille of the Rainforest Alliance, which certifies producers of all kinds.” Secondly, the article said, guaranteeing a minimum price produces no incentive to improve quality, thereby giving a low quality product the same price as a higher quality product simply due to an organizational status. Thirdly, the article argued that Fair Trade is an inefficient way to get money to producers. “Retailers add their own enormous mark-ups to Fairtrade products and mislead consumers into thinking that all of the premium they are paying is passed on.” It went on to say that only about 10% of the price a consumer pays actually gets back into the hands of the producer.

Also simply because a coffee is not “Fair Trade” does not mean it was traded unfairly. For instance our Guatemala Finca Villaure was bought well above the Fair Trade price and ALL of that money went directly to the producers and not to any middlemen.

The Economist article was published Dec. 7th 2006 and titled “Voting with your Trolley?” Accessed online 9/10/2010 <http://www.economist.com/node/8380592>

SCC CORE VALUES

BY HARRISON WOMACK

As a family owned and operated enterprise, Sisters Coffee Company is built upon the mission, vision, and ideals of its owners, the Durhams. Late last year they spent hours and hours developing the core values for the company. After much deliberation they arrived at four words to sum up their beliefs:

- Coffee
- Ministry
- Stability
- Community

“Sisters Coffee Company is a Christ-centered market place ministry innovating towards coffee excellence as it creates an experience of comfort in the heart of the community while building stable families, stable relationships, and stable finance.”



WINFIELD DURHAM (RIGHT) LIVING OUT THE CORE VALUES IN GUATEMALA

"THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL HAS NOT BEEN TRIED AND FOUND WANTING — IT HAS BEEN FOUND DIFFICULT AND LEFT UNTRIED."

- G.K. CHESTERTON

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