

The Conscious Consumer: Fair Trade and Catholic Social Teaching

October is Fair Trade Month-a time to raise our awareness about fair trade and

Trade may be the most powerful tool for boosting standards of living in the developing world. But for trade to lift up the world's poorest, it must be designed to include those people traditionally bypassed by the benefits of commerce. For decades, Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs) and Fair Trade Organizations (FTOs), have been demonstrating how counter-cultural models of trade can achieve what traditional commerce and aid have not.

Fair Traders work with disadvantaged artisans and farmers to build their businesses and market their wares directly to consumers in developed regions. They minimize the cut taken by often exploitive intermediaries and return perhaps one sixth to one-third of retail prices of items to producers. Fair Trade typically focuses on workers in rural areas, where nearly 75 percent of the world's poorest live and work.

Fair Trade organizations are those that adhere to a strict array of criteria regarding workers' pay, conditions and other terms, set forth by accrediting organizations such as the Fair Trade Federation (ITF), the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) and Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO).

The conscious consumers who support fair trade are responding to our Catholic Social Teachings that call us to::

- Enhance the life and dignity of every human person.
- Respond to the needs of the poor and vulnerable
- Promote the rights and the dignity of the worker
- Stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters
- Care for God's creation-when we purchase products that were produced by means that protect and preserve the environment.