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Taking action to be an ethical trader

A lot of people ask our advice on a range of ethical issues relating to trade. Unfortunately we are unable to give specific comments about other companies and their products. However, you may find some of the points below helpful.

Fair trade if you can

Obviously the ideal is fair trade! Look out for our products - there is an increasing range in High St stores. You should also look for products bearing the Fairtrade Mark. At present the Mark is applied to a limited range of commodities: coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar, honey, bananas (fresh) and orange juice.

If there is no fair trade product

It is still worthwhile to encourage all businesses to better practice. One of the best things to do is to ask questions e.g. does your company have a code of conduct for purchases from the "third world"? If the answer is "yes", then ask if it is independently monitored. If "no", then ask how they avoid exploitation of the people who make their products. The very act of asking questions keeps companies on their toes.

If you want to get involved more actively, some useful organisations are:

- **Ethical Consumer** - subscribe to their magazine or check their website: www.ethicalconsumer.org. Ethical Consumer describes itself as "the UK's only alternative consumer organisation looking at the social and environmental records of the companies behind the brand names". Their address is: ECRA Publishing Ltd, Unit 21, 41 Old Birley St, Manchester M15 5RF. Tel 0161 226 2929, email mail@ethicalconsumer.org.
- **Labour Behind the Label** is specifically for people wanting to campaign about clothing workers rights. Their address is: c/o Women Working Worldwide, Room 412, MMU Manton Building, Rosamund Street West, Manchester, M15 6LL. Tel 0161 247 1760, email women-ww@mcr1.poptel.org.uk.
- The **Fairtrade Foundation** website has links to various ethical shopping initiatives: www.fairtrade.org.uk.

If you want to find an ethical source of mass-produced products for your shop/company

The **Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)** is an alliance of companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and trade union organisations. The members are committed to working together to identify and promote good practice in the implementation of codes of labour practice, including the monitoring and independent verification of the observance of code provisions.

They have a "base code" which any retailers wanting to promote ethical standards in their business could use as a model. You can find it on their website: www.ethicaltrade.org.

Please note the ETI is not a consumer organisation and does not run campaigns. However, consumers may wish to ask high street retailers if they are a member of the ETI and whether they have a code of conduct for purchasing which matches the ETI base code.

May 2003
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