



Does Traidcraft cut out the middleman?

"Cutting out the middleman" was a popular refrain in the early days of fair trade, and referred to the desire to end the dominance of exploitative and monopolistic middlemen in particular commodity sectors. This clearly was – and remains – an important aspect of fair trade.

Sometimes, however, the phrase is interpreted more loosely as seeking to cut out all middlemen – which is in fact very far from the truth.

In many cases our producer groups involve small communities who would struggle with the requirements of international trade. In such cases it is often necessary for intermediary organisations to work with Traidcraft on their behalf.

For example, in Malawi, Traidcraft created a company called Development Trading Limited (DTL) to help poor producers access markets both in Malawi and abroad. Without this assistance we would not be able to purchase baskets from the many producers throughout the country that we are now able to work with.

To get from producer to consumer, products also need to pass through the hands of shippers, packers manufacturers and distributors. These are all middlemen, as indeed is Traidcraft itself!

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