



# Fair's fair

With the recent launch of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges' (EAUC) new Fair Trade Community of Practice, the convenor of the group, Liz Cooper, explores this topic and the key issues affecting tertiary education

**L**iz is the Fair Trade Coordinator for the University of Edinburgh and spent four years working on fair trade projects in developing countries, before completing an MSc in Business and Community at the University of Bath. She now works on fair trade engagement and the development of a Fair Trade Academic Network at the University of Edinburgh.

Today's supply chains for the majority of goods are global and complex. Products flow from farmers, through various processing firms, and through retailers, before finally reaching consumers. Powerful corporations typically wield power over actors lower down the chain. Small-scale producers in developing countries tend not to get a fair deal. They are paid low prices, lack bargaining power, and are sensitive to global commodity price fluctuations. The vulnerability of these producers has real impacts on people's lives, in terms of whether they are able to access basic nutrition, healthcare and education required for a minimum standard of living.

Fair trade is about redressing these power imbalances by reducing vulnerability and exploitation. Fair trade labelling schemes and fair trade companies aim to ensure a reasonable

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**BELOW:** Fair trade looks to reduce vulnerability and exploitation



price is paid, capacity-building, decent working conditions, and long-term trading relationships. Universities in the UK are increasingly working to the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade University model: making commitments to procuring and selling fair trade products, setting up staff-student steering groups, and raising awareness. At the University of Edinburgh, we are making plans to celebrate ten years of being a Fairtrade University in 2014.

Yet we are also taking fair trade further: adopting a broader definition of fair trade beyond any particular labelling scheme, working on other supply chain codes of conduct, and capitalising on academic expertise through our Fair Trade Academic Network, to encourage debate and inform policy. **UB**

## Matching Members' needs with new networking opportunities

The EAUC supports our Members to exchange ideas, skills and experience. Our network now comprises over 3,000 colleagues in universities, colleges and learning and skills institutions. To encourage more specialist learning and information sharing, we seek out and launch a range of Communities

of Practice to support focused and efficient networking.

The new Fair Trade Community of Practice recognises the need to share ideas, experience and expertise – between different institutions, and also between academic staff, non-academic staff and students – on how we can trade more fairly.

Learn more about the EAUC and our Communities of Practice at [www.eauc.org.uk](http://www.eauc.org.uk).