

Fair Trade Roundup

Domestic Fair Trade Group and others grow the network

BY ERBIN CROWELL

Past issues of *Cooperative Grocer* have reported the growing movement for Domestic Fair Trade. Here, we are excited to update readers on the activities of the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA), which grew out of these organizing efforts. The DFTA is a multi-stakeholder organization made up of 31 member organizations representing farmers, farmworkers, processors and marketers, retailers and food co-ops, and non-governmental organizations. Each stakeholder group elects representatives to a board of directors that manages the activities of the Association.

While many people are familiar with international Fair Trade, people have increasingly come to recognize that the inequities and ecological problems of the global food system also impact farmers and farmworkers on a domestic level as well. The goal of DFTA is to promote a more just, healthy, and sustainable domestic food system by advocating for Fair Trade at all levels of the economy. (The principles of domestic fair trade that provide the core philosophy for DFTA's work can be found at: <http://www.dftaassociation.org/principles>.)

DFTA members range from farmworkers' organizations such as CATA and the Farmworker Support Committee to Swanton Berry Farm in California; and from advocacy organizations such as Pesticide Action Network of North America to our newest member, Honest Weight Food Co-op in Albany, New York. Food co-ops are well represented in the DFTA, including six individual food co-ops and the National Cooperative Grocers Association.

The Domestic Fair Trade Association emphasizes peer dialog and learning, and members have the opportunity to share best practices, allowing each organization to improve its own environmental, labor, and trading practices—and therefore those of the movement as a whole—through collaboration. Over the past few years members have been gathering once a year to discuss their goals and vision, positions on policies of importance, and developments in

For background on the Domestic Fair Trade Group, see the March-April 2008 Cooperative Grocer www.cooperativegrocer.coop/articles/index.php?id=791

Fair Trade. This year, the DFTA's annual meeting will be held December 5 and 6, 2009 at Organic Valley headquarters in LaFarge, Wisconsin and will be open to both members and non-members who are committed to building the movement for fair trade in North America. Organizations interested in joining DFTA and participating as full voting members at the meeting are encouraged to apply for membership by October 15, 2009. (For more information, contact Kerstin Lindgren: <mailto:dftaassociation@gmail.com>).

As part of our effort to communicate our work to the food co-op community, we've asked some of the members of the DFTA to report on recent activities. Below are their updates and contact information.

Agricultural Justice Project

The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) is a multi-organizational initiative formed for the purpose of developing, piloting, and promoting a market-based food label for social justice and economic equity. The vision of AJP is to support fairness for all in the food system, from farmworkers and farmers to retailers and processors. AJP has a pilot project underway in Wisconsin and Minnesota, through which co-op grocers, farmers and an organic certifier participate in full-scale audits and are certified to the AJP standards. AJP is expanding to new regions, including Canada, California, and the Southeast.

AJP represents a collaboration of organizations, many of which are DFTA members, including Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI - USA), Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas/Farmworker Support Committee (CATA), Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFAF), Florida Organic Growers/Quality Certification Services (FOG/QCS), and Fundación RENACE, a Bolivian organic producers' association.

The AJP's standard-setting process began in 1999 with the publication and dissemination of "A Call for Social Justice in Sustainable and Organic Agriculture," a preliminary vision statement and model standards for social justice labeling. These model standards have been widely circulated and refined through a participatory process including a series of domestic and international forums and extensive public

comment periods. The model standards are currently in their fifth draft. From December 2008 through mid-2010, AJP will undertake the revision of these standards based on the lessons learned through the pilot projects and add standards for retail workers and indigenous people's products.

Contact Sally Lee, Just Foods program assistant, RAFI-USA

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California Institute for Rural Studies

Contact: Ron Strohlic, Executive Director: rstrochlic@circinc.org; 221 G Street, #204; Davis CA 95616; 530-756-6555 x16; www.circinc.org.

CATA

Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA, or Farmworker Support Committee) is a member-driven migrant and immigrant workers' organization based in the mid-Atlantic region. CATA's members are mainly from Mexico and, like many farmworkers in the U.S., often become migrants as victims of unfair trade—neoliberal economic policies such as NAFTA and massive farm subsidies in the U.S. which have served to drive poor rural people off the land. CATA's members have been involved in promoting fair trade in numerous ways—more concretely as one of the principal partners in the Agricultural Justice Project (AJP, described above). CATA has also been actively involved in the founding and development of the Domestic Fair Trade Association.

Contact Richard Mandelbaum: richardmandelbaum@hotmail.com; or cata-farmworkers.org.

Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE)

Another founding member of the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is the Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE). CFNE provides lending and technical support to co-ops and community based non-profits, many of which



are involved in building a more just and sustainable food system. "Our mission is to provide the financial and techni-



cal assistance that co-ops and other organizations need to achieve their missions," says Erbin Crowell of CFNE. "For us, it has been very exciting to see how many of our borrowers are also leaders in this new movement for Domestic Fair Trade." Equal Exchange was an early CFNE borrower, along with other DFTG members such as Franklin Community Co-operative (Green Fields Market and McCusker's in Massachusetts), and non-profit organizations such as Red Tomato. More recently, CFNE has been collaborating with the Neighboring Food Cooperative Association, a group of nearly twenty co-ops in western New England that is working to build a regional food system (see "Planning in Collaboration," Cooperative Grocer #140, Jan.-Feb. 2009) and the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops (www.valleyworker.org), a network of co-ops promoting a more sustainable, democratic, and participatory economy in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. "The principles and values of co-operation mesh closely with those of Fair Trade," says Crowell, who also serves on the board of the DFTA, "so it should come as no surprise that co-ops are deeply involved in this movement."

Contact Erbin Crowell: erbin@cooperativefund.org; 800-818-7833; P.O. Box 3413, Amherst MA 01004; www.coopfund.coop.

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps

Dr. Bronner's company website Fair Trade page is inclusive and offers news on several fronts: http://www.drbronner.com/fair_trade.html.

Hemp: Dr. Bronner's uses hemp oil as a ingredient in all its soaps because of its unsurpassed essential fatty acids content; hemp oil is also a key ingredient in the company's lip balms, body balms, and lotions. It is certified by fairDeal, a domestic Fair Trade certification program for North American organic family farms.

Coconut oil now comes from Sri Lanka. Our subsidiary Serendipol (Pvt) Ltd. took over an existing coconut factory, improved buildings, installed new processing technology, and helped convert some 300 coconut farms (4,000 acres) to organic practices. From small subsistence farms of 2-5 acres to mid-sized family farms of 100 acres, these farmers symbolize how Sri Lanka grows its most popular food crop—and how past lack of stewardship has eroded soil fertility and farm profitability and threatens a traditional industry and important rural employer. Serendipol produces, finances, and supplies organic fertilizer at cost, thus helping our growers increase their yields by 30-50%. Higher yields along with the organic premium motivate them to improve land stewardship and working conditions for their mostly casual workers.

Olive oil: In early 2007, Dr. Bronner's began sourcing 90% of its olive oil needs from Palestinian producers near the West Bank town of Jenin. There, the trading firm Canaan Fair Trade was founded by Palestinians who support peaceful coexistence with Israel and see profitable olive farming as one means of improving Palestinians' economic situation (www.canaanfair-trade.com). Canaan works closely with the Palestine Fair Trade Association and purchases oil from some 1,700 smallholders. Dr. Bronner's funding of the organic and Fair Trade certification by IMO boosted the project's visibility and provided access to high-end markets. The balance of our olive oil comes from Sindyanna, a fair trade business run by Jewish and Arab women in Israel.

Palm oil: Like coconut oil, certified fairly traded palm oil was not commercially available anywhere when we started our initiative to source all our major materials from fair trade sources. We teamed up with the NGO

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Maine Coast

Fearless Planet and the U.S. company Jungle Products to develop a palm oil supply with small farmers and processors in the eastern region of Ghana, some 60 miles north of the capital Accra. To improve product quality and working conditions, we've built a simple "organic only" palm oil mill, modeled after the system used by many small local entrepreneurs but also featuring advanced appropriate technology, for example for steaming and pressing of oil fruits. The mill is operated by a co-op of women entrepreneurs. As in Sri Lanka, the fair trade premium paid by Dr. Bronner's and other buyers will support prioritized local development projects.

Contact: Sue Kastensen: 608-634-6363 or 858-205-3854 (cell); sue@drbronner.com.

Equal Exchange

Equal Exchange, the worker co-op that helped pioneer Fair Trade foods in the 1980s, continues to bring that model to new audiences and new groups of farmers. The latest Equal Exchange initiative is to tackle the much-troubled \$30 billion+ U.S. banana industry. To do this, Equal Exchange increased



its work with and investment in Oké USA, the nation's only 100% Fair Trade fruit importer. These organic, Fair Trade bananas now carry the Equal Exchange brand that is well known by many co-op shoppers for representing a strong commitment to both farmers and co-op values. Unlike some other Fair Trade bananas that are sourced from plantations, these come from a small farmer co-op, El Guabo, in Ecuador. The bananas are already available in the Upper Midwest, the mid-Atlantic, and New England. Equal Exchange hopes to make the bananas available nationwide, so contact them if your co-op is interested.

In addition to ongoing work with coffee co-ops, Equal Exchange is also strengthening its ties with tea growers and U.S. farmers. On the tea front, they're using their new line of five organic large-leaf pyramid teas to refocus the Fair Trade category on small farmer co-ops, which have been shut out until now. Here at home they have offered additional support, in the form of a grant, to the farmer/worker co-op in Georgia whose salted pecans are a key part of Equal Exchange's line of Domestic Fair Trade healthy snacks. The \$8,500 grant is being used for investments that will help the Georgian producers widen their customer base.

This October Equal Exchange is bringing back their "Reverse-Trick-or-Treating" campaign to raise awareness of Fair Trade and the problem of forced child labor in the cocoa sector. It is a collaborative, nationwide campaign with many

participating organizations and one that many food co-ops have already embraced. To facilitate higher Fair Trade chocolate sales for Halloween, Equal Exchange has added a scannable UPC to its popular dark chocolate organic Fair Trade "minis."

Contact Rodney North: rnorth@equalexchange.coop; 774-776-7398; 50 United Dr., West Bridgewater MA 02379; www.equalexchange.coop.

Family Farm Defenders

Contact: John E. Peck, Executive Director: familyfarmdefenders@yahoo.com; P.O. Box 1772; Madison WI 53701; www.familyfarmdefenders.org.

Fair Trade Resource Network

Contact: <http://www.fairtraderesource.org>

Farm Workers Association of Florida

Farmworkers are often the last to be considered and/or are actually excluded in the growing public discussion and debate about, and interest in the significance and impact of both international and domestic Fair Trade products. Ironically, the public awareness of and demand for international fair trade products includes fair working conditions for the laborers that produce the product. Domestically, however, there is still much ignorance about the harsh and unjust working conditions for the farmworkers in our own country.

The Farmworker Association of Florida supports a Domestic Fair Trade standard that includes fair wages, safe workplaces and healthy and just working conditions for agricultural workers in the United States. Some of the activities we have engaged in both nationally and internationally include participating in crafting and signing on to the letter to the newly-constituted Consultative Group to Eliminate the Use of Child and Forced Labor in Imported Agricultural Products that will hopefully lead to the development of a "standard set of practices" that will reduce the likelihood that products imported into the U.S. are produced with forced or child labor. We, also, support Fair Trade standards that protect workers in agriculture in other countries.

Domestically, working with allied groups, including the Florida Organic Growers Association, FWAF is participating in a pilot program in Florida and the Southeast to work with growers, retailers and workers to identify a workable set of standards that could constitute a marketable

fair trade label for our region. We have, also, participated as a member of the Domestic Fair Trade Coalition for the past three years to ensure farmworker participation in the process of development of fair and just standards for agricultural products. We have, also, tabled at the World Fair Trade Day events, sponsored locally by the Greater Orlando Fair Trade Coalition, for the past two years. Lastly, our organization is exploring opportunities to sell organic, fairly traded coffee and other certified Fair Trade products as a fundraiser to both raise awareness and to raise funds for our continuing work.

Contact: Jeannie Economos: farmworkerassoc@aol.com, 407-886-5151; www.floridafarmworkers.org.

Farmer Direct Co-operative,

Founded in 2001, Farmer Direct Co-operative Ltd (FDC) is a farmer-owned business that



provides the world with ethically grown and traded food. Our co-operative of 70 certified organic family farms produces high quality grains, oilseeds, pulses, and beef for food manufacturers and distributors and food service providers in the United States, Europe and Canada. FDC's mission is to manage the sales, marketing, and logistics of our members' crops from the farm gate to the food manufacturer. Our open and transparent system is an alternative to the traditional buy low, sell high trading model.

The fairDeal was initiated by Farmer Direct Co-operative seven years ago. Its aim, through certification, transparency, and stewardship, is to help ensure that organic family farmers receive a fair price for their crops and to provide consumers with high quality food that better reflects their ethical concerns. The fairDeal's mandate is to connect ethical consumers with organic family farmers by providing food manufacturers with an identifier (the fairDeal Seal). The fairDeal Seal supports the following principles:

Fair contracting: Pooling contracts, based on creating minimum pricing for crops, that cover the cost of production, pay the farmer for their labor, and provide profit that can be reinvested in the family farm. The fairDeal is also fostering stability in the contracting process by introducing multi-year contracts.

Social justice: Ensure farm labor is paid a living wage, has access to collective bargaining, and that working conditions abide by all provincial and federal laws.

Stewardship/sustainability: By promoting farming practices that reduce the use of fossil fuel inputs and promote the building of soil, both of which reduce green house gas emissions or sequester green house gases; promote green

acres, thus ecosystem conservation; protect and conserve ground water.

Transparency and traceability: A web tool will enable fairDeal food purchases to be traced back to the family farm by entering a lot number that appears on the food product. The web tool will also enable farmers to input information into the system which will assist them in producing the paper work for their organic inspections. The stakeholder interface will facilitate social networking between all stakeholders (from farm to table), developing relationships and a sense of community which fosters a reconnection to the land and the food produced.

Contact: Marla Carlson, marla@farmerdirect.coop; 306-352-2444 x 221; 2054 Broad St., Regina Saskatchewan S4P 1Y3; www.farmerdirect.coop

Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers

Contact: Marty Mesh, fog@foginfo.org; 352-377-6345; P.O. Box 12311, Gainesville FL 32604.

Food for Thought

Contact: Timothy Young, timothy@foodforthought.net; 231-326-5444; 10704 Oviatt Rd., Honor MI 49640; www.foodforthought.net.



Franklin Community Cooperative

Contact: Suzette Snow-Cobb, suzette@franklincommunitycoop; 413-773-9567 x6; 144 Main St., Greenfield MA 01301.

Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA)

Contact: Elizabeth Henderson, Box 135, Stevenson CT 06491; 315-331-9029; lzbthenderson@yahoo.com; www.nofa.org.



Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative

Contact: Kristen Woodhouse: Kristen.woodhouse@organicvalley.coop; 608-625-2602 x3361. Organic Valley: One Organic Way, La Farge WI 54639; www.organicvalley.coop.



RAFI

The Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA cultivates markets, policies and communities that support thriving, socially just and environmentally sound family farms.



While focusing on North Carolina and the southeastern United States, we also work nationally and internationally. RAFI is creating a movement among farm, environmental and consumer groups to ensure that:

- family farmers have the power to earn a fair and dependable income;
- everyone who labors in agriculture is respected, protected, and valued by society;
- air, water and soil are preserved for future generations;
- the land yields healthy and abundant food and fiber that is accessible to all members of society;
- the full diversity of seeds and breeds, the building blocks of agriculture, are reinvigorated and publicly protected.

Contact Sally Lee, Just Foods Program Assistant, RAFI-USA: sally@rafiusa.org; (office) 919-542-1396 x211; P.O. Box 640, Pittsboro NC 27312; www.rafi-usa.org.

Red Tomato

Contact: Sue Futrell, sfutrell@redtomato.org; 781-565-8911; 1033 Turnpike St., Canton MA 02021.



Seward Co-op Grocery & Deli

Contact: Tom Vogel, tvogel@seward.coop; 612-465-0891 x1039; 2823 E. Franklin Av., Minneapolis MN 55406.



United Students for Fair Trade

Contact United Students for Fair Trade for campus Fair Trade events and organizations: <http://www.usft.org>.

